

2008 연구보고서 -12-3

# Balancing Work and Family: Current Issues and Policy Directions

KWADI

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## **Balancing Work and Family: Current Issues and Policy Directions**

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2008 INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM IN SEOUL  
25~26, August, 2008

연 구 기 관 : 한국여성정책연구원

연구책임자 : 홍 승 아 (본원 연구위원)

## *Invitation*

Women's economic participation opened new opportunities to women and boosted further economic development. It, however, brought many challenges to families with working women in Korea. In fact, Korea is not alone with this problem and families in most industrialized countries and developing countries are struggling everyday to balance work and family.

There is a great need for the state to perform a proactive role in overcoming this challenge. Korea took the first step last year by revising the *Equal Employment Act* to the *Act on the Gender Equality Employment and Support for Work-Family Balance*. It is high time for policy research and development to effectively turn the political will into reality.

It is in this context that Korean Women's Development Institute(KWDI) cordially invite you to the symposium "Balancing Work and Family: Current Issues and Policy Directions." With kind cooperation of the Embassy of Sweden to Korea, the symposium will listen to experts from all around the world.and have in-depth discussion It will be a good opportunity to share ideas and insights.

With Sincere thanks from,

President of KWDI  
Swedish Ambassador to Korea

Taehyun Kim  
Lars Vargö

## Speakers

### 1. *Marie Thérèse Letablier(France)*



- Director of Centre d'Economie de la Sorbonne  
Université Paris 1
- Social and family policies, women's employment  
and on work and family balance, and childcare  
services
- Care and care policies in the European Union

### 2. *Suzan Lewis(U.K.)*



- Professor of Organizational Psychology, Middlesex  
University
- International research projects on work-life issues in  
Europe, North America, and Japan
- Co-author of "The Myth of Work-Life Balance and  
Women, Men Work and Family in Europe" (2007)

### 3. *Rianne Mahon(Canada)*



- Director of Institute of Political Economy, Carleton  
University
- Politics of childcare
- OECD and "policy learning" in Canada, Sweden  
and Korea in relation to "reconciliation of work and  
life" policies

#### 4. *Soma Naoko(Japan)*

- Professor of Social Welfare Policy, Yokohama National University
- Comparative Study of Childcare Policy in Japan and Korea Childcare policy
- The emergence of "childcare" as a public matter in Korea

#### 5. *Laura den Dulk(Netherlands)*



- Professor of Sociology, Utrecht University
- Cross-national research regarding work-life policies in organisations in different welfare state regimes
- Attitudes, opinions and behaviors of top-managers towards work/life policies, and social quality in European workplaces

#### 6. *Ann-Zofie Duvander(Sweden)*



- Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Stockholm
- fertility, labour market behaviour, and family policy
- The impact of parental leave use on women's labour market careers relationship between income and fertility

*7. Pia Engstrom Lindgren(Sweden)*



- Deputy Head of Jämo: The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman
- Former Director General, Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, European Commission

*8. Eva N Hultberg(Sweden)*



- Director of Organisational Changes, AstraZeneca, Sweden
- Former Human Resources Director, AstraZeneca
- Responsible for equality and diversity and leading the global talent management process

*9. Ito Peng(Canada: Moderator)*



- Professor of Sociology, University of Toronto
- Recent social policy reforms in these countries in response to economic globalization, demographic shifts, changes in family and gender relations, and domestic political changes
- Political economy of welfare state transformations in East Asia

## Program

Monday, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008 Moderator: Hwa-Soon Byun  
(Senior Research Fellow, KWDI)

09:30-10:00	Registration
10:00-10:10	Welcoming Remarks Taehyun Kim (President, KWDI)
10:10-10:20	Congratulatory Address In-Shik Lee (Vice Minister, Ministry of Gender Equality)
10:20-12:00	<b>Session 1</b> Presentation <i>Work-Family Balance Policy: Implementation and practice in the UK</i> Suzan Lewis (Professor, Middlesex University, UK) <i>Work-Family Balance Policies in France : Principles, Contents and Outcomes</i> Marie-Thérèse Letablier (Professor, Centre d'Economie de la Sorbonnes, Université Paris 1, FRA) Discussion Ann-Zofie Duvander (Professor, Stockholm University, SWE) Seo-Jung Kim (Director, Division of Population Policy, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs) Hyeyoung Kim (Research Fellow, KWDI)
12:00-13:30	Lunch
13:30-15:10	<b>Session 2</b> Presentation <i>Work-Family (Im)Balance in Canada</i> Rianne Mahon (Professor, Carleton University, CAN) <i>Answers to Work-Care Dilemmas : Initiatives in the Netherlands</i> Laura den Dulk (Professor, Utrecht University, NLD) Discussion Suzan Lewis (Professor, Middlesex University, UK) Ji-Yeon Jang (Senior Research Fellow, Korea Labor Institute) Yunkyu Ryu (Research Fellow, KWDI)
15:10-15:30	Break

Monday, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008

13:30-15:10	<p><b>Session 3</b></p> <p>Presentation</p> <p>Whose <i>"Work and Life"</i>? Whose <i>"Balance"</i>? : <i>Work-Life Balance Policies in Japan</i></p> <p>Soma Naoko (Professor, Yokohama National University, JPN)</p> <p><i>Work-Family Balance and Policy Directions in Korea</i></p> <p>Seungah Hong (Research Fellow, KWDI, KOR)</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Marie-Thérèse Letablier (Professor, Centre d'Economie de la Sorbonnes, Université Paris 1, FRA)</p> <p>Tae-Hong Kim (Director-General, Equal Employment Bureau, Ministry of Labor)</p> <p>Gye-Sook Yoo (Professor, Kyung Hee University, KOR)</p>
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Tuesday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2008 Moderator: Hyae-Kyung Chang  
 (Senior Research Fellow, KWDI)  
 Ito Peng  
 (Professor, Toronto University, CAN)

09:30-10:00	Registration
10:00-10:10 10:10-10:20	Welcoming Remarks Taehyun Kim (President, KWDI) Congratulatory Address Ulf Sörmark (Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Sweden)
10:20-12:00	<b>Session 4</b> Presentation <i>Swedish Family Policy and Work-Life Balance</i> Ann-Zofie Duvander (Professor, Stockholm University, SWE) Discussion Rianne Mahon (Professor, Carleton University, CAN) Soma Naoko (Professor, Yokohama National University, JPN) Su-Jeong Kim (Professor, Dong-A University, KOR)
12:00-13:30	Lunch
13:30-15:10	<b>Session 2</b> Presentation <i>Legal Instruments to combat work-family related discrimination in Sweden</i> Pia Engström Lindgren (Deputy Head of JämO, SWE) <i>How AstraZeneca in Sweden supports Work-Family Balance</i> Eva Hultberg (HR Director, AstraZeneca, SWE) Discussion Laura den Dulk (Professor, Utrecht University, NLD) Bong-Hyup Chung (Director of Women's Policy Bureau, Ministry of Gender Equality) Hee-jung Lim (Research Fellow, KWDI)
15:10-15:30	Break
13:30-15:10	Cross-Discussion Moderator: Ito Peng (Professor, Toronto University, CAN) Discussants: All Experts

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# I

## *“Work–Family Balance” Policy, Implementation and Practice in the UK*

Suzan Lewis

Business School, Middlesex University

## 1. Introduction

The issue of what is often referred to as “work-family” or more recently “work-life balance”<sup>1)</sup>, has become a hot topic in the UK in government, employer and union discussions, in the media, and in everyday debate. However, the questions raised about how to manage paid work and family and other responsibilities are not new. There is a long tradition of research and discussion on the interface between work and family (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1969; Lewis and Cooper, 1989). Initially this research was a response to demographic trends especially the rise in women’s labour force participation in the second half of the twentieth century. In the twenty first century concerns and discussions are also driven by other phenomena, related to the pressures of the global competitive market. Paid work is increasingly dominating people’s lives (Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport, 2006; Bunting, 2004). People are expending more and more time and energy in paid work as working hours are becoming longer and more intensified in many contexts, in the UK (Lewis and Smithson, 2006; Burchall, Lapido, and Wilkinson, 2002) as elsewhere (Van der Lippe and Peters, 2007; Duxbury, 2008). One consequence is that, as time expands in the global 24-hour market place and space and distance is compressed by information and communication technology, temporal and spatial boundaries between paid work and family life have become increasingly blurred (Sullivan and Lewis, 2001; Brannen, 2005). Work intrudes into family time as many people stay longer at the workplace or work at home during “family time”. Experience of long and/or intensified working hours and blurred work-family boundaries can engender feelings of pressure, lack of time and general ‘busyness’ (Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport, 2006; Bunting, 2004), sometimes signified by metaphors about time such as “the time squeeze” or “time famine” (Hewitt, 1993). In relation to family, there is concern about a “care deficit” that is the question of who

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1) The term work-life balance has attracted much criticism for oversimplifying the issues (Smithson and Stockoe, 2005; Lewis, Gambles and Rapoport, 2007), but it is nevertheless now widely used in policy debates.

will care for the young, old and vulnerable if people are working more and more (Smeaton, 2008). In Britain these conditions also exacerbated a polarisation of opportunities among professional and non professional women (Dex et al, 1996) and social fragmentation between families who are “work-rich” often with too little time for family and those who are “work-poor” with limited access to paid work. The drive to include more people in paid work underpins much UK state policy on work life balance.

Debates in the UK have been marked by shift in terminology from work-family and family friendly policies to work-life and work-life balance policies. This was partly a response to the association of family with women and neglect of men’s family roles. Radical change in workplaces or families will not be possible unless men as well as women are enabled to reconcile work and family. The shift in terminology also reflects a concern to emphasize that work has to be integrated with not only family commitments but also other aspects of personal life for both men and women (Gambles, Lewis and Rapoport, 2006; Lewis, Gambles and Rapoport, 2007).

In this paper I first briefly consider some of the history and developments in approaches to supporting those involved in paid work and family care, before outlining some relevant aspects of contemporary policy in the UK. I will then discuss implementation issues, particularly as these are played out in workplaces. The final section addresses the question of how it is possible to build on and move beyond policies to bring about workplace changes to meet contemporary economic and social challenges, drawing on case studies of British organisations.

## 2. Developments in state support for work and family- from non intervention to “light touch”

Legislation on equal opportunities for men and women was introduced in

Britain in the 1970s<sup>2)</sup>. It was recognised that women's greater responsibility for children and family was a major factor limiting women's access to and advancement within the labour market. Nevertheless successive governments were, until recent decades, reluctant to implement policies to actively support the reconciliation of work and family. Traditionally, family was regarded as a private, not a public concern. The liberal welfare state approach of minimal state intervention resulted in policies of "non intervention" in family life. Government support, for example for childcare or by employer regulation, was minimal. The development of work-family provisions was, and to a large extent still is, left to market forces. In this context there have traditionally been high rates of part time work among mothers of young children, often in low status jobs, because promotion increasingly requires full time and long hours of work (Crompton, Dennett and Wigfield, 2003). This part time working trend persists today although the proportion of mothers working on a full time basis is growing (Smeaton, 2006). Meanwhile British men work the longest hours in Europe. Consequently, gender inequities in terms of pay and promotions persist (Anderson, Forth, Metcalf and Kirby, 2001; Smithson, Lewis, Cooper, and Dyer, 2004). Currently women earn 80% of men's salaries.

In the context of minimal state support some employers, particularly larger organisations relying substantially on women's labour, began in the 1980s, to adapt working practices to support working parents - primarily women. This was partly to recruit and retain women employees for business reasons (supply factors) and partly in response to pressure from women to do this (demand factors). The focus was on policies and benefits, often adopting practices being introduced in the USA, but also breaking new ground with innovations such as career breaks- periods of unpaid leave with the right to return to employment with the organisation (Lewis, Watts and Camp, 1996).

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2) *Sex Discrimination Act 1975; Equal Pay Acts 1970, 1983*

This trend slowed down in the economic recession of the early 1990s but resumed as the economy improved. Nevertheless, provision of work and family policies in organisations remained patchy and take up of these policies remains limited.

However, there have been dramatic shifts in governmental approaches in recent years, from the beginning of the New Labour government in 1997. This was driven partly by economic concerns. There has been a steady stream of initiatives to support lone mothers and mothers in low income households to get into paid work, for example, through welfare-to-work initiatives, and the Working Families Tax Credit and Child Care tax credits (discussed below) for low earning families. This is driven by concerns to reduce child and family poverty, as well as to cut public expenditure on welfare benefits but the shift nevertheless has resulted in public discourses about how better to support people with caring responsibilities by inclusion in paid work.

Government policy has also been driven by EU Directives. An opt-out from the EU social charter which set minimum standards of employment law to address social issues was negotiated by the previous Conservative government. This was reversed by the incoming Labour government of Tony Blair. The Government responded to European Union requirements for greater support for the reconciliation of employment and family life by introducing provisions such as two weeks paid paternity leave, unpaid parental leave, and the right to request flexible working practices. However, the responses tend to be minimal compared with much of Europe. For example the UK government was the last EU member states to introduce statutory parental leave in 1999- and then the minimum required by the parental leave directive - 3 weeks unpaid.

The current government preference is to encourage employers to voluntary action, as the market permits, rather than regulation-a Neo Liberal approach. In effect, it adopts a two pronged, “light touch” approach: building a

statutory minimum framework of rights in relation to "work-life balance" while encouraging employers to go further as a way of enhancing productivity and competitiveness (Harker and Lewis, 2001). The 'business case' for change (Bevan, Dench, Tamkin and Cummings, 1999) promoted by the Government encourages employers to think about new ways to work, and publishes a wealth of 'best' practice case studies as examples and guidelines. However, there are often problems in the everyday implementation of policies, as discussed below. In recognition of this, and to encourage rather than legislate for change, the Government allocated funding, known as the Challenge Fund to help employers to develop 'work-life balance' policies and practices. Employers could bid for funding to bring in consultants to help them to make changes, for example by the development of various forms of flexible working. A systematic evaluation of the scheme (Nelson et al., 2004) found that the Challenge Fund did enable employers to make significant changes in order to raise awareness of and develop policies to support work-life balance, although it proved difficult to measure actual financial benefits of this. Change programmes undertaken by the Trades Union Congress have also supported changes in actual practice rather than just policy (TUC, 2005).

### 3. Current policy

#### *Childcare*

With a lack of a well established infrastructure of accessible and affordable childcare, it is mostly mothers who have to cobble together a mixture of formal and informal childcare arrangements. Many children are cared for by relatives such as grandparents while their parents are at work. Formal childcare is expensive. It includes public, voluntary and private nursery provision, plus some workplace nurseries and a network of home-based childminders. There are also some after-school and school-holiday provisions

run by schools or privately. Thus the market has responded to changing childcare needs for those who can afford to pay.

State childcare provision has traditionally been very minimal, but the government has more recently begun to develop the provision, particularly for low income families. Government intervention is through an initiative known as Sure Start, initially to provide family support services for children aged 3 and under. This now encompasses Children's Centres which aim to provide integrated care, education, health and welfare facilities for the under 5s and their families<sup>3</sup>). Provision and support are targeted at socially disadvantaged areas and the exact form of support is locally provided. The government intends childcare provision to remain a mixture of public, private and voluntary providers. Nevertheless, the extension of state provisions- mostly through nurseries, although still accounting for only a small proportion of all childcare, means that childcare has been transformed from a political backwater to being central to the contemporary social policy agenda in the UK (Vincent et al, 2008). It is being redefined as a public social issue, not just a private matter. The first ever *Childcare Act* was given royal assent on 13 July 2006.

Government is also making childcare more broadly available through the introduction of tax credits for low income families. Working tax credits support people who are working or self employed on low incomes by topping up earnings. There is also extra help with costs of a registered childminder or approved childcare- up to 70% of childcare costs - via the childcare element of working tax credits<sup>4</sup>). The underlying policy aim of linking tax credits to childcare is to encourage lone mothers back into work as a way of addressing child poverty.

Government has introduced national minimum quality standards for childcare, regulating childminders and nurseries. It has also turned its

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3) See <http://www.surestart.gov.uk/surestartservices/settings/surestartchildrenscentres/>

4) See [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/5/1/new\\_tax\\_credits.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/5/1/new_tax_credits.pdf),

attention to ways of improving conditions of childcare workers/practitioners. This includes more support for the training of the still largely unqualified childcare workforce. The introduction of a national minimum wage (£5.73) for adults from October 2008 also benefits many childcare workers who are generally low paid.

Progress in the development of childcare has been made by the Labour government. Interestingly, however, new plans to help parents meet their childcare costs when returning to work have been unveiled by the opposition Conservative Party. This represents a complete turnaround from earlier Conservative policy and suggests an overall repositioning of the importance of childcare issues in social debates and the policy agenda.

### *Parental leaves and working time policy*

The government Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) states that *employment law* aims to support both employers and working families by providing a framework of rights and responsibilities for both employer and employee. It also takes account of EU directives to implement policies such as parental leave, the right to take leave for family emergencies and the provision of equal pro rata benefits for part time workers.

Maternity but not parental leave (for either parent) is paid in the UK. All pregnant employees are entitled to take up to one year's (52 weeks) maternity leave, regardless of length of service with the employer. The continuous period of maternity leave comprises two stages. There are 26 weeks' Ordinary Maternity Leave - at the end of which a woman is entitled to return to the same job on the same terms and conditions as before her leave began and a further 26 weeks' Additional Maternity Leave - at the end of which she has the right to return to the same job or, if it is not reasonably practicable for the employer to hold this post open, to another post on terms and conditions which are no less favourable. From October 2008 women will

be entitled to the same contractual benefits during Additional Maternity leave as they receive during ordinary maternity leave.

During both forms of maternity leave the contract of employment continues, and although the woman has no statutory right to contractual remuneration during maternity leave, she must, during ordinary maternity leave, continue to receive all her other contractual benefits including any pay rise her colleagues get while she is away. She is also entitled to bonuses or pension contributions that are paid while she is on leave. Pregnant employees who meet qualifying conditions based on their length of service and average earnings and give the correct notice are entitled to receive from their employers up to 39 weeks' Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) and the government will shortly extend maternity pay to 12 months. Employers who are liable to pay SMP may reclaim most or all of the payment from the government. The rate of SMP is 90% of a woman's average weekly earnings for the first six weeks, followed by the lesser of a flat rate of - £117.18 a week or 90% of her average weekly earnings for the remaining 33 weeks. The flat rate is subject to review every April. Women who are not entitled to SMP but meet qualifying conditions based on their recent employment and earnings records may claim up to 39 weeks' Maternity Allowance at a lower rate from their Jobcentre Plus<sup>5)</sup> office. Women may, by agreement with their employer, undertake up to 10 days' work under their contract of employment without losing any SMP or MA. This is important so that women's skills do not become outdated.

Employees may also have a right to parental leave, time off for dependants, the right to request flexible working, and paid paternity leave. The right to parental leave entitles all eligible employees who have completed one year's qualifying service to take a period (currently 13 weeks per child) of unpaid leave to care for a child, with a maximum of 4 weeks

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5) <http://www.businesslink.gov.uk>

in any calendar year. There are plans to enhance this by for example increasing the length of the leave from 15 to 18 weeks for parents with a disabled child. However the leave will remain unpaid.

The right to Paternity Leave and Pay allows eligible employees to take paid leave to care for their baby or to support the mother following birth. Employees can take either one week's or two consecutive weeks' paternity leave and during this time may be entitled to Paternity Pay (at a low rate). Additional Paternity Leave and Pay, shortly to be implemented will entitle employed fathers to a new right of up to 26 weeks Additional Paternity Leave, some of which could be paid, if the mother returns to work. The Government's intention is to introduce Additional Paternity Leave and Pay alongside the extension of maternity pay to 12 months. The aim is to do so before the end of the current Parliament. Thus the right to paid leave remains essentially for mothers- who may choose to transfer some entitlement to leave to the father. In contrast with many other EU countries, fathers are not entitled to paid leave in their own right and hence take up is likely to be limited. Recent research shows that 93% of employed fathers took some leave at the time of the birth of their child0 45% took paternity leave and 50% annual (holiday) leave(Dex and Ward, 2007).

Time off for dependants is a right allowing employees to take a reasonable amount of time off work to deal with certain unexpected or sudden emergencies and to make any necessary longer-term arrangements. This is unpaid though some employers implement a number of paid leave arrangements. This is important, not just for childcare, as the UK like other industrialised countries has an ageing population. In 2006, 9% of the workforce stated that they had caring responsibilities for an adult (more women than men) (Hooker et al, 2007) and this is predicted to rise.

*The Flexible working law*(right to request flexible working and duty of employers to consider) enables parents with a child under 6 or a disabled child under 18 to make a request for flexible working, for example, reduced hours or flexitime, and places a duty on employers to consider such request seriously and only reject them for good business reasons. In 2007 the right to request flexible working was extended to carers of adults. The Government has also indicated that it will extend the right to request further - to parents of older children.

Public consultations have been launched on all these initiatives to canvass the view of employers, parents and other interested bodies. In the government's 'light touch' approach employers can refuse requests for flexible working on 'business grounds'; and working time legislation with a maximum of 48 hours a week comes with an opt-out clause to which employees can, and are often expected to, sign up, reflecting Government's concern with opposition coming from business groups such as the Confederation of British Industry.

The Government have also carried out a high profile work-life balance campaign to encourage employers to not only respond positively to request for flexible working but also to develop a range of workplace policies beyond the statutory minimum to support work-life balance. This is framed within a business case approach(See Employers for Work-Life Balance <http://www.theworkfoundation.com/difference/e4wlb/businessbenefits.aspx>). The Challenge Fund discussed above is one initiative in this campaign.

### *Cash benefits and tax policy*

Child Benefit is paid to parents- usually mothers, who are responsible for a child under 16, or a young person over 16 and under 20 if in full time non advanced education. It is universal, not means tested and therefore the take up is high. It is a good way of targeting poor mothers while high income mothers pay tax on it.

There is no universal tax relief for childcare. However, Working Tax Credit is available to certain people who work at least 16 hours a week. Child Tax Credit is a means-tested payment for people with children, and most families are entitled to some help from this. Working Tax Credit is designed to top up a working household's income and help with childcare costs. It is also means-tested and usually only paid to families on low incomes.

Tax exemptions, for both employer and employee, are available for childcare settings that qualify as workplace nurseries.

#### 4. Implementation: policy and practice in the workplace

With the exception of fiscal and childcare policies, most statutory work-family policies rely on effective implementation in the workplace by employers and managers, for example, responding appropriately to requests for flexible working or encouraging or at least not discouraging fathers from taking paternity or parental leave. Legislation can help to create a normative climate which can give rise to higher employee expectations of support for work and family (Lewis and Lewis, 1996; Lewis and Smithson, 2001). Evidence from a five country European study of young workers' orientations to work and family suggests that supportive state policies including legislation and public childcare provision can enhance young people's sense of entitlement to expect support for managing work and family, not just from the state but also from employers (Lewis and Smithson, 2001). Nevertheless, regulation does not always change practices or expectations. Much depends on how policies are implemented at the workplace level where they are influenced by such factors as organisational norms, practices and culture and manager discretion and support. The British government's work-life balance campaign also encourages employers to implement voluntary work-life

policies, beyond the statutory minimum, where they see this as appropriate to meet a business need- for example to enhance recruitment and retention. Again however, the implementation of such policies without attention to changing prevailing norms, values and assumptions can result in an implementation gap between policy and practice (Gambles et al., 2006). In this section I consider issues affecting the implementation of policies- both statutory and voluntary - in workplaces.

### *Maternity and Parental leaves- some unintended consequences*

When maternity leave was first introduced there was some concern among employers that this might be costly, difficult to administer and disruptive. Their fears proved to be largely unwarranted and although there remain some employers who resent the regulations and discriminate against pregnant women or mothers of young children, attitudes have changed over the years. On the whole maternity leave entitlements are now widely accepted. However, these hard won changes in attitudes are now being challenged again by the planned extension of paid maternity leave to twelve months. This appears to have unintended consequences in that it reinforces the notion among employers that only women take time off to care for babies. In July this year, the chief executive of the equality watchdog, The Equality and Human Rights Commission raised concerns that changes to maternity law resulted in mothers becoming “the parent who pays the career ‘penalty’ for having a child”. She argued that expansion of maternity leave without similar increases in rights for fathers had left women exposed to victimisation by employers (see also Lewis and Campbell, 2007). It appears that many employers find the prospect of more women taking one year of paid maternity leave too threatening and disruptive and may avoid employing women of childbearing age. The comments have sparked debate in government and business about whether the UK should move closer to European norms of allowing greater flexibility in dividing parental leave between mothers and fathers, but employers and

government remain opposed to this at present.

### *Men and family leaves*

Thus the debate is turning to the role of fathers so that the impact of parenthood on work and careers could be more easily shared between parents. However, at present the existing two weeks statutory paternity leave is often not taken by men partly because it is paid at such a low rate. Even fewer fathers take unpaid parental leave. Men are more often the higher earner in families and so taking unpaid leave tends to be considered an illogical family strategy in most households. Moreover, while the right to request flexible working arrangements is supposedly gender neutral, many more women than men request flexible working- especially reduced hours. Moreover, it is not only economic factors that limit take up of entitlements. There remain many practical and cultural and barriers to men taking leave and indeed to women in certain (especially male dominated) occupations requesting more flexibility.

The right to request flexible working plus the government Work-Life Balance campaign and focus on the business case have been associated with an increase in the availability of most flexible working arrangements (Hooker, Neathey, Casebourne and Munro (2007)). The most commonly available arrangements are part time work, reduced hours for a limited period and flexitime. In 2006 17% of employees had made a formal request for flexible working, more women (22%) than men (14%) (Ibid). Among parents of children under the age of 6, women are much more likely than men to request flexibility. Again, however, as with statutory workplace flexibility policies, there are a number of barriers to take up and success of voluntary policies. I discuss some of these barriers below before moving on to look at promising ways of moving beyond policy to changes in practice.

### *Influences on effective implementation of flexible working arrangements*

#### *Communication*

Clear workplace communication of policies is important. Opportunities for flexible working are not always well communicated (Bond et al., 2002) and often it is employees with the most need for flexibility who are unaware of the possibilities (Lewis et al., 2000). For example, in a study of working parents with disabled children it emerged that many of the parents worked in organisations that had a carers' leave policy for employees with family emergencies, but few parents knew about this- adding unnecessarily to their stress (Kagan, Lewis and Heaton, 1999). Fathers are also less likely than mothers to know about their entitlements such as the right to request flexible working (Hooker et al., 2007). Also managers tend to know more about work-life options than other employees (Nadeem and Metcalf, 2007). In many cases examples of poor communication stem from managers' fears about "opening the floodgates" if too many people know about and take up their entitlements. This stems from a lack of understanding of or acceptance of the business case for supporting employees to enable them to reach their full potential. In other cases there is scope for different interpretation of statutory policies, some of which are more supportive to employees than others. For example in a case study of an insurance company, carried out as part of an EU project on the transition to parenthood, the new regulations on unpaid parental leave were interpreted in such a way that staff were not allowed to take parental leave rights until after they had taken all their family leaves (Lewis and Smithson, forthcoming).

#### *Perceived equity and inequity*

Currently the right to request flexible work is restricted to certain groups- although this is changing. In circumstances where flexible working

arrangements are directed primarily at parents, perceived inequity among employees without children can lead to backlash against parents (Young, 1999). It can also reduce sense of entitlement to take up provisions among parents themselves (Lewis, 1997; Lewis and Smithson, 2001), reducing the take-up and therefore outcomes of these initiatives. Making flexible working arrangement normative and available to all rather than subject to management discretion may therefore contribute more than targeted policies to a family supportive culture (Lewis and Cooper, 2005).

The impact of flexible working arrangements can also be influenced by perceived procedural justice. Interventions in which employees have been able to participate in the design of work schedules appear to have the potential to achieve highly workable flexible arrangements and be associated with positive work related attitudes (Smith and Wedderburn, 1998; Kogi and Martino, 1995; Rapoport et al., 2002). Conversely, lack of consultation with managers about the development of such arrangements can contribute to feelings of unfairness which may undermine implementation. For example, Dex and Schriellb (2001) noted that some of the managers in the larger organisations they studied felt alienated because they were compelled to introduce policies on which they had not been consulted.

### ***Workloads and Intensification***

Experiences of intensification of work – that is fewer people doing more work often using flexible working practices such as working from home, to manage increased workloads is widely reported in UK organisations as elsewhere (Lewis and Smithson 2006; Birchall et al., 2002). Flexible working arrangements can be an effective way of helping employees to manage intensified workloads but can also blur boundaries between work and family and create difficulties for workers and their families.

In some cases intensification of work results from the ways in which regulation is implemented. A case in point is that of junior doctors in

hospitals. Recently doctors' hours have been reduced to 48 per week (junior doctors have long worked very excessive hours) to conform to the European Working Time Directive. They are no longer allowed to work overtime. However, in many hospitals doctor's hours have been cut but there is no reduction in patient numbers and no additional medical staffs are employed. Thus doctors are working shorter but more intensive hours with the same workload, while receiving less pay (Lewis et al 2008 Quality report). This is mirrored in many other workplaces.

### *Gendered assumptions*

Intensification of work can exacerbate greedy organisations (Coser, 1972) and gender inequity as it is increasingly difficult for parents to sustain two full time and intense jobs and it is often women who cut down on paid work or fail to seek advancement. Effective policies would be gender neutral-applying to men and women. However, although policies must, by law apply equally to men and women, policies often tend to focus implicitly, if not explicitly, on women. This makes it difficult for men to take up entitlements and tends to result in the marginalisation of women who do take up work-life initiatives. Changes are made around the margins for women, but prevailing working practices and underlying gendered assumptions remain intact, particularly the belief that ideal workers are those who work full time and without breaks for family care (Lewis, 1997; 2001). Gendered stereotypes prevail. For example, men are much more likely than women to have requests to work flexibly or part time refused (Hooker, Neathey, Casebourne and Munro (2007).

### *Organisational norms and cultural values*

For workplace policies to be effective they need to be taken up by workers, but often take-up of formal policies is low, due to cultural barriers

and to gendered assumptions as discussed above. There is much evidence that policies alone while bringing about some change for women at the margins rarely affecting mainstreams structures, culture and practices (Lewis, 1997). Organisational culture or climate is a crucial variable contributing to the outcomes of flexible working policies, especially when these are formulated as "family friendly" rather than productivity measures (Lewis, 1997; 2001; Lewis et al., 2002; Fried, 1998).

Many British workplaces are characterised by a long hour's culture, which co-exists with and undermines a range of flexible working policies (Lewis, 1997; Cousins, 2004). Long hours at work are expected and valued for their own sake regardless of actual performance- what has been termed presenteeism. In the context of assumptions about "ideal" full time workers and undervaluing of part-time or flexible workers, take up of policies can be career limiting. There are some examples of part-timer workers being promoted to senior positions- but this remains limited.

Assumptions about long hours and ideal workers are counterproductive, since longer hours at work do not necessarily enhance productivity and can even encourage inefficiency (Lewis and Cooper, 2005). Assumptions about certain work roles - such as what makes a good manager- also undermine work and family initiatives are also counterproductive. An example of this is an organization which we call Peak Insurance, which had recently undergone several mergers and acquisitions, was trying to get beyond policy towards culture change that was based on trust and flexibility in order to provide a new corporate identity and enhance performance (Lewis and Smithson, in press). The drive for culture change was successful in many ways, challenging several assumptions about the organization of work. However, one counter-productive assumption remained unchallenged. This was the belief that although reduced hours of work was possible for most employees,

managers needed to work full time to be available to staff at all times. Rather than looking for new ways to transform working practices so that the company and the managers could both benefit it was decided that managers who wished to work less could work part time and retain their managerial pay, but could not continue in their managerial role. These managers were moved to less responsible roles. They became demotivated and invariably left the organization within a fairly short time (Lewis & Smithson, 2006).

Thus policies alone, without attention to fundamental workplace systems, assumptions and practices, do not bring about systemic change. Assumptions such as those about ideal (full-time) workers, the need for long working hours, the devaluing of part-time or flexible workers and that employees working in non-standard ways cannot be trusted, undermine the potential effectiveness of policies. More fundamental structural and cultural changes are necessary if organizations and employees are to derive the full benefits from the work-life initiatives through a dual agenda approach.

### *Manager support and discretion*

There is much evidence supervisory support is a critical aspect of organisational climate which is essential for policies to be effective in practice (Hopkins, 2005), but it is not always forthcoming and many employees feel that taking up opportunities for flexible working will be career limiting (Lewis et al., 2002).

Legislation, under the government's light touch, enshrines the principle of employer discretion to be able to refuse request of flexibility on business grounds. This principle tends to apply in relation to both statutory and voluntary policies, with managers permitted discretion to decide on operational grounds who can be allowed to work flexibly. While this element of discretion is arguably important to be able for engaging employers and managers, it is also difficult to monitor. It also absolves line managers from

having to work out innovative practices to make flexibility work (Lewis and Cooper, 2005). Some managers, for example, do not fully understand or accept the business case, while others are keen to learn new ways of doing things. This leads to inconsistency among managers in the same organisation. and feelings of inequity when some managers are more supportive than others. Those employees who are not supported by their managers then feel unfairly treated and resentful. This can lower morale and be linked with turnover intentions, undermining the purpose of work-life policies (Lewis & Smithson, 2006)

### ***Adjustment of manager expectations***

Managers can also influence the effectiveness of flexible working policies by their day to day management and expectations of flexible workers... There is some evidence from both qualitative and quantitative research suggesting that employees working shorter hours may be as, or often more efficient or productive than full timers (Lewis, 1997; 2001; Stanworth, 1999). Yet studies of part time and reduced hours workers suggest they often pose particular problems for managers, particularly in contexts where those working non standard hours are in a minority, the result of reactive decision making rather than part of a well thought out strategy, and in the context of a norm of long working hours (Edwards and Robinson, 2001; Lewis, 2001; Lewis et al, 2002). Managers do not always adjust their expectations when employees move from full time to part time work so part timers may have inappropriately high workloads (Lewis, Brannen and Nilsen (forthcoming). Alternatively managers often assume that part timers are not committed or serious workers and under use them (Edwards and Robinson, 2001; Lewis, 2001). For example a study of part time police officers revealed that they were often overlooked for training and promotion (Edwards and Robinson, 2001), while part timers in a survey of Chartered accountants reported that they typically worked proportionately as many hours over their contracts as

full timers but were still regarded as not committed and many felt that they were given less challenging assignments(Lewis et al., 2002).

### ***Good employment practices***

Recent research suggests that job conditions and resources such as autonomy, opportunities for creativity, and good interpersonal relationships at work are predictive of workers' self reported quality of working life and quality of life more generally than formal flexible working opportunities (Lewis, Brookes, Marks and Etherington, 2008). This suggests that in some circumstances at least, there are disadvantages to workers of making use of formal flexitime policies, if they do not provide real autonomy and choice about how and when work is carried out. Thus it is good quality employment practices, rather than specific work-life balance policies that best empower workers to make an optimum contribution at work and in the family.

## **5. Moving beyond policies to practice and challenging gendered assumptions and organisations**

Research in the UK(Lewis, 1997; 2001 Bond et al., 2002) and elsewhere(Rapoport et al., 2002) shows that while policies are necessary to help people manage work and family. The Work-Life Balance Challenge Fund, discussed previously, that provides government support for change agents in workplaces, had the potential to move employers beyond policy to practice and ideally to bring about systemic change in practices, structures and culture However, although an innovative approach, funding tended to be short term. Systemic change takes time, requiring long term change initiatives. Evaluation of the fund showed that key success factors in implementation of changes included a participative approach involving all employees and the need for senior management support for the aims and

implementation of change projects (Nelson et al., 2004). These factors also emerge as highly significant in a stream of research that has begun to examine and experiment with processes for moving beyond policy to practice. Building on the action research process of Rhona Rapoport, Lotte Bailyn and their colleagues (Rapoport et al, 2002; Lewis and Cooper, 2005) this approach focuses on the need for systemic and sustainable changes. Part of this process is making visible and challenging gendered assumptions that underpin current ways of working, for example assumptions that ideal workers are available for long working hours and do not need breaks for childcare, which can underpin inefficient ways of working.

Consider the two workplaces described below. The first focuses on policies without changes in culture or practices, the second focuses on wider and more comprehensive changes.

#### *Case study: Proffirm<sup>6)</sup>*

Proffirm is a Chartered Accountants practice, part of a large international organization (see Lewis & Cooper, 2005). Their Human Resources Department developed a wide range of work-life balance policies to try to improve retention rates because there was high turnover, especially among younger staff. However, the new policy provisions were used mainly by women with young children, who largely accepted that reducing their working hours would be career limiting in the context of a profession-wide norm of long working hours. Policies providing options for flexible and reduced hours were implemented within a culture of strongly held assumptions that ideal workers or "good professionals" should be able and willing to work long and inflexible hours and not allow family or other obligations to interfere with work. One consequence was a culture of "presenteeism," or face time: people

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6) All names of companies are pseudonyms

stayed long hours in the office just to be seen. Many of those who were working flexibly or reduced hours felt that they were working more efficiently than others who were working full time. As one 23-year-old male trainee observed:

*If you work shorter hours, at least you work efficiently...or you can string it out and work eight to seven, inefficiently, but it's the work that needs to be done rather than the hours that's important.*

The benefits offered by the work-family policies were obscured - as was the inefficiency associated with a culture of long hours - by the entrenched assumption that long hours were necessary to be productive. Initially there was no attempt to challenge these assumptions and practices because it was felt to be too time consuming. The firm wanted a quick fix. Women continued to leave the firm, as did many younger male recruits who were not prepared to spend all their time working. Later the management began to question assumption that was undermining their work-family problems. These included assumptions about time and about the role of the clients which held led to practices that were harmful to both employees and the clients whom they served (Lewis and Cooper, 2005). Once these assumptions were made visible and changed it was possible to identify new, more efficient ways of working that benefitted all.

### *Case study: Printco*

Printco is a small printing business (see Lewis & Cooper, 2005). A new Managing Director (MD) joined the company at a time when it had 10 years of losses behind it. He recognised that change was essential for the company to survive. At this time the culture was one in which all decisions were made from the top, allowing no collaboration from the workers themselves. Not only did this practice fail to build on the expertise of those who did the

work, but it also meant that no strategic decisions were taken, as top management was too busy making day-to-day decisions that could have been delegated to others. There was also a strong culture of one-person, one job, which undermined flexibility and was particularly damaging given the high rate of absenteeism and turnover.

The MD first found ways of involving and collaborating with the workforce that included holding briefing sessions on the state of the business and the need for change. He also talked to staff about their jobs and about their lives generally, bringing in personal as well as job-related matters. He asked about working practices, teasing out taken-for-granted assumptions about why work was carried out in the ways it was.

The starting point for enhancing performance and, as it turned out, work-personal life balance or integration, was the introduction of multi-skilling. Workers were encouraged to learn multiple skills so that colleagues could cover for each other on a reciprocal basis if they took time off for any reason. Workers collaborated in finding flexible solutions that they perceived as fair and that also sustained production. When multi-skilling was first introduced, some of the workers were hesitant to accept it but agreed on the basis that they would enjoy flexibility of working hours in return. Thus there was a potential for two-way flexibility that benefited the workers and the business. From this starting point the firm developed numerous working patterns, and now nearly any arrangement is accommodated: compressed working week, part-time, during the school term only, variable part-time, home working and extended lunch break. The key point here is that formal flexibility policies were introduced *after* changes in practice and culture and not in an attempt to bring about such changes. New employees are encouraged to discuss their flexibility needs at their job interviews, and existing employees who want to change their hours are encouraged to propose solutions. The onus is on the employee to discuss issues and needs with their work mates, and then show them how proposed

changes in working arrangements will work to the benefit of everyone.

Because flexibility is regarded at Proffirm as a strategic opportunity for engaging employees and enhancing the business, there are no judgements about the validity of the reasons for wishing to work flexibly. These reasons are not limited to family issues, nor is it primarily women who want to work differently. By being open to these other working arrangements rather than sticking to rigid assumptions about good workers, the firm capitalizes on employees' creative thinking. Similarly, there are no jobs that are excluded from the possibility of alternative working arrangements. Even jobs that are assumed to be necessarily full time can be adapted in this context.

There are many benefits of this approach for the business as well as for employees' personal lives. Flexibility has become widespread, including multi-skilling across traditional job boundaries. Employee engagement with business aims; mutual flexibility and collaboration have been encouraged by the establishment of self-managed teams, which has enabled the firm to capitalize on opportunities for expansion. The business, which was in financial problem, is now thriving and hugely profitable.

The two examples outlined above illustrate that policies may be necessary, but they are not sufficient for systemic change. They also show that win-win solutions benefiting both businesses and employees are possible.

### *Organisations are not gender neutral*

The above examples also show that sustainable systemic change requires a focus on process and practice. This process includes a focus on what has been termed a dual agenda for change (Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher & Pruitt, 2002). That is, it is possible to design interventions that enhance both organizational effectiveness and employees' ability to integrate their work and personal life in satisfying and gender equitable ways. This is because working practices that undermine work-personal life integration also undermine work

effectiveness(Rapoport et al., 2002; Lewis & Cooper, 2005). Systemic win-win change always involves going beyond the development of policy to actual practice. Fundamentally it involves recognition that organisations are not gender neutral(Acker, 1971). It also involves collaboration. Work-life initiatives developed collaboratively are likely to be more effective than those implemented top down or by Human Resources alone. Employees at all levels who are involved in the process will be more committed to the outcomes. The process also involves examining the way that work is done, the gendered assumptions on which this is based and the implications for the dual agenda. It is often assumed that workers' personal lives are not relevant to or threaten workplace effectiveness. In Printco, the process of asking people about their personal as well as organizational issues was important for legitimising a discussion of work-life issues, thus setting the scene for dual agenda solutions. Employees were encouraged to talk about their personal needs, such as the need for more family time or the desire just to have a lie -in on Monday mornings, and then to collaborate on developing the flexibility to make that possible. Challenging entrenched and gendered organizational norms and assumptions about ideal workers and ideal ways of doing work can highlight the ways in which they undermine workplace effectiveness and work-life integration(Rapoport et al., 2002; Bailyn, 2006). For example, an unquestioned assumption at Proffirm was that staff must not ask clients to get information in on time even though late information meant that staff had to work excessive hours to meet deadlines. This subsequent crisis mode of working was not good for the organization and was very difficult for staff with family responsibilities. Challenging this assumption paved the way for innovative practices in working with clients. Once these assumptions have been addressed it is possible to collaborate to develop innovations that will benefit the organization and its employees. Solutions are context specific. At Printco innovations included multi-skilling, developing mutual flexibility with associated rights and responsibilities, and self-managing teams. At Proffirm,

once the assumptions about relationships with clients had been challenged, it was possible to think of ways of involving clients in planning so that crises were avoided rather, than expecting staff to work excessive hours. The clients, the staff and the firm all benefited from this solution.

## 6. Conclusions

There has been considerable progress in the development of work-family policies in Britain in the past two decades. However, policy still tends to assume that mothers are the main carers for children and although attention is paid to the needs of fathers, they continue to be conceptualised as secondary carers. This has unintended consequences that backfire on women. The government's two pronged approach of building a statutory minimum framework of rights in relation to "work-life balance" while encouraging employers to go further as a way of enhancing productivity and competitiveness. Has resulted in the growing development of voluntary workplace policies beyond the statutory minimal. There is some evidence that both statutory and voluntary policies are making it easier to manage work and family in many cases. Nevertheless the successful implementation of these policies involves attention to organisational culture, norms and practices. The next stage is to build on and move beyond necessary but not sufficient policies, to workplace interventions that address and challenge more fundamental processes in gendered organisations, to bring about more fundamental, systemic changes.

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# II

## *Work–Family Balance Policies in France: Principles, Contents and Outcomes*

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## 1. Introduction

The work-family issue has been a key concern for public policies in France over the last three decades, especially for family policy and working time policy as well. Like in other advanced industrial or post industrial countries, the issue is connected with significant change in family structures, in work's transformation and in cultural values, especially with regard to gender roles. The increase in mothers' participation into the labour force, the increase of lone parent families and the decline of the family male breadwinner model have raised new issues for social/family policies. The challenge for parents is no more working or mothering but instead working and parenting, since mothers are expected to participate into the labour force and fathers are expected to share parental responsibilities, therefore changing the traditional family model into an "adult worker model" sharing more or less equally work and care responsibilities.

The work family balance issue was already on the political agenda in the sixties onwards in France strongly supported by a feminist lobby working in public institutions through a working women committee (*Comité du Travail Féminin*), but the issue really emerged on the political agenda around the 1980. The most noteworthy aspects of the work-family balance issue in France would seem to lie in the co-existence of apparently contradictory policy measures, supporting mothers both as workers and carers as an implementation of the principle of "liberty of choice" for mothers to work or to care. This principle was strongly asserted in political discourse during the eighties and nineties and is still in the discourse of the present government despite the requirements of the European community with regard of the necessity to raise women's employment rates. It is therefore not surprising that in much of the literature on this topic France continues to defy any straightforward classification in models of contemporary gendered welfare regimes (Fouquet *et al.*, 1999). The country has long been characterised by a

tradition of relatively high, full time employment rates for women (notably for mothers) and by a relatively stable birth rate (Le Feuvre and Lemarchand, 2007). This relative performance for women has often been explained by the support provided by the state to working parents, notably through generous family allowances, tax relief on families with children and an extensive provision of childcare and early education for children less than six years of age (Hantrais and Letablier, 1996). By comparison with other European continental countries, *i.e.* Germany for instance, three key points may explain the French specificity with regard to work-family balance issue: the role of the State in regulating family affairs (families as a public concern); the importance of demographic issues underlying family policies; and the concern with children's early education and well-being. These three points are linked to the Republican ideology fostering equal opportunities for children, women's emancipation through paid employment, and state regulations. However, there was no consensus on the role of women since the "family lobby" is very powerful and influential in France, claiming for more "maternalist" policy measures allowing mothers to care for their children. Because this lobby was not counterbalanced by a powerful feminist lobby, work-life balance policies have continuously balanced between the two orientations.

This paper begins by a presentation of the historical background of work-family balance policy in France in order to provide an understanding of the policy logic behind French attitude. A rapid synthesis of some of the major policy measures that have contributed to the construction of the work-family balance debate will be provided. Then, the policy instruments of work-family balance provision are examined, with a particular emphasis of recent reforms. Finally, the policy outcomes will be scrutinized with regard to who cares for children, who pays and what implications for mothers' labour force participation, satisfaction and well-being.

## 2. Work-Family Balance Policies in Historical perspective

France is not only a country with a long history of state regulation of the family-employment interface; it is also a country where state intervention in family life and welfare receives a high recognition and legitimacy (Buttner *et al.*, 2002; Hantrais, 2004). In a survey carried out in 2000 on attitudes towards state intervention into family affairs, 58% of the respondents thought that the existing level of state welfare intervention should be further increased and only 18% agreed that it should be reduced (Forsé and Parodi, 2001). Despite variations in opinions according to age, sex, social class and geographical location, the state is seen as a legitimate social actor in the work-family balance debate in France. However, there is no consensus about the precise role the state should play in regulating the work and care interface, precisely as far as women's role is concerned.

### *From support to the traditional male-breadwinner family model ...*

Work-family balance policies have emerged on the political agenda in the 1960 onwards, when mother's employment rates began to increase again, as a result of an increase in educational level, a claim for emancipation and more economic security, and labour shortages on the labour market. However, policy measures have been really developed in the 1980 and the 1990. From the post war period up until the end of the 1960s, France was characterised by a strong incentive for women to leave the labour market after marriage or after the birth of their first child, with a "single wage subsidy" reflecting the desire of the French State to encourage married women to leave the labour market, supported both by the catholic church and reformist employers associations. The level of the subsidy made the labour market retreat an economically viable option for mothers of at least two children in most social categories, at least until the early 1960s when female activity rates started to increase again (Martin, 1998). The progressive decrease of the relative value

of the housewife subsidy and the recognition of the potentially important economic role of women in an expanding economy, all together with aspirations of women for more economic security, have contributed to weakening the male breadwinner/female carer model and to reformulate the French gender contract.

### *... To support to work-family balance*

In a context of changing family forms, raising women's' labour force participation and increasing demand for state support to working parents, two major changes characterised family policy : a social turn in response to the development of new social risks, notably the risks due to divorce and separations, and a new work-life balance orientation. Family policy that is an autonomous branch of the social security system in France no more could only be a support aimed at reducing childcare costs of children. Progressively, family policy integrated the need for support to working parents, therefore diversifying the forms of support(Letablier, 2003).

In the late 1970s and the 1980s, several measures were adopted in support to women's labour force participation during their child-rearing years.

- The early 1980s saw the widespread adoption of the so called "*contracts enfance*"(childcare contracts) between the local Family Policy Funds(CAF) and the municipalities in order to increase the number of collective childcare facilities. Part of the investment in childcare structure is funded by the family policy through a specific subsidy to municipalities.

One of the most important measures with respect to work-family balance was the support to early education for young children from three to six, on a full time base. This was indeed a major measure with regard to women's enrolment in full time employment. The "*écoles maternelles*" had been created in 1881 one century earlier but had not been wide spread all over the territory. A strong impetus has been given to their development in the 1980s

resulting in a full coverage of the needs at the end of the 1990s.

Since publicly funded collective childcare structures did not developed fast enough to cover the needs, new allowances were introduced to support mothers' employment through private and individual childcare solutions. A home based childcare allowance(AGED) was introduced in 1986 for parents employing a nanny at home, and the childminder's allowance(AFEAMA) was introduced in 1990 to support parents who employ a childminder to care for their children.

The introduction in 1985 of a "home care allowance"(APE) for parents with three or more children was interpreted as a major watershed in the work-family debate in France(Le Feuvre and Lemarchand, *op.cit.*: 3). Although the aim was primarily to support work family balance and reduce poverty among large families, the measure was interpreted and contested by the feminists and the trade unions as a tool designed to encourage mothers to leave the labour market therefore limiting their income security. In fact, the APE was not linked to the parental leave which had been introduced in the Labour Code in 1978 without any payment. With a monthly allowance equivalent to half of the minimum wage, the APE was only paid to women with a long and continuous experience in the labour market before the birth of their third child(originally two years in employment during the 30 months preceding the APE application, reduced to two years during the past ten years in 1986). In fact, given the eligibility conditions at this period of time, the incentive to leave the labour market was very limited. Things changed after the 1994 reform which relaxed the conditions of eligibility. Nevertheless this measure had a strong symbolic meaning.

- The early 1980s also saw the first policy measures in favour of the development of part-time work in France. Several laws(1980, 1981 and 1982) lifted the restrictions on the recruitment of part-time employees since part-time employment was seen as an exception to the norm of full time

employment. However, part-time work was not seen primarily as a work-family balance measure but rather as a work sharing measure in a context of high and rising unemployment. It was not until the law of 31<sup>st</sup> December 1992 that the French government adopted a direct incentive for part-time work, via a 30% reduction on employers social security contributions (increased to 50% in 1993, then down to 30% in 1994) for each permanent part-time employee (between 19 and 30 hours/week). The incentive was abandoned in 2000 under the measures of legal reduction of working time (The Aubry Laws). It is nevertheless clear that the incentives to part-time work modified what was previously seen as the “French exception” with regard to the women’s employment patterns (Maruani, 2000).

In addition to these work-family balance measures, most of them being implemented by the family policy, various measures were adopted throughout the late 1980s and 1990s to promote employment in the household service sector. Tax relief and reductions in employers social security contributions made these measures incentive for parents to rely on a childminder or a home helper to care for their children. These measures were adopted with the explicit objective of increasing women’s economic activity rates, combating unemployment and promoting a better work-family balance (Le Feuvre *and al.*, 1999). In practice, they have contributed to produce flexible and low paid jobs for low qualified women, without addressing the issue of men’s participation in parenting.

### *Principles underlying work-family balance policy*

The cognitive frame informing family policy in France includes three elements: the autonomy of the family policy among other social policies; the historical foundations that influence the path for reforms; and the protective role of the state (Commaille *and al.*, 2002).

First of all, France differs from other EU member states by its explicit

interventionist family policy. Family policy was defined as an autonomous branch of the social security system aimed at supporting families, protecting the family values and improving family life. However, the perimeter of the family policy has broadened progressively as far as the social dimension of the family policy has developed including now housing, employment and social inclusion issues.

Secondly, the historical foundations of the family policy rely on two major pillars, each being supported by a lobby; the pro-fertility lobby and the “familist lobby”. “Familism” was linked to Christian philosophy, therefore denoting attachment to defend the family as a value, whereas “natalism” was more focussed on the promotion of large families as a challenge for the future of the French “Nation”. But over the last three decades, family policy was snared in a tension between familist/maternalist ideology and the emancipation project of feminism, the latter being supported by economic arguments in favour of a high female employment rate. This tension tackles traditional gender roles in the society and within households.

The third element of the cognitive frame of the French Family is the protective role of the state, especially in relation to women’s maternity rights in the workplace since employers were reluctant to recognize mothers’ caring rights unless they are forced by law or collective agreements to come up with maternal implications.

The debate around work-family balance issues echoes to these three elements, thus explaining the weak role of enterprises with regard to this issue, the low concern of fathers who are not very keen in sharing parental responsibilities since policies have mainly focussed on mothers, and the gap between low and high educated mothers with respect to employment patterns and caring roles. Although women display relatively high labour force participation rates, they continue to assume most of the parenting burden since the conceptualisation of the gender division of labour remains strong in the French culture. Yet, gender equality at work has been a major issue for

employment and work policies but while supporting the specific role of women as mothers. The assumption, always repeated by the successive governments, that work-family balance policy relies on the principle of “liberty of choice “ for parents to working or caring is emblematic of this policy orientation.

Another specificity of the French family policy is in the role of the “Family Union” that is an intermediate corps between the state and the families. Most of families in France are member of family “associations”(NGOs) forming a ‘National Family Union” that is at the centre of the families’ social citizenship. This form of unified representation of families and family claims was validated in 1945 into the social security laws as the official partner of the family policy. The Union(UNAF) is a masterpiece of the family policy corporatist frame, regularly consulted by the government. Since there is no counter power from the feminist side, the liberty of choice assumption behind work-family balance orientation has been strongly influenced by the familist ideology.

The work and family balance policy is however still influenced by old republican ideas about children, their education and social inclusion. Long before Esping-Andersen formulated the idea for the European Union on the necessity for welfare states to invest in children in order to insure for the future of the Western societies(Esping- Andersen, 2002), the issue was raised and formulated in France under the third Republic, then encouraging the state to develop education and early socialisation for children at a sustainable cost for parents since state support should also contribute to social equity between social groups.

Although we have been mostly focused on the family side of the work-family balance policy, it should not be forgotten that at least two other policy areas are involved into this issue:

- The employment policy that was enrolled into work-family balance

issues in the 1980s, namely through the “*emplois de proximité*” policy aimed at developing jobs in caring activities or in social services. Childminders were one of the major targets of this policy.

- The working time policy that was mainly aimed at sharing work but also with work-life balance objectives. This policy ended in 2002 with the come back of the right in power and its new program “Work more to earn more!” aimed at encouraging employees to work overtime and longer hours at the detriment of their work and family life.

### 3. Recent developments in Work-family balance policy

After the reform of the home care allowance(APE) in 1994 which extended the eligibility conditions to parents of a second child and at the same time reduced the previous employment experience requirements, the number of applicants increased rapidly. The measure became successful, especially among low educated and low qualified mothers who used the measure to escape from hard and uncomfortable working conditions. Since periods of unemployment could be included into the two years prerequisite rule, the proportion of unemployed women increased among recipients: no less than one third of the recipients were unemployed prior to the birth of the second child. The reform also enabled parents to claim for a part-time allowance with a partial compensation for the reduction of the working hours. Only 20% of the APE recipients however opted for the part-time option. The impact of the reform on mothers’ labour force participation was a controversial issue(Afsa, 1996; Bonnet and Labbé, 1999). However, the take up rate for this allowance varies according to the education level of mothers, being lower for high educated mothers who continue to work while rearing children.

The reform was also accompanied by change in the parental leave entitlement. From 1994 onwards, small and medium size firms were required to provide up to three years unpaid parental leave to their employees, whilst granting their reinstatement. In fact, the parental leave remain a social right linked to employment whereas the home care allowance was a family policy measure, however not always clear in its objectives. The complexities of the support benefit system lead the French government to reform the childcare benefit package in 2004.

*Innovating in the making of the family policy over the last decade*

An innovation in the making of the family policy was introduced in the mid 1990s with the “Family policy conferences”. These conferences have been organized every year from 1996 to 2006 with the aim of making a global and ambitious family policy together with social, economic and political actors. Each year the conference focused on a specific issue prepared by groups of experts. An overview of the conferences’ topics indicates that the work-family balance question has been on the fore of the debates and orientations over this period.

In 1997, work-family balance was declared a policy priority with two major objectives: extending and improving childcare provisions, and providing parents with more time and more flexible arrangements for caring. The 1998 conference drew on four major reports, especially prepared for the special issue on family change and family policy. The outcomes were on one hand recognition of the diversity of family forms and on the other hand the adoption of a life course perspective with regard to work and care. The Théry’s report underlined the fact that work-family balance policy had been excessively and exclusively focused on women (Théry, 1998). Although the conference in 2000 focused on joint parental responsibility, the conference in 2001 introduced a new paid paternity leave and the 2004 conference lead to

the restructuring of the childcare policy, with the creation of the childcare benefit package(PAJE).

In 2005, the new policy measures announced at the Family conference had been prepared by three groups of experts researching and consulting on demography and maternal employment after childbirth. The fertility issue was back on the political agenda although the fertility rate was the highest among EU member states together with the Irish rate(1.9 children per woman). In one of the working groups chaired by the president of the Family Union - UNAF- the patterns of the parental leave and the parental care allowance were discussed in a new way(Brin, 2005). The report suggested that the parental leave should be shortened and better paid *“since most women wish to pursue careers on equal terms with men, the key to fertility is to be found in allowing women to fulfil this desire”*(Brin, 2005:7). The proposals explicitly refer to the European context and recommendations: raising women’s employment rates, extending childcare provisions, and promoting gender equality in working and parenting. The government took up the proposal of a shorter parental leave but only for parents of a first child who were not eligible before the reform, and with low compensation. Trade unions denounced the government’s failure to undertake more radical change on a highly contested issue. Other proposals concerned an extension of various leaves for family reasons: emergency leave for parents with disabled or very sick children; extension of transport reductions for large families; extending collective childcare facilities, etc. A new working group was set to examine further possibilities for reforming the parental leave. The more noticeable point in the government discourse was about the importance of “liberty of choice” for parents, related to fertility decisions, working or caring decisions, that was interpreted by some authors as a “liberal turn” in the family policy. However, the government has integrated the idea that *“young mothers in the twenty first century want to fulfil themselves in employment and secure their financial independence”*(discourse of D. de Villepin, Prime

Minister at the “*Conference de la famille*”, 2005). Indeed the government position is influenced by the Family Union, a powerful and partner of the family policy.

A new report was delivered to the government in 2007(Pécresse, 2007) on work-family balance policy that re-examined the recommendations contained in the former about parental leave, suggesting to leave the Parental leave unchanged and rather to improve childcare provisions that was viewed as a most incentive measure to mothers’ returning to work quickly. The report suggested implementing a social right for children(at least for children aged from 2 to 3) to a childcare service. The measure is still under discussion. The report also recommended to facilitate mothers’ come back to work after maternity/parental leave by various measures that have been included into a 2006 law on social inclusion. However, the major measure taken up by the government was the implementation of a new childcare development scheme. Since then the Family conferences seem to have being stopped by the new government arrived in power in 2007.

### *The reform of the childcare benefit package(PAJE)*

The diversification of family forms and the complexity of the childcare provisions system aimed at supporting work and family balance has resulted in a restructuring of the childcare benefit package. The new childcare benefit package(*Prestation d’accueil du jeune enfant-PAJE*) replaces five previous allowances, including now four allowances that give parents the choice of working or caring on one hand and the choice of the childcare option on the other hand. The PAJE includes a new born allowance (mean tested), a basic childcare allowance(mean tested) aimed at compensating costs of rearing children that may be complemented either by a home care allowance for the parent who takes up a career break totally or partially to care for his/her child until he/she is three years of age, or by a childcare allowance aimed at

compensating part of childcare costs by a childminder or a nanny.

The new born allowance amounted 863.79€ at the 1st of January 2008, for parents under the income ceiling. The childcare basic allowance is paid to parents of a child below three and below an income ceiling, amounting 172.77€ per child and per month from birth to the age of three in 2008. Parents of a child under three who interrupt totally or partially their career to care for their child are entitled for a home care allowance “*Complément libre choix d’activité*”-CLCA) if they have been previously into the labour force for at least two years(employed or unemployed). The amount of this allowance is: 368.27€ for parent’s recipients of the childcare basic allowance (low income households) and 536.03€ for parents who are not eligible for the basic allowance. Only parents who care themselves for their children are entitled to this home care allowance in fact replacing the previous APE. Parents working and caring part-time are entitled for a partial allowance depending on the number of hours dedicated to work, along with two options, short part-time(less than a half full time) and long part-time(between 50% and 80% of the conventional working time in the firm). The amount of the home care allowance in 2008 is given in table 1 below.

Table 1. Amount of the home care allowance, France, 2008

	Short part-time work /long part-time care	Long part-time work /short part-time care
PAJE basic allowance recipients	234.83 €	135.46 €
Parents not eligible for the PAJE basic allowance	407.60 €	308.28 €

Source: Cnaf, 2008

However, parents with only one child are only eligible for this allowance for the six months following the child birth or the end of the maternity leave, whereas parents with two or more children are eligible for the allowance

until the last child is three.

The childcare allowance (“*Complément libre choix du mode de garde*”-CLCMG) is dedicated to parents with at least one child under six who is cared for by a childminder or a nanny. The aim of the childcare allowance is to compensate part of the childcare expenses, *ie* the wage paid to the childminder or to the nanny. The salary of the childminder should not exceed 43.55 e per day and per child. The amount of the allowance varies according to the level of the household income and to the age of the child whether he/she attend pre-school or not (table 2).

Table 2. Amount of the childcare allowance according to income level of families and age of children, France, 2008

Low income families	for a child < 3: 428.76 € for a child 3 to 6: 214.39 €
Medium income families	for a child < 3: 270.37 € for a child 3 to 6: 135.21 €
High income families	for a child < 3: 162.20 € for a child 3 to 6: 81.10 €

Source: Cnaf, 2008

In addition to this allowance, the state through the family fund pays for the employers’ social security contributions totally for the childminders and partially for the nannies. Also, parents employing childminders or nannies are entitled for tax deductions, thus reducing notably the costs of childcare. Although the reform has not really reduced the complexity of the childcare benefit system, it has resulting in better conditions of access to childcare by childminders, especially for medium income families. Meanwhile, the childminders employment status and working conditions have been revised in order to increase their qualification and therefore the quality of care, and also to insure them with work protection regulations. The outcome is also an increase in the number of registered childminders and in a reduction of the

waiting lists, particularly in rural areas where collective childcare structures are rare. On the whole, this reform has resulted in a diversification of childcare forms and also in a form a privatisation with public support and regulations(Fagnani and Letablier, 2005).

### *The reduction in working time: an opportunity for work family balance?*

Another set of policy measures to be mentioned in relation to work-family balance are the laws reducing the legal working time for all employees, which were introduced by the socialist government in 2000. Although the first aim was to reduce unemployment by sharing work, the so-called “35 hours” laws were also expected to have a positive impact on work-life balance since one of the claims behind the measure was “Working less to better live!”. With respect to work-family balance issue, the idea was to limit long working hours for men and short working hours for women by reducing working hours for all, therefore leaving more time for men and women to dedicate to family responsibilities. Evaluations of the effects of the 35 hours regulations on the quality of life show a rather high satisfaction with this measure(Estrade *and al.*, 2001). The satisfaction was notably high for women, with the exception of those in unskilled jobs. A specific study of the effects of the “35 hours laws” on work-family balance for parents of young children (under six) indicate that on average 60% of them note an improvement in the combination of work and family life(Fagnani and Letablier, 2004). However, the study also show that some parents experienced more difficulties in synchronising work and family life because of the time schedules imposed by employers in a context of increasing imposed flexibility and unsocial hours of work(Fagnani and Letablier, 2006; Eydoux and Letablier, 2008).

Although childcare arrangements have not been affected by the reduction of working time, it is noteworthy that half of the parents of young children say that they can spend more time with their children, and there is no

significant difference between mothers and fathers. There was a general consensus however on the fact that the reduction in working hours has not deeply modified the dominant pattern of the gender division of household labour.

Nevertheless, the issue is no more on the political agenda. On the contrary, the return of the right into power has progressively removed the measure by encouraging employees to work more in order to earn more money, therefore pushing out of the picture the work-family balance issue. More and more, here are incentives for employees to work overtime although it is well known that it is a highly gendered issue.

### *The introduction of a paternity leave: from mothering to parenting*

Gender equality in sharing parental responsibilities is still a weak point in France. Family policy remained “maternalist” despite the raise in mothers’ labour force participation. Although the parental leave may be taken up either by mothers or fathers, no more than 2% of eligible fathers take it up (Boyer, 2004). Indeed incentives for men to take even part of the parental leave are limited, not to say inexistent. In 2001, the Ministry of Family affairs introduced a paid paternity leave for fathers a new born. The eleven days leave comes in addition to the three days of the birth leave, with the explicit aim of involving fathers in parenting more than they were used to do. This measure was successful as about 65% of eligible fathers take up this leave or at least part of it, and declare a high level of satisfaction with this measure.

However, this attempt to involve fathers into family life has not been followed by other measures. The reform of the childcare support (PAJE) in 2004 did not introduce something like a “father month” into the home care allowance like in some other European countries.

### *The 2006 childcare development scheme*

Following some of the recommendations contained in several reports commissioned by the Ministry of family, the government announced in 2006 a five years childcare program (“*Plan petite enfance*”) aimed at “offering to each child with working parents, or looking for a job, a childcare facility adapted to his/her needs and to the expectations of his/her parents”<sup>7)</sup>. The objective is to improve the work-family balance policy, in response to the requirements of the European commission in terms of women’s employment rates and childcare coverage (Lisbon and Barcelona targets). Taking notice of the insufficient supply of childcare services for working parents, as well as of the preference for services over cash benefits, the program (2006-2011) rely on a set of nine measures including the development of collective structures especially in rural areas, the increase in the number of registered childminders and the incentive to small and medium companies to participate in the development of childcare services.

Since the beginning of the 2000s, efforts had been concentrated on the development of childcare services for children below three, either on collective structures or on childminders whose occupational status has been renovated to make this occupation more attractive. In addition, the reform of the PAJE resulted in a rise of the State financial contribution to childcare, making it less costly for parents. The new program insists on the diversification of the childcare supply by developing various forms of childcare structures (various size and multi functions; various modes of funding and management), and also by developing the quality of care by rising the quality of employment in this sector. Despite the efforts made to encourage companies to invest in childcare services, the number of companies’ childcare services is still low and does not exceed 4% of all childcare structures, most of them being in hospitals (Eydoux *et al.*, 2008).

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7) See : <http://www.travail.gouv.fr/especes/famille/grands-dossiers/plan-petite-enfance/plan>

Unlike Nordic countries, the development of childcare facilities in France is based on the idea that parents should have the liberty of choice of the form of childcare, despite the fact that over the last fifteen years, all the opinion surveys have shown a strong preference for public services (70% of the respondents on average) over other forms of support. The high level of pre-school attendance (almost 100% of children from 3 to 6) confirms the parents' preference for collective public services that guarantee a quality based on pedagogic methods of education and highly qualified staff. In addition, the collective public services are the cheaper childcare for families, especially for low income families. Parents pay a rate nationally fixed and depending on their income and the number of children: the minimum rate is around 0.30 € per hour and the maximum 4€, the rest of the costs being paid by the Family Fund and the municipality. Another objective of the scheme is also to relax the constraints imposed on the creation of a "crèche" in order to stimulate their development (especially rules associated to the control of quality and to the qualification of the staff). The second pillar of the scheme is the increase in the number of registered childminders, a private individual form of childcare that has dramatically increased over the last decades as an alternative to collective public services, however supported and controlled by the state. Their number is expected to increase again.

### *Public spending on work-family balance and Policy instruments*

In comparison to most other European countries, France displays a rather good score with regard to public spending on Work-family balance policies. With 3.7% of the GDP dedicated to family support (including tax breaks and pre-school expenditure) France lies at the third rank among the European Union member states, after Luxembourg and Denmark, for the policy expenditure dedicated to supporting parents of young children, but only 2.5% if tax breaks and pre-school support are not included depending on the data sources being considered (OECD or Eurostat).

### *Policy expenditure on families*

Like Germany and to a less extent the Netherlands and the UK, part of public spending on families is under the form of tax breaks, the rest being in cash and in kind benefits (Graphs 1 and 2 in annex). Public spending on families is almost twice of the average spending in OECD countries.

Public spending in kind (childcare and education services) amounts 1.2% of the GDP, ranking France just after Nordic countries that display the highest rates in Europe (Graph 3 in annex). However, the French score is better for early education (pre-school) than for childcare services (Graph 4 in annex) since a number of parents (*i.e.* mothers) take up the home care allowance and care for their young children.

### *Childcare and early education policy*

Parents with young children (below six) have various individual or collective, public or private childcare possibilities: their child may be cared for in a collective public service or by a registered childminder. The child may also be cared for at home by a home helper paid directly by parents but this practice is limited to high income families, although tax relief on this childcare form are rather advantageous. Children who attend pre-school may be cared for after school hours and during vacations in a leisure centre or a out of school care.

### *Early education is widely developed in France for children aged from three to six*

Early education is a major issue of the work-family balance French policy. Pre-Schools ("écoles maternelles") were created in the nineteenth century onwards but they have rapidly developed since the 1980s, now covering the whole territory. In 1946, 27% of children from 2 to 5 attended pre-school, now almost all children from 3 to 6 attend pre-school, generally full time.

And around 25 % of children aged 2 to 3 years also attend pre-school, but the schooling children at the age of two remain a controversial issue among experts and policy actors. Pre-school is free of charge for parents who only have to pay for lunch and/or for extra school hours childcare. Out of school childcare and activities are provided by municipalities, but not by all municipalities. School begins at 8:30 and finishes at 4:30 PM on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursday, Friday and Saturday morning. Classes are organised according to the age of children (young, medium and the older), thus providing adequate care and education to each level. There are about 20 children by class with a teacher and one or two assistant. Pedagogic methods are implemented, the educational norms being strong (Plaisance, 1999). There is a high consensus on early socialisation of children in France and the level of satisfaction of parents with pre-school is high, both with regard to costs and quality. This assumption is attested by the demand from parents of children aged of 2 to attend pre-school. In 2002, 37% of children aged 2 to 3 attended pre-school (most of them part-time) against 97% of children aged 3 to 6 (of whom 70% full time). However, the raise in fertility has reduced to 25% in 2005 the proportion of children aged of 2 in pre-school. The very early enrolment in pre-schools depends on the supply of places resulting in broad disparities across regions. The enrolment rate is generally higher in rural areas than in large cities. Half of children from 2 to 6 take up lunch at school place where a hot meal is provided (Blanpain, 2006). Costs of the meal are supported both by parents according to their income level and by municipalities' social policy. After school (school day ends at 4:30 PM) two on three children are cared for by one of their parents (but one on two when parents both work full time), others are cared for by childminders or in collective childcare at the school place (until 6:30 and mainly in large cities).

### *Children below three who are not in pre-schools*

#### *Collective childcare services*

The number of children in collective childcare services has constantly increased over the last two decades, however less rapidly than the individual childcare. Collective childcare services include regular – permanent services and occasional services, that are less and less separated but reorganised in the same place thus providing diverse forms of childcare better adapted to the parent's needs (“multi-accueil services”) taking account of change in working schedules.

The “crèches” are dedicated to permanent childcare for children from 4 months (age at the end of the maternity leave) to the age of 3. They develop an approach of the child based on pedagogic methods of education and development, similar than in pre-schools. They include “crèches de quartier” (in the district), “crèches de personnel” (at the work-place) and “crèches parentales” (managed by parents). The municipal “crèches” are generally managed by municipalities, sometimes also by associations or ONG, whereas other crèches are managed either by employers or employee representative or by parents. In 2006, there were 1900 municipal crèches, 210 companies' crèches and 190 parental crèches. In addition, 2500 “halte – garderies” (occasional childcare) receive children for few hours during the day, especially for parents working part-time or with irregular working hours. They are managed either by municipalities or by ONG.

As already mentioned, the present French government tries to encourage companies' investment in childcare services for their employees, thus contributing to develop childcare services at the work place. Since, 2004, partnerships are encouraged between the local family institutions and companies within “childcare companies contracts”. Companies may receive subsidies from the family policy fund for investing in childcare services. They also benefit from tax deductions. Around 40 partnership contracts have

been signed, thus contributing to the development of childcare services for working parents.

***Over the last two decades, individual or family childcare raised more quickly than collective childcare***

The raise in the use of individual(childminders) or family(one parent) childcare since the 1980s onwards is mostly due to the increase in state support to these forms of care and their restructuring through the PAJE. Whereas in 2005, 257,000 children were cared for in a collective childcare service, 700,000 parents were recipients of the Paje childcare allowance and 600,000 of the home care allowance(Office national de la petite enfance, 2006).

Nearly half of families recipient of childcare benefits use it for caring totally or part-time for their children, being recipient of the home care allowance while 40% are recipient of the childcare allowance since they rely on a childminder or a nanny at home to care for their children during working hours, and about 12% are recipient of several allowances because they have more than one child to be cared for.

***Profiles of childcare benefits recipients:***

***Recipients of the home care allowance(parental care allowance)?***

According to a survey on PAJE recipients commissioned in 2005 by the ministry of social affairs and the National Family Fund, 97% of the recipients are women. Mothers taking up the full time home care allowance(the CLCA) are on average younger than other mothers, lower educated and lower paid. More than one on two was executive or in low qualified clerk jobs before child birth whereas recipients on part-time caring /working are in higher qualified occupational positions. Recipients with only one child are higher educated and live in rather high income families, using this facility to

prolong the maternity leave which is 16 weeks in France. By contrast, half of recipients of the home care allowance who have at least two children belong to lower income households.

### ***Recipients of the childcare allowance?***

Recipients of the childcare allowance(CMG) aimed at compensating the costs of a childminder or a nanny at home on average live in higher income families than the recipients of the home care allowance, especially recipients who employ a nanny.

Finally, despite the explicit objective of work-family balance policy to insure equal opportunities for children and families, in fact, the system of support creates social disparities with regard to childcare forms.

### ***Who cares for young children in France?***

In comparison with other countries, enrolment in childcare services is rather limited for children under 3 whereas participation of older kids in early education is high in France. Actually, 70% of children below 3 years are cared for principally by their parents(in fact their mother) whereas 13% are cared for by a childminder and 9% in a collective childcare service. With two parents working full time, 33% of children are cared for by a registered childminder, 28% by one of the parents and 20% in a collective childcare structure. Informal care by a grand parent or a relative concern 9% of children whereas 9% are cared for by a nanny or a baby sitter at home, or in a day-care centre. Flexible working hours, especially shift working, explain why children with two full-time working parents are cared for by one parent(Graphs 5 and 6 in annex).

Although childcare benefits and subsidies to collective structures are the same all over France, geographical disparities are observed with regard to childcare facilities. Collective childcare is more important in large cities and

in the Paris Region, whereas individual and family childcare are more widespread in rural areas, especially in the West of France where as a counterpart the pre-school attendance at 2 years is the highest in France (more than one child on two in the Brittany region).

Children who attend pre-school may also benefit from childminders services for out of school hours with a childcare allowance: 35% of children attending pre-school are cared for by a childminder after school hours or during holidays.

### *Childcare and early education costs*

#### *For early education*

The costs of one child in public or private pre-school was 4676€ in 2005 according to the evaluation of the Department of Education.

The state contributed for 2,452€, 99% of which were dedicated to pay teachers and educational staff. Local authorities, mainly municipalities contributed for 1,973€, 57% of which were dedicated to pay the care staff who assist teachers in pre-school.

Families contribute for 251€ covering school fees in private schools (very low in France) and lunch facilities offered to children who stay all day at school.

#### *For childcare services*

The family branch of the social security system is the main financial provider for work-family balance policy. The other contributors are the local authorities, the tax system and the families. The costs for families vary along with the type of childcare. For medium income families, care by a childminder is less costly than other facilities, whereas for low income families, the collective childcare service is less costly. The financial support from the family policy concerns all families but is higher for low and

medium income families than for those with a high income who benefit from substantial tax relief, especially those who employ a person at home to care for children. Among all childcare facilities, childminders are the less costly for the state.

However, whatever the income of the families, the state contribution to work-family balance policy is higher for collective childcare services than for any other childcare facility.

### *Parental leave and working time policy*

#### *Parental leave*

Parental leave is an individual entitlement for working parents. This social right was incorporated into the labour Code in the 1970s onwards to allow parents of a young child to make a career break until the child is three years. As a social right, the parental leave is unpaid in France, however, the family allowance fund pays an allowance to parents who care themselves for their child until the age of three. The home care allowance paid to all families who meet the eligibility conditions whether or not they are on parental leave (most of them are) is not a replacement wage but rather a family policy benefit. It is a flat-rate allowance paid to families below an income threshold, however actually nearly 90% of families are eligible. The allowance is paid only for six months to parents with only one child whereas families with at least two children may receive the allowance until the last child is 3. A higher amount of allowance is proposed to parents of large families (more than 3 children). Certain flexibility in use was introduced by the reform of the childcare benefit package in 2004. All employees are eligible for parental leave if they have been into the labour force for at least one year with the same employer before the birth of the child. However, the take up of parental leaves is not well known since employers are not required to provide information about the take-up. Data only concern the recipients of the

parental leave allowance(APE) and from 2004 of the parental care allowance (or home-care allowance-CLCA).

The restructuring of the APE in 1994 with the extension of eligibility to parents with two children resulted in a decrease in mother's participation to the labour force: between 1994 and 1997, about 100,000 working mothers with two children took advantage of the measure. The take up was higher for low and medium qualified mothers than for high educated mothers who are reluctant to interrupt their career. Mothers are more likely to take up parental leave when their working conditions are deteriorated, ie in low paid low qualified jobs with unsocial hours of work like in the catering and hotels sector for instance.

The home care allowance remains highly controversial for two reasons: First the duration is too long (three years) thus making it difficult to certain employees to resume work, especially for those with low qualification; secondly it is not a replacement wage associated to the parental leave. The low rate of the allowance may discourage fathers to take it up or to share part of it. So, the measure remains highly gendered, also resulting in a gap between low and high educated women who do not behave similarly with regard to work and care(Méda and Périvier, 2006). For these authors, the home care allowance is an incentive for mothers to withdraw from the labour market, thus breaking their career. Recent measures have attempted to limit the impact of the parental leave on work career by maintaining the links with the firm and by giving rights to training for employees on parental leave.

### *Working time*

Working time policy: the working time duration is fixed by law in France and then implemented in companies through collective agreements either at the branch or at the company level. The legal working week was reduced from 39 to 35 hours in 2000 for all employees. However, according to the

European Labour Force survey, 67% of women(25-54) work on average 35 hours or more by week. Apart former socialist EU new member states where more than 90% of adult women work 35 hours or more, France is one of the European countries with the highest rate of women in age of mothering work full time(Table 3). Indeed, part-time work is not so developed in France as in the Netherlands, Germany or the UK. Moreover, part-time is not mainly used by mothers to reconcile work and family life but rather as a transition in and out of the labour market(Anxo and Erhel, 2008; Anxo *and al.*, 2007).

With regard to flexible working time arrangements, France displays a medium place in Europe with a low rate of individual agreements on flexible hours and a relatively high rate on flexible arrangements. However, flexible arrangements are not all responding to a demand from employees, but rather are often imposed by the employer according to the needs of services or work organisation. In addition, there is little attention to the family structure (table 4).

Table 3. Men and women(25–54) working hours  
in some European countries, 2005, %

	France	Germany	The Netherlands	Sweden	The UK	EU 25
Women <15hours	3.8	14.4	15.4	3.0	8.2	6.4
15–29	18.2	26.2	42.6	12.1	27.7	20.8
30–34	10.9	8.8	15.5	19.7	8.9	8.5
35+	67.0	50.5	26.5	65.2	55.1	64.2
Men < 15 hours	0.6	2.0	1.5	1.5	0.7	0.9
15–29	3.6	3.3	4.7	4.2	3.7	3.2
30–34	2.8	2.0	6.7	3.4	2.2	2.2
35+	93.1	92.6	87.1	90.8	93.4	93.7

Source: Eurostat, LFS

Table 4. Flexible working time arrangements for men and women(25–49) by household structure, 2004 (% of total by household structure)

	France	Germany	The Netherlands	Sweden	The UK	EU 25
Lone parent						
Fix or staggered working hours	75.0	53.7	83.4	–	74.6	73.5
Individual agreement on start and end of working hours	3.7	38.9	5.4		11.5	13.4
Flexible working time arrangements	21.3	5.9	4.5		12.4	11.6
Other	73.9	1.5	6.7		1.6	1.6
Couples with children						
Fix or staggered working hours	73.9	55.2	80.7		71.1	76.4
Individual agreement on start and end of working hours	4.7	35.0	5.2		12.9	10.5
Flexible working time arrangements	21.4	7.3	5.7		14.4	11.1
Other	–	2.4	8.4		1.5	2.1

Source: Eurostat, LFS 2008

*Tax breaks for families*

Tax breaks are an important component of the family policy benefits package in France: they represent 34% of all benefits(including housing benefits and social assistance benefits paid to families by the Family Allowance Fund. Most of tax breaks are linked to the “quotient familial” system which takes account of the number of children living into the household. Childcare expenses represent 3% of all tax breaks for family reasons. The system primarily benefits to higher income families since low income families are not paying any income tax.

### *Companies' family friendly policies*

Although the role of the state is prominent in implementing work-family balance measures, the role of companies should not be neglected. Firstly, companies contribute to the financing of the family policy in France through the employer's social contributions to the funding of the social security system. Secondly, companies have to implement legal rules, *ie* laws and collective agreements. Thirdly, companies have their own strategies towards work-life balance, providing cash or in kind support to their employees for childcare facilities or for leisure activities. Not only companies have been recently encouraged by the state to invest into childcare facilities for their employees (by tax relief) but they also are encouraged to implement work-family balance measures in order to contribute to improve gender equality at the work place. Labels or other forms of certification are the tools used to reach this objective (Klammer and Letablier, 2007). A survey carried out by the French Demographic Research Institute in 2005 provides useful data and information on the role of enterprises in supporting work-family balance, showing the broad diversity of forms of support and the unequal generosity of companies depending on the economic activity sector and the size of the enterprise (Eydoux and al., 2008; Lefèvre et al., 2008).

## 4. Family and work-family balance policy outcomes

On the whole, policies supporting work and family balance are relatively generous in France in comparison with European continental countries. These policies use a large set of Policy instruments in line with the 'liberty of choice' principle guiding the French policy.

Although it is difficult to draw on the outcomes of such a work-family balance policy notably because the causal relationship between the measures and their impact is hard to assess, it is however possible to examine some

features of families' behaviour that may be associated to this policy. We first raise the issue of the employees' satisfaction with this policy, then we examine the possible outcomes on the fertility behaviour and on mother's participation into the labour market, and finally on children well-being.

### *Satisfaction*

As mentioned in introduction to this paper, the most noteworthy aspects of the work-family balance question in France seem to lie in the co-existence in apparently contradictory policy measures, social practices and attitudes, however resulting in both relatively high fertility rates and mothers' participation to the labour force. The 2002 International Social Survey Program (ISSP) on Family and Changing Gender Roles confirm the contradictions and inconsistencies of the Work-family debate in France. On the one hand, women's employment outside the home is viewed as desirable and legitimate by a vast majority of the population: 70% of men and 75% of women agree on the statement that "*Men and women should both contribute to the household income*", and 80% of men and 88% of women agree on the statement that "*After marrying and before having children, a woman should work full time*". Moreover, 53% of women and 41% of men support the idea that "*Having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person*" (quoted by Le Feuvre and Lemarchand, 2007). But when children arrive, attitudes tend to support mothers giving up work or reducing working hours, at least when children are below three before attending preschool. However, there is a discrepancy between the ideal work - family balance pattern mentioned in the survey by French women and their current behaviour: 75% of the mothers surveyed said they have continued to work when their children were below school age (50% full time and 25% part-time) although 45% said that working part-time would be the best solution for mothers of young children to combine work and care and 38% said that the best solution is to give up working. These discrepancies between the "ideal"

and the practices are confirmed by the French opinions surveys that are regularly carried out by the CREDOC(Damon and al., 2003). However, few discrepancies are observed between men and women responses. Men just tend to support more than women the idea that “*Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay*”(42% of men agree to this statement against 35% of women), but the gender effect should be taken into account when interpreting these data. The young generation tends to be less supporting of the male breadwinner/female carer model than the older generation. However with regard to the share of parental and housekeeping duties, French men and French respondents in general tend to remain rather conservative: 20% of the respondents declare frequent disputes about the share of family duties.

According to the “families and employers survey” carried out by the Demographic Institute in 2005, 18% of women and 20% of men declare to be unsatisfied with their work and life balance arrangements. Irregular working hours are the major reason given by these respondents whereas those who are satisfied can manage with flexible working arrangements. Besides, long working hours(more than 40 hours per week) for both men and women decrease the level of satisfaction. On the whole, women’s satisfaction is highly dependant on the working time arrangements with their partner. Finally, the survey highlights the effect of working time arrangements on the level of satisfaction *vis-à-vis* work and family balance(Pailhé and Solaz, 2006).

### *Fertility*

The relatively high level of fertility is often attributed to the French work-family balance policy and especially to childcare facilities for working parents and the early education system(Fagnani, 2001). With a total fertility rate of nearly 2 children per woman, France stands at the top among EU member states. State support to compensate the costs of children for families and measures limiting the indirect costs may impact on fertility decisions. It

is clear indeed that countries where generous and good support to work-family balance are provided to parents, fertility rates and women's activity rates are higher than in countries with weak support to families where working and caring are conflicting.

### *Mothers' participation in the labour market*

Mothers' participation into the labour market is also high in France, especially in comparison with south European countries. Employment rates of women aged 25-49 with children were nearly 66% in 2006, compared with 55% in Italy, 59% in Spain but 63% in Germany, 73% in the Netherlands and 63% in the UK (Eurostat, 2007). Nevertheless, the incidence of children on women's employment rates is still noticeable: 74% of women at the same age but without children were in employment in France. However, it is mainly the third child that has an impact on employment rates as shown on the graph below (Graph 7 in annex)

### *Child well being*

The impact of work-family balance policies on well-being of children is uneasy to assess since several dimensions have to be considered: poverty risk, cognitive development, subjective well-being, health, etc. According to OECD data (Graph 8 in annex), the child poverty rate is lower in France than in most Western countries, but higher than in Nordic countries. The redistributive dimension of the family policy is effective with regard to poverty and redistributive impact on families with children. In addition, children poverty has not increased over the last years in France whereas it has increased in many countries.

## 5. Conclusion

Despite its complexity, the French policy supporting work and family balance for families could be said as creating a family-friendly environment favourable to parenting and childrearing, allowing most parents to have the number of children they wish to have and most women to participate into the labour force. In some ways, the French work-family balance policy profile could be compared to Nordic countries when considering the role of the State in providing and regulating work-life balance policy, the place of children at the centre of the issue, and the relatively high rate of de-familialisation of childcare especially for pre-school age children. However, the mix of work-family balance instruments makes it different, especially with the development of private childcare services, either by childminders or by others social actors. The de-familialisation process has been on the way for now about three decades however some policy measures remain controversial especially with respect to gender equality. In addition, all needs are not yet covered and parents do not always get what they expect in terms of childcare.

Controversies firstly concern the parental leave pattern, and above all the parental care allowance which is considered to be too long with respect to career break, too lower paid with respect to fathers' incentive to take up part of the leave and mothers' income security. In fact, behind the assumption of "liberty of choice" the French government is recurrently suspected to behave more in line with a "maternalist" perspective than with gender equality worked-based objective.

Controversies secondly concern the trend towards privatisation of childcare by strong support provided to childminders at the detriment of collective childcare services to which parents and the whole population are attached to in particular because of the high quality of care.

Thirdly, incentive for companies to invest into childcare facilities does not

receive a full support although the aim is clearly to increase the supply of childcare services. But a suspicion remains about the possible subordination of children and childcare to economic objectives and requirements of the firms especially with respect to working time.

Nevertheless, the idea of providing children with a social right to a childcare service is under study. The implementation of this idea would be a new step forwards a sustainable work-family policy.

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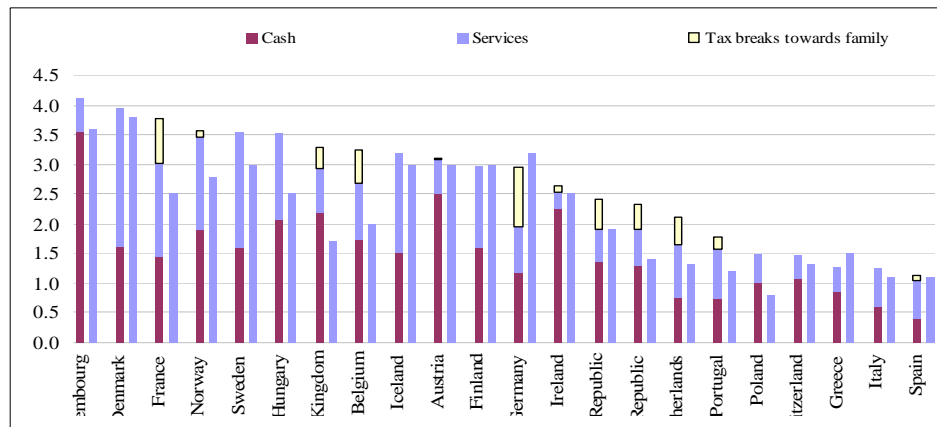
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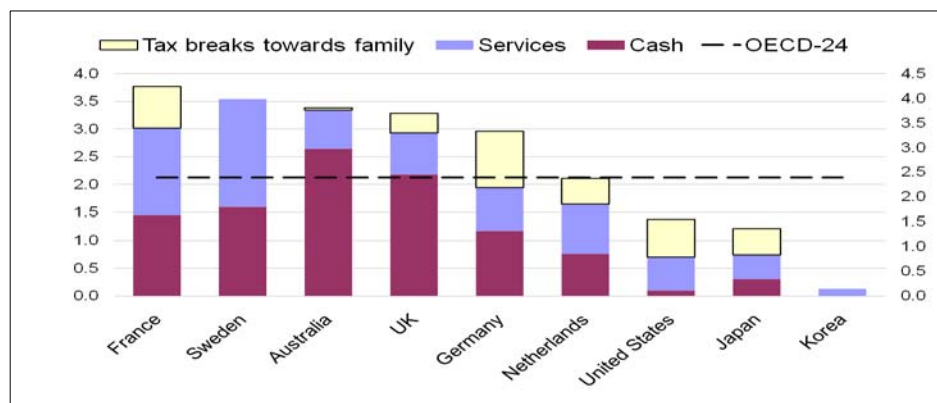
## APPENDICES:

Graph 1. Public spending on families in France and EU member states (% of the GDP)



Sources: ESSPROS 2005 and SOCS 2003 (Math and Thévenon, 2008)

Graph 2. Public spending on families

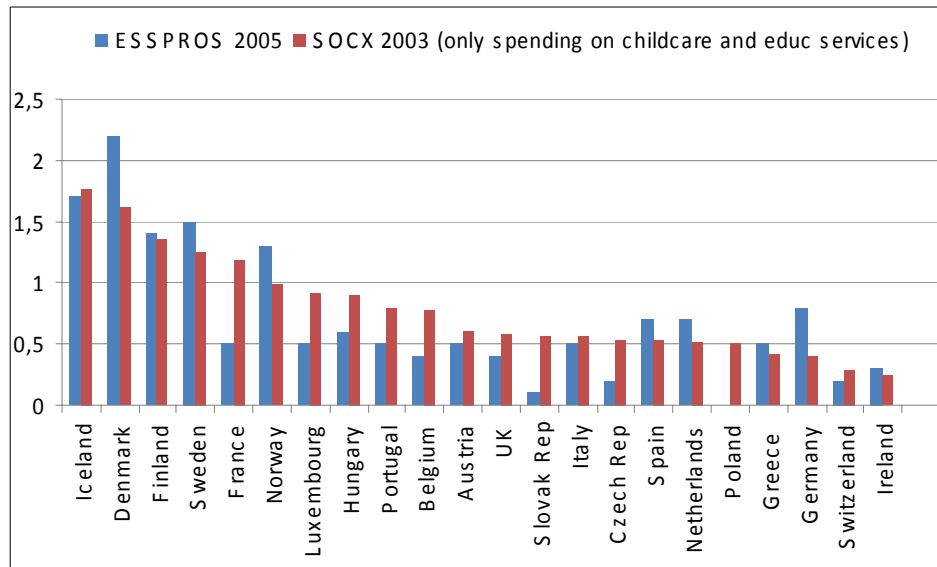


**Notes:**

- Public support accounted here only concerns public support that is exclusively for families (e.g. child payments and allowances, parental leave benefits and childcare support). Spending recorded in other social policy areas as health and housing support. Spending recorded in other social policy areas as health and housing support also assists families, but not exclusively, and is not included here.
- OECD-24 excludes Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland, Switzerland and Turkey where Tax spending data are not available.

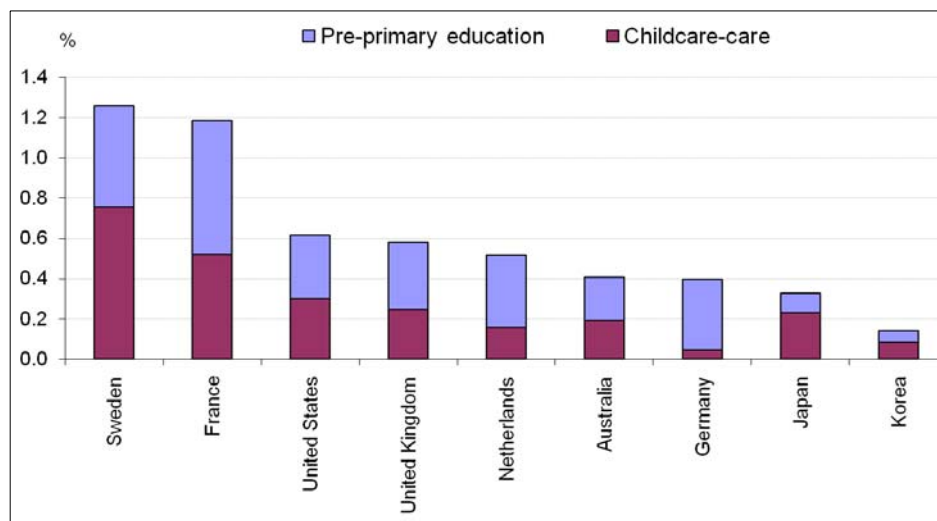
Source: Huerta, OECD 2003, SOCS data base

Graph 3. Public spending in kind (% of GDP)

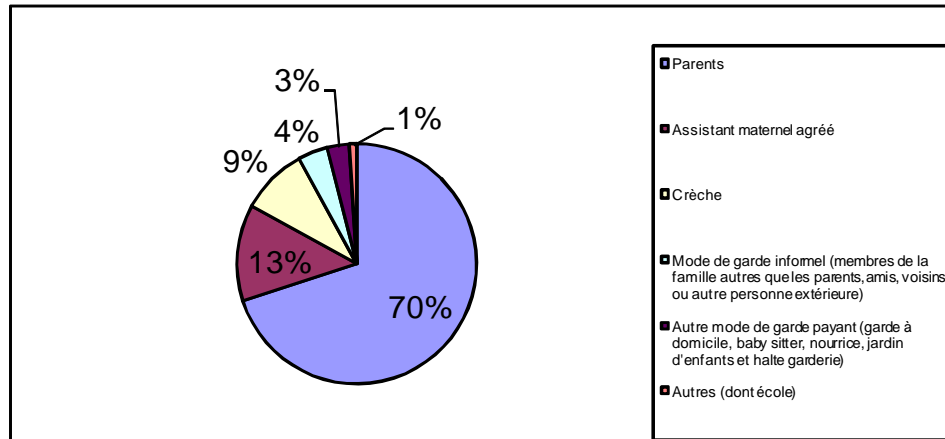


Sources: ESSPROS 2005 and SOCS 2003 - only spending on childcare and education services

Graph 4. Public spending on early education and childcare (Source, OECD, 2007)

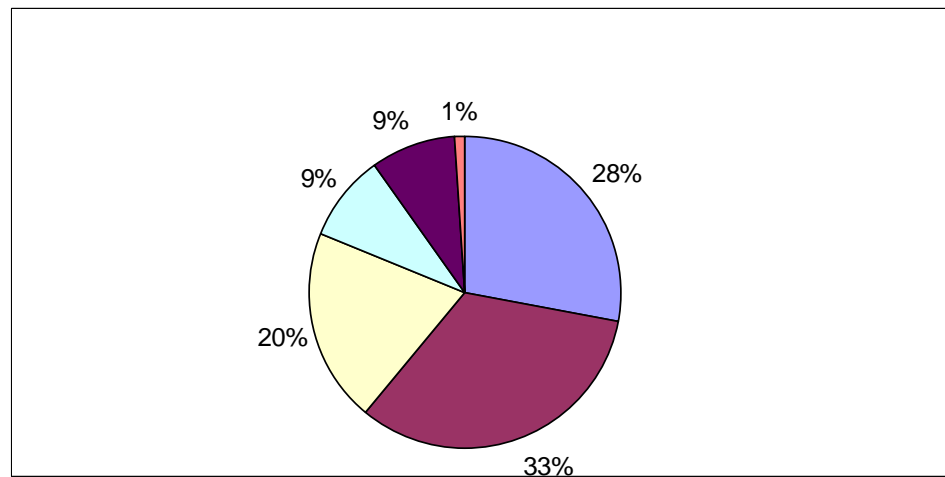


Graph 5. Share of young children below 3 according to the main care, 2006



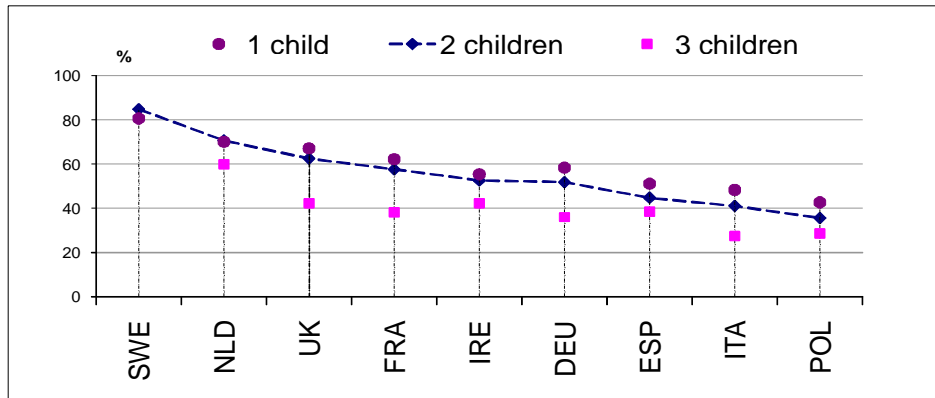
Source: Drees/cnaf, Survey on Childcare, 2006

Graph 6. Share of young children (below 3) with two working parents according to the form of care, 2006



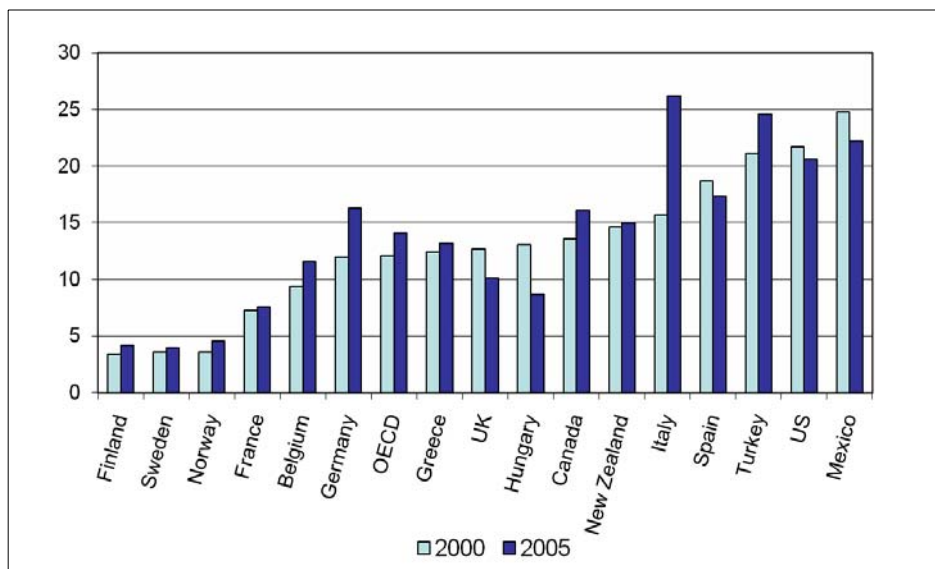
Source: Drees/cnaf, Survey on Childcare, 2006

Graph 7. Maternal employment rates by number of children



Source: OECD, 2007

Graph 8. Child poverty in 2000 and 2005



Source: OECD, 2007

# III

## *Work–Family (Im)Balance in Canada*

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## 1. Introduction

The issue of work-family balance(broadened to work-life balance<sup>8)</sup> in Canada during the 1990s) has been placed on the agenda of OECD countries as a result of changing families, demographic challenges and transformations in the world of work. Together these have given rise to new needs – for child and other(e.g. elder) care services as well as for time to care. As the OECD(2007) recognised, governments have a role to play to ensure that quality care services are available in sufficient quantity where they are needed, and, through legislation and social insurance, to create a work time regime favourable to reconciling work and life. Yet needs are not always translated into public deeds, and even when they are, needs can be responded to in different ways, as is well recognised in the literature on welfare regimes.<sup>9)</sup> Some policy responses go much further toward promoting gender and other forms of social equality, while others give greater sway to market forces and/or try to reinforce a modified male breadwinner-female domestic caregiver family form(Mahon, 2006).

Canada's social policy regime clearly belongs to the(mainly Anglo-American) "liberal" family, where markets and families retain a key role, supplemented by modest state supports largely targeted at those in considered most vulnerable.<sup>10)</sup> Its labour market regime is similarly organised along liberal lines, characterised by relatively low levels of unionisation, especially in the private sector, with bargaining mainly decentralised to the

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8) It was broadened to "life" in recognition of the multiple demands on people's time over the life cycle, as well as the need for further training/education associated with many of the jobs in the "knowledge-based" economy (Fudge, 2006:18).

9) The classic reference here is Esping-Andersen (1999). While critics have pointed out that his liberal, conservative, and social democratic regime typology is insufficient to incorporate the numerous varieties of regime across the world and for its failure to grapple seriously with the issues raised by feminist scholars, it does provide a useful starting point.

10) This follows Esping-Andersen's (1999) well-known classification scheme of liberal, conservative and social democratic.

firm or plant level, and a limited role for the state. No surprisingly, therefore, Canada's responses to the challenge of work-life balance reflect this liberal market-centred orientation, although there have been some attempts to modify this. In particular Canada has a federal state structure, in which the provinces – and increasingly, municipalities – have an important role to play. While this can create barriers to the construction of effective pan-Canadian work-life balance policies, as we shall see, at the same time it leaves room for sub-national innovation. With regard to work-life balance in particular, the francophone province of Quebec has been especially innovative, developing policies that move toward the Nordic social democratic model. As we shall see, while its achievements have been the most striking, it is not alone in this regard. In contrast to Quebec, however, the oil-rich prairie province of Alberta has chosen policies that reflect a blend of neo-liberalism and social conservatism.

The first section of this paper provides an overview of the changes that have helped to place work-life balance on the political agenda in Canada. The second section looks at policies regarding care services, with a particular emphasis on child care. The final section takes up the issue of time to care.

## 2. Changing Context, New Challenges

This section provides a brief overview of the changing socio-economic context that has given rise to public concerns about work-life balance. While the focus will be on Canada as a whole, attention will also be paid to inter-provincial variations, given the important role played by the provinces within the Canadian state system. Particular emphasis will be placed on Quebec and Alberta, which have developed quite different welfare and labour market regimes.

Changing demographics have helped to highlight the need for public action

to secure work-life balance because governments are concerned to maintain fertility rates without sacrificing other objectives, and because of the care needs associated with an ageing population. As in many other OECD countries, the fertility rate(1.5) is below the replacement rate. While this is the case in all parts of Canada, birth rates vary across the country. In recent years, the highest birth rates have been in the three prairie provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta),<sup>11)</sup> with the lowest in the Atlantic provinces of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, as Table one shows. Quebec's fertility rate is close to that of Ontario, the most populous province in Canada and one with a similar economic base.<sup>12)</sup> Despite the fall in fertility, women's rising labour force participation rates together with immigration, which remains relatively high,<sup>13)</sup> have helped to maintain the proportion working age adults in the population as a whole. In 2003, nearly two-thirds of the population was of working age, while the proportion of senior citizens(13%) remained lower than that of children under fifteen(18%)(OECD, 2005: Table 2.2: 37). Nevertheless, the combination of lower fertility rates and greater longevity will mean that by 2020, those over 65 are expected to account for as much as 40% of the adult population(OECD, 2005:38). Although "active ageing" policies may mean that a number of those over 65 will remain economically active for some time, the rising share of frail elderly will generate a growing need for elder

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- 11) For Saskatchewan and Manitoba in 2003, the rate was around 1.8, with a significant portion of this accounted for by the higher birth rate in Aboriginal families, which account for about 13% of the populations of these provinces - the highest share among the provinces. In Alberta it was 1.69. The Atlantic provinces had fertility rates between 1.3 and 1.4, with the highest (1.46) in Prince Edward Island, which was equal to that of Quebec and Ontario (Vanier, 2004: 4).
  - 12) Manufacturing is centred in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, with the other provinces much more dependent on resource extraction.
  - 13) In 2003, over 18% of the population were foreign born(OECD, 2005: Table 2.2: 37). Immigrants accounted for over ¼ of the population of Ontario and British Columbia(2001), but the highest concentrations are in Canada's major cities - Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal.

care.

In the past, women provided the bulk of care for very young children, the sick and the frail elderly. This is no longer considered an option in Canada, nor has it been for several decades. Women's labour force participation rates are among the highest in the world, a trend which set in during the 1970s. Whereas in the 1961, the male breadwinner-female caregiver family was the norm, accounting for 68% of families, by 2001 the dual earner family accounted for 62% of families, with male breadwinner families accounting for a mere 15% (Arthurs, 2006: 18). In fact while men's labour force participation rates dropped from 77.6% in 1976 to 73.6% in 2003, women's rose from 45.7% to 61.6% (Vanier, 2004: 68). Initially the expansion was led by women in Western Canada and Ontario, but over the last two decades, labour force participation rates for women with children under six in Quebec and Atlantic Canada have caught up with and in fact have surpassed the rate, in Alberta. As Roy notes,

The lowest participation rate was for mothers in Alberta, which at 64.9% was over 10 points less than in Quebec. Manitoba was next at 68.7%, followed by New foundland(68.8%), BC(69.0%) and Saskatchewan(70.9%). Ontario equalled the national average at 71.9%. These relative standings are the complete opposite of the 1960s and 1970s, when participation rates in the west were ahead of the east(2006, 3.3).

It should also be noted that Canadian women's labour force participation does not conform to the "M" pattern - i.e. labour force participation prior to marriage and children, temporary withdrawal while the children are young, followed by return to the labour force - found in some other OECD countries, as Table 1 suggests. While mothers in Alberta and British Columbia exhibit a greater propensity to spend the early years at home even in those provinces, this is clearly no longer the norm.

Canada also has a relatively high share of lone parent families -

approximately one in five, most of which are headed by women. In the past, social assistance policies made it possible for lone parents to stay at home with their children but since the 1980s, federal and provincial policies have placed increasing emphasis on “activating” lone parents.<sup>14)</sup> Now “most provincial authorities...require sole parents on income support to look for work as from an early age(varying from six months to six years) of their youngest child”(OECD, 2005: 26). As a consequence of this and of changing gender norms, the employment rate of lone parents with children under 16 jumped from 54.5% in 1981 to 76.6 in 2006.<sup>15)</sup> Quebec experienced the most substantial change – from 47% in 1981 to 71% in 200(OECD, 2005: 18; Vanier, 2004: 86). This is interesting to note because Alberta is the province where lone parents are considered employable when the youngest child is as young as six months old(Jenson and Thompson, 1999: 32), whereas lone parents in Quebec are exempted from mandatory job search until their youngest child reaches the age of five.

These changes in families, in combination with the demographic changes noted above, have highlighted the importance of reconciling work and life. As the Arthurs report noted,

Families with two working partners...must somehow find time not only for two careers, but for the child-rearing and care-giving tasks that were formerly performed almost exclusively by women who did not enter the waged workforce. Canada’s growing complement of single-parent families faces similar pressures in even more extreme form. So too do those people who care for family members who are aged, chronically ill, or both(2006:20).

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14) Bashevkin (2003) describes the federal government’s workfare turn in the 1990s, but Lord’s (2008) dissertation documents the earlier shift to “activation” in federal policy and in the province of Nova Scotia.

15) Table 6, [www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89F0133XIE/2006000/tables/tab6.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89F0133XIE/2006000/tables/tab6.htm) accessed 29 June 2008. The rate for lone parents with children 3-5 was 66.2% and for mothers with youngest child under 3 it was 46.3% in 2006.

For lone parents, especially those working full time, which many in Canada do, the conflict between work and family life is likely to be substantial, as they cannot rely on support from the other parent.

Concerns about work-life balance are not driven by demographics and changes in families alone. The world of work has also changed, in many respects in ways that have exacerbated the potential conflicts. The link between the demands of a “knowledge-based economy” and the need for time away from work for further training or education has already been noted. More broadly, the growing importance of private service sector employment and restructuring(outsourcing/contracting out) in the goods-producing and public sectors, where the Fordist standard work model once prevailed, have resulted in what has been called “hours polarisation”, i.e. an increase in long hours employment for some, short or uneven(part time, temporary work), for others. As a recent survey of employees working for large public and private sector employers across Canada noted, “the considerable restructuring that has taken place within many Canadian workplaces over the past few decades and workplace practices that are driven by concern for the ‘bottom line’...have taken a toll on both employers and employees alike....employee engagement and organizational commitment have been negatively impacted, productivity has declined, workloads have increased, demands on Canada’s health care system have escalated, and the incidence of stress, burnout and work-life conflict has risen dramatically(Higgins, Duxbury and Lyons, 2006:31).”

The studies done by Higgins et al document the resulting stresses encountered by managers and professionals due to the increased demands at work. There are, however, differences in the degrees of stress experienced across the country, with Quebec employees generally “less likely to perceive that their work demands interfere with their ability to meet family role responsibilities” than those on the prairies and in BC(Duxbury and Higgins, 2003, 45). As we shall see, Quebec is also the province with the strongest union movement and most favourable employment standards legislation, at

least with respect to work-family reconciliation and the status of part time workers.

Canadian Policy Research Networks' "vulnerable workers" project documents the other side of work in an increasingly polarised labour market - that associated with the rise in non-standard, often precarious, employment. By 2002 non-standard work accounted for nearly one third of all jobs - 11% part time, 13% temporary and 15% self-employed(CPRN, 2006:3). Many of these jobs offer low wages. Young people(15-24) accounted for 45 percent of those holding such low paid jobs, but more than 16 percent of those in the key child-bearing years(25-34) and 13% of those aged 35-55 were stuck in low wage jobs(2006:2). Women are disproportionately represented among those holding non-standard jobs, especially part time work, as table 2 suggests.<sup>16)</sup> Women, especially young women, are also somewhat over-represented among those with temporary work.<sup>17)</sup> As a recent Statistics Canada report noted, "In 2004, 30% of these young female employees had temporary work, compared with just 11% of employed women aged 25 to 44 and 9% of those aged 45 and over. At all ages, though, employed women were slightly more likely than their male counterparts to be in a temporary work arrangement(2006:111)." Although men have a higher rate of self-employment, self-employment counts for a rising share of women's jobs

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- 16) In comparison with other OECD countries, Canada is a bit below the OECD average for part time work (26.2% versus 26.4 in 2006) for women, but above the average for men(10.9 vs. 8.1). The Netherlands, Australia and Japan all had above average rates for men and women. The countries with the highest rates of part time work for women were the Netherlands, Japan, Australia and the UK but Germany, Italy and Belgium are the countries where part time work is clearly a feminine phenomenon. See Usalcas, 2008, table 4,:14). The share of part time work in Korea is half the OECD average(8.8 vs. 16.1 in 2006), though it is somewhat higher for women at 12.3%(OECD, 2007: 45). It should also be noted that a lower percentage of Quebec women were engaged in part time work, however, than in the rest of Canada 23.1% versus 30.4% (OECD, 2005: 17).
- 17) Here again, Canada is just below the OECD average for men and women (13 vs. 13.1%, 2006) and for women (13.7 versus 14%). This is in marked contrast to Korea, where temporary work accounted for 29.4% of employment and 32.5% of women's employment(OECD, 2007: 45).

and, as we shall see, this poses problems especially with regard to access to maternity and parental leave – outside the province of Quebec.

These changes in the labour market affect family life. Low wages make it more difficult to decide one can afford to have children, especially in countries like Canada where family benefits have not been generous.<sup>18)</sup> The potentially adverse impact of work on women's (and men's) decisions to have children is also linked to employment instability, as a Swedish study (DS, 2001) found. In other words, the new world of work not only exacerbates the work-life balance through the "time crunch", it also makes it very difficult for younger adults to choose to have and raise as many children as they want.

For the most part Canada has followed the "liberal" flexible labour market route, which does little to mitigate these trends, although there has been some progress in terms of support for low income families. This is in marked contrast to the "flexicurity" alternative outlined in the OECD's updated Jobs Strategy (2006). Again the "social democratic" Nordic countries are among the best examples of the "flexicurity" route. As Esping-Andersen notes, "modest levels of 'rigidity' in the Nordic group reflect a strategy of harmonizing flexible employment adaptation with individual security through full-employment promotion, active labour market policy and welfare state guarantees (1999: 23)."

For example, wages and working conditions tend to be better in unionised workplaces yet, in Canada unionisation rates fallen, albeit not as precipitously as in the US. In Canada as a whole, unionisation rates fell from 38% of the labour force in 1981 to 31% in 2004, with most of the decline occurring after the conclusion of the Canada-US free trade agreement.<sup>19)</sup> By 2007, union density had declined further, reaching 29.7%. While unionisation rates

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18) See below for more discussion.

19) [www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/050422/d050422c.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/050422/d050422c.htm). Most of the fall occurred between 1989 and 1998.

in the public sector remain high(71.7%), they have fallen to a mere 17% in the private sector.<sup>20)</sup> As more women are concentrated in the public sector, their unionisation rate is slightly better than men's(30 vs. 29.3), but many also work in the private service sector, where coverage is especially low. There only 12.4% of women are unionised in comparison with 20.9% of men. Unionisation rates among part time workers stand at a mere 22.9%. In terms of inter-provincial variation, Quebec boasts the highest union density(36.4% in 2006) and Alberta the lowest(22.3%).

Nor does Canada do that well when it comes to public investment in human capital. To be sure, Canada has invested substantially in primary and secondary education and, in the most recent OECD's PISA round, of 31 countries, Canadian students ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in reading, 5<sup>th</sup> in science and 6<sup>th</sup> in math.<sup>21)</sup> Nevertheless there is quite a high dropout rate from high school and "almost half of all young Canadians still do not complete post-secondary education(Banting, 2006:434)." Since the 1990s, moreover, there has been a shift back toward private rather than public investment in human capital, via sharply rising tuition fees for post-secondary education and the shift from grants to loans, engineered by the Canada Student Loan program, which burdens many graduates with substantial debt.

Finally, Canada has never invested substantially in adult education and training(Albo, 1995). The rhetoric of "social investment" aside, Canadian governments have done little to change this. Canada's investment in active labour market programs remains below the OECD average and tends to focus on employment readiness and job search more than basic training and adult education(Banting, 2006, 436). Thus the Labour Market Development Agreements(LMDA) signed with most provinces 1996-98, supported a work-first approach as "the agreements' performance indicators(numbers served, number returned to work, savings to the EI account) favour serving

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20) Perspectives on Labour and Income August 2007(Statistics Canada), p 3

21) [www.pisa.gc.ca/pisa/brochure\\_e.shtml](http://www.pisa.gc.ca/pisa/brochure_e.shtml)

large numbers of clients and placing them in the first available job over more involved interventions that might offer recipients skill development”(Graefe, 2006:12). There is also an activation emphasis in the use of U/EI funds, but these programs, which offer a richer array of programs, reserved for the shrinking part of the workforce holding full time, permanent jobs.

During the decades when the above changes were making their impact felt, federal and provincial governments in Canada were also responding to pressures to cut back social expenditure and to further liberalise the labour market. Throughout the 1980s, formula modifications resulted in falling federal contributions to social programs. In 1979, the government introduced family income testing(for upper income) to unemployment insurance. As a result, high income claimants would “have to pay back up to 30 percent of all UI benefits paid in a taxation year(Myles and Pierson, 1997:456).” A decade later, higher income earners faced a claw back of family allowance and OAS benefits and, in 1993, universal family allowances were abolished. We have already noted the decline in social assistance rates associated with the workfare turn. The federal Conservative government’s 1990 decision to impose a cap on transfers to the three of the largest provinces through the Canada Assistance Plan(CAP), <sup>22)</sup> followed by the latter’s elimination in 1996, clearly encouraged this trend.<sup>23)</sup>

The deepest cuts were reserved for unemployment insurance, whose generosity came under increasing criticism from the Right. A series of reforms in the 1990s, culminating in the renaming of the program “Employment Insurance”(EI), reduced those eligible from 80 to 40 percent of those out of work(TCSCA, 2006: 21). The earnings replacement rate was cut

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22) CAP, established in 1966, was the program through which federal money flowed to support social assistance and other related provincial programs, on a 50-50 matching basis

23) CAP, a transfer conditional on provincial co-payment, was rolled into the new (and smaller) Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST), a block fund, in 1996. The CHST was replaced by the Canada Health Transfer and the Canada Social Transfer in 2004.

and the income level at which the benefits claw back was introduced was lowered. Those who had quit voluntarily or been fired were declared ineligible. The number of weeks worked required for eligibility was increased, especially for entrants, re-entrants, and frequent claimants, while the duration of benefits was cut, particularly in areas of low unemployment. Thus in Canada's largest city, only 22 percent of those without work are covered by EI. The gender gap also widened: although the coverage rate for men fell from 49.3% in 1996 to 47.3% in 2004, it fell from 47.3% to 39.7% for women over the same period (Battle et al., 2006: 18).

This is not to suggest that Canadian social policy has simply followed a straight neo-liberal course of expenditure cuts, new eligibility limits and US-style workfare. In fact, the policy path has been more uneven (Mahon, 2008). At the federal scale, from the late 1990s to 2005, renewed interest in combating child poverty was reflected in the introduction of the National Child Benefit (NCB). The NCB was designed in part to "break down the welfare wall," by creating incentives for social assistance recipients to work - or for the working poor to keep at it, despite the low rates of pay. In addition to a component offering a child tax credit that provides something (falling as income rises) for four-fifths of families with children under eighteen (Jenson, 2004), the NCB provided a supplement (NCBS) - \$1,000 per child for those with annual incomes under \$22,397, phased out for those with annual incomes over \$32,000 (2002). Unlike the US Earned Income Tax Credit, the NCBS applied to all low income families with children under 18, regardless of whether they were on social assistance or in the workforce. Yet the amount offered was far below the estimated cost of lifting children in low income families out of poverty (Armitage, 2003). The provinces, moreover, were invited to "claw back" all or part of the amount paid to social assistance recipients, which funds could then be "reinvested" in children's services or additional provincial income supplements for low income families. Some provinces, like Quebec, focused on positive incentives

to work, while others, including Alberta, made it part of a coercive “work first” set of arrangements (Jenson and Stroick, 2000).

The NCB focused on the problem of child poverty and, to a lesser extent, child development. This seemed to ignore the problem of poverty among working age adults. This issue was taken up by various social policy organisations, including the Toronto-based “modernising income among working age adults” (MISWAA), which issued its report in the summer of 2005. MISWAA’s core recommendations for the federal government included reforms to EI “to address the significant decline in coverage of the unemployed and related decline in access to employment supports and training; “ and the creation of a new refundable tax credit for all low income working age adults, plus a supplement for low wage workers (TCSA, 2006: 14). Prior to its defeat in the January 2006 election, the Liberal government announced plans to introduce only one of these, and the one that received the most criticism from union and anti-poverty representatives on MISWAA - the tax credit for low income working adults. Not surprisingly, this was one of the few Liberal initiatives that the new Conservative government implemented, as it reflected both governments’ interest in “making (low wage) work pay.”

Again, Quebec took a different approach, with an innovative anti-poverty program inspired by “social justice” concerns.<sup>24)</sup> The latter’s framework law looked at poverty as a contravention of human rights. Its strategy for change included meaningful consultation with the community, including low income people themselves; the setting of clear targets and timetables for poverty reduction; establishment of appropriate poverty indicators of progress toward this end; and a comprehensive strategy including raising the minimum wage, improving family benefits for all (but more for those most in need) and public investment in health and social housing.

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24) See Noel (2002), Ninacs et al (2003), and Collin (2007) on the politics behind the development of the Parti Quebecois government’s anti-poverty framework law and the Liberal government’s decision to follow through on this with concrete measures.

In general, the federal and provincial initiatives that have gone the furthest toward breaking with a neo-liberal approach have been those that attempt to grapple with work-life imbalance. These will be discussed below.

### 3. Recent Policies

#### *Child Care Policy: Two Steps Forward, a Giant Step Back?*

Although the *British North America Act*<sup>25)</sup> of 1867 gave the provinces jurisdiction over social programs, since the 1960s<sup>26)</sup> the federal government has been involved in shaping the(uneven) development of a pan-Canadian child care system, albeit in ways that have left substantial room for inter-provincial variation. For the most part, its policies have reflected the liberal nature of its welfare regime: supporting the growth of a market for child care via fee subsidies targeted on those “in need”, via CAP, and a child care income tax deduction, of particular benefit to families with higher incomes. There have been efforts to create a genuine pan-Canadian child care system, however, initially in the name of gender equality and, more recently, in the name of early child learning and care. These have resulted in some incremental improvements, but all too frequently, attempts to create a universally accessible, high quality learning and care system have thusfar yielded little. While these federal initiatives - and setbacks - have had an impact on provincial policies, the latter have also been able to forge their own policies. As we shall see, Quebec stands out in this regard, but other provinces - and certain municipalities - have also taken steps toward a child care system designed along Scandinavian lines.

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25) The BNA Act of 1867 functioned as Canada’s de facto constitution until the 1980s.

26) To be precise, the federal government was also involved in funding day care spaces for the children of mothers working in war-related industries in Ontario and Quebec during the Second World War. At the end of the war, however, it terminated the program. Only Ontario retained an involvement in day care until the 1960s.

While the federal government's decision to include "day care" as one of the services it was prepared to co-fund under CAP came as women's labour force participation was beginning to rise in the 1960s, its initial focus was on making it possible for women "in need" to choose labour force participation (Mahon, 2000). It was only with the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1970) that day care was framed as a service needed by all women if gender equality was to be achieved. Although this did result in the widening of the definition of "in need", potentially to include middle class families, neither the Royal Commission's recommendations, nor reports of the subsequent Abella and Cooke investigations, proved sufficient to secure a universal pan-Canadian child care system.<sup>27)</sup> The federal government's contributions to child care continued to be primarily defined by CAP. This resulted in a system with the following features:

- It was a cost-sharing agreement between the federal government and the provinces. Municipalities were not involved, except in Ontario and Alberta;<sup>28)</sup>
- There was no ceiling on federal funding, but the provinces had to pay 50 percent. This proved harder for the poorer provinces, a fact recognised by the Cooke Task Force, which recommended differential federal contributions - from 25 to 75 percent, depending on provincial capacity, to no avail;
- Under the "welfare services" route, introduced in the 1970s, the federal government made funds available for more than fee subsidies, but funding was limited to public or non-profit providers. This influenced

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27) The Mulroney government did introduce child care legislation in 1987, but this was not supported by child care advocates and their allies in the women's and trade union movements. See Mahon and Phillips (2002) for an account of this.

28) In Alberta, lasted until the late 1970s/early 1980s, when the provincial government centralised control of regulation and financing of child care for pre-school children. Ontario is the only province where municipalities retain a substantial role in financing and planning childcare.

the pattern in many, but not all provinces: today 80 percent of all childcare centres are operated under non-profit auspice. Alberta(53%), Newfoundland(70%) and New Brunswick(66%), however, have a high proportion of commercial operators(CRRU: 2008).

- Under CAP, the federal government perpetuated the idea of childcare as a service for families “inneed” rather than a universal entitlement. Following the Royal Commission’s report, the parameters were widened, permitting the provinces to subsidise families well up into the middle-income range. None took full use of this option, however, and the “welfare” shadow remained.

As noted, this system allowed for considerable inter-provincial variation in the quantity and quality of child care spaces across the country.

Ontario was the only province to have established machinery to administer a child care system prior to CAP’s passage, and Toronto, now Canada’s largest city, took advantage of this in the 1970s and 1980s to lay the foundations for a universal child care system(Mahon, 2005). Toronto now has the largest child care system in Canada outside Quebec. To achieve this, the municipality has worked with local school boards and others to establish the foundations for a high quality early learning and care system delivered largely by non-profit providers and its standards consistently exceed provincial guidelines. Most recently, the city developed a set of operating criteria built on the values of quality, respect for diversity and parental involvement. Recognising that the quality of care is also dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified care providers, which depends on wages and working conditions, Toronto pioneered the development of a wage enhancement policy designed to provide fair wages without sacrificing affordability. Toronto has also been a key driver of innovative pilot projects, including the development of an integrated set of children’s services. In all of this, the municipality has come to operate as a “spider in the web” linking

child care operators(mainly non-profit), school boards, providers of other children's services and advocacy groups. Toronto has not been able to realise its vision to the full, however. Although it has laid the foundations for a child care system based on "social democratic" principles, lacking sufficient support from the federal and provincial governments, it is only able to provide spaces for one-fifth of pre-school children and as few as seven percent of school-aged children.

Ironically(in light of later events), the Alberta government was quick to take advantage of CAP to fund child care and throughout the 1970s, it was one of the leaders in Canada, supporting the establishment of a largely municipally-run child care system funded by all three levels of government. The province assumed control of child care for preschool children in the late 1970s, however, and strongly favoured the growth of for-profit child care<sup>29)</sup> (Langford, forthcoming). The 1990s was a period marked by substantial cutbacks and restructuring. With the election of a Conservative government, the budget of municipal affairs was cut in half, as was funding for kindergarten(Miller, 2005: 26). Provincial allocations for regulated child care fell from a high of \$67.6 million in 1995 to \$54.3 million three years later. The number of regulated child care places for pre-school children fell from 51,656 in 1992 to a low of 46,238 in 2004 - a cut of more than 10%(Friendly et al., 2007: 226, Table 26). The Alberta government's child care policy also reflects a conservative, neo-familial orientation. Thus in 2003 the government introduced "Kin Care" to enable eligible parents to pay non-resident relatives to care for their children and in 2006 it introduces a "stay at home" subsidy for the children of families with a stay at home parent who are enrolled in an approved early child development program(Friendly et al, 2007: 139) The lack of affordable regulated child care combined with the supports for the children of stay-at-home mothers, in

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29) Municipalities retained control of child care for school-aged children and a greater proportion of these spaces are under the auspices of non-profit providers.

turn, are likely to have contributed to Alberta's shift from having been a leader regarding the labour force participation of mothers to now being one of the laggards, as Table 1 suggests.

Quebec was slow off the mark, despite the emergence of a strong Quebec feminist movement in the 1960s. For a while, grass-roots organizations were able to get access to federal funds through federal programs like Opportunities for Youth and the Local Initiative Projects. These experiments established some core features that would later become part of what is now known as the 'Quebec model', notably the emphasis on parent involvement in decision-making in non-profit, community-based centres and organization at the sub-municipal scale. That model was long in the making, but in 1997 the province introduced its "\$5 day"<sup>30)</sup> child care program. The core of Quebec's new program is consistent with the 1970s experiments as a key role was allocated to the non-profit, community-based CEPs, responsible to elected boards. More broadly, it has had a substantial impact on the number of spaces available for preschool children, just as the earlier decision by the Ministry of Education substantially improved access to OSH care for school-age children as Table 3 suggests. While Quebec accounts for only 22% of very young children in Canada, it contains 40% of the regulated child care spaces(OECD, 2005: 52). The election of a Liberal government resulted in a rise in the daily fee to \$7, opened the way to funding new for-profit child care and severed the link between the non-profit "*centres de la petite enfance*"(CEPs) and family child care providers. Nevertheless, Quebec's child care system has clearly broken the liberal mould, with its ambition of developing a Scandinavian-style system.

This is not to suggest that Quebec(and, within the limits possible, Toronto) have been the only places where important path-breaking initiatives have been taken. Under social democratic governments British Columbia(in the 1970s and again in the late 1990s) and Manitoba(in the 1980s and since

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30) Now \$7 a day

2000) have taken important steps and, until recently, the city of Vancouver has had a child care plan with “social democratic” ambitions.<sup>31)</sup> None, however, have gone as far as Quebec toward the construction of a universal early learning and child care system.

There have also been persistent efforts to reform at the federal scale. While the earlier push for universal child care under the banner of gender equality yielded limited results, the national children’s agenda launched jointly by the federal and provincial governments<sup>32)</sup> in the late 1990s led to new federal initiatives. The first, the Early Child Development initiative, involved a federal commitment of \$2.2 billion over 5 years beginning in 2000-2. Provinces could choose from a menu of options, including the “strengthening of early childhood development, learning and care” as one of four areas. It resulted in little new investment in child care, however, with some important exceptions, to be discussed below. The key initiatives were the Multi-lateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care(2003) and the bilateral agreements negotiated with all ten provinces in 2005. Both sought to entrench the “QUAD” principles across the country(quality, universality, accessibility and developmental in orientation).

The Multilateral Framework Agreement committed the federal government to transferring \$1.05 billion to the provinces and territories over five years. The agreement did not require matching provincial investment and the provinces were free to select from a broad menu of ECEC expenditures, including demand-side measures more typical of a market oriented model - information provision, fee subsidies, quality assurance - and the kind of supply-side measures associated with ECEC as a key part of the social

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31) In May of this year, Vancouver’s city council, which is dominated by the right-wing NPA, voted to axe the city’s Childcare Design Guidelines, lowering regulations to provincial standards (Vancouver Province, 2.05.08, reported in the CRRU’s “child care in the news” bulletin.

32) Quebec was not signatory to this or to the subsequent Multi-lateral Framework for Early Learning and Child Care. It did, however, receive equivalent funds because its programs were in line with the objectives these sought to further.

infrastructure – capital and operating grants, training and professional development, and wage enhancements. The Multilateral Framework Agreement did, however, seek to entrench the QUAD principles as it committed all governments to report annually on their investments, specifying efforts to improve availability, affordability and quality.

All ten of the bilateral agreements negotiated in 2005 referred to the QUAD principles and included a commitment to report to the provinces' respective publics and to exchange information with an eye to contributing to the development of a pan-Canadian quality framework. Moreover, for the first time in over a decade, Quebec was officially included. Yet there were important limitations. Only two agreements made it clear that the funds would only be invested in non-profit operations, while three explicitly stated their intention to fund commercial operations, despite the fact that study after study has confirmed that non-profit operations are much more likely to provide quality care than their commercial counterparts. Only three agreements specified that investments could include innovative programmes in the formal school system – a move which could do much to bridge the divide between child care and pre-school education. Moreover, while eight provinces committed to investing only in regulated ECEC programmes, two did not. One of these was New Brunswick, which has one of the weakest records in this field.

Any progress made through these agreements toward a national vision of child care was extinguished as soon as the Harper Conservatives took office in 2006 and implemented its alternative vision of a federal child care plan. The Conservative government's vision combined a social conservative focus on the family – the so-called universal child care benefit, which offered all families a taxable benefit of \$100 a month for each child under six, with no requirement to use it for early child learning – with a neo-liberal emphasis on private sector provision of new child care spaces (the “child care spaces initiative”). The Conservatives' child care benefit has been strongly criticised. As Battle et al note, under the benefit

no family ends up with the full \$1,200 [per annum]. Welfare families net \$951, while working poor and modest income families are in the \$600–800 area. Two earner couples in the middle range...get about \$900. In the upper income 100,000 plus range, one earner families get \$970, two earner couples between 850 and 680 and the very small group of single parent families from 680 to 640(2006a:2).

In other words, the biggest winners are not working parents but high income single breadwinner families. In no case, moreover, does the amount provided do more than cover a very modest amount of child care fees. Little is being done to develop child care as part of a high quality social infrastructure. Although the Conservatives were forced to retreat on their plan to increase spaces by providing incentives to business, in the face of clear evidence that the business community was not interested(Collier and Mahon, 2008), the new transfer payments it is making to the provinces for child care amount to substantially less than they would have received under the bilateral agreements as Table 3 shows. The Table also indicates that much is left to be done to provide regulated spaces for all children of working mothers, even in the province of Quebec.

Many of the parents who are unable to obtain a space in regulated care are forced to rely on informal care arrangements, often in unlicensed care. In addition, many parents - perhaps as much as half of all dual earner couples with children - also rely on to shift work to cover their child care needs(OECD, 2005: 198). While shift work is associated with male jobs in the goods-producing sector, many of the women with jobs in the health care and private service sector also work shift work.

In addition to child care, the rising share of frail elderly in the population is generating a need for long term care services for the elderly, yet the situation here is even worse than it is for child care. Long term care includes services that fall under health care - acute and chronic care in hospitals - and those once funded under CAP such as community- based group homes, physio- and occupational therapy programs and respite care as

well as home care services such as visiting nurses, homemaker services and meals on wheels(Armitage, 2003).” In the period of welfare state expansion, the emphasis was on residential care and nursing homes, with the latter often commercially operated. As Peng notes, over the last decade or so, “many provinces have cut the number of chronic care beds and hospitals and shifted such care to community and private homes as part of health care reform. Although many of these services are provided by social welfare systems and by the voluntary sector, these services are often means-tested and... constantly in danger of being retrenched”(2006: 3-4). Aronson and Neysmith’s(2006) case study of home care in Ontario documents the introduction of internal markets and contracting out to the for-profit sector and the impact this has had on its largely female workforce. As a result, all too frequently, “eligibility regulations accord priority to medical needs and basic bodily maintenance; no room is left for more spacious or inclusive responses to the needs and aspirations of frail elderly people...”(Aronson and Neysmith, 2001: 154).

Manitoba is the only province to develop a universal, completely public home care program(Finkel, 2005: 303). The new infusions of federal cash coming through the Canada Health Fund may alleviate some of these problems on the medical side, but funding also needs to be increased through the Canada Social Transfer to support domiciliary services. In contrast to the funds(albeit inadequate) targeted for early childhood education and care, however, the need for various forms of elder care has not attracted the necessary political attention.

### *Time to care?*

Publicly-subsidised and regulated child(and elder) care services only form part – albeit an important part – of the work-family reconciliation package. Paid parental leave time to care for infants is increasingly recognised as important, not only to meet care needs but also for gender equality(OECD,

2007). At the same time, long maternal or parental leaves(e.g. 3-4 years), as are found in Finland, France and Austria(and recommended by the task force appointed by the Conservative government), do little to promote gender equality as they are primarily taken by women(Mahon, 2006). More broadly, as the OECD noted, in most member countries, “*gender equity* objectives appear to be incidental rather than serve as primary policy objectives...with the exceptions of the Nordic countries and Portugal. With its largely individualised parental leave system, Iceland has the most comprehensive set of policies which aim to *enable fathers to spend more time with their children* and generate a more equal sharing of care responsibilities for young children”(2007: 14 Emphasis in the original).

Time to care for children is not the only concern. Many working age adults in Canada are engaged in providing care to the elderly. As Pyper noted, “While seniors receive some help from formal sources such as agencies, organizations or paid individuals, almost three-quarters of the hours spent assisting them are provided by a network of family and friends(2006:5). Here too gender equality is at stake. Although both men and women provide such supplementary care, “women are more likely to be the high-intensity caregivers”(Pyper, 2006:12). Nor are employee’s demands for time to care restricted to child and elder care. There is increasing interest among workers in securing a broader “right to care.” As Arthurs found, they are seeking “a framework of rights that would ensure that all members of the labour force... enjoy the opportunity for decent livelihoods, fair working conditions, a sensible balance between one’s working life and personal life and the flexibility necessary to accommodate individual, cultural and religious preferences”(2006: 16-17).

Just as in child and elder care services, however, Canada’s work time regime<sup>33)</sup> largely reflects the liberal, market-oriented values of the broader

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33) Fudge identifies the components of a working time regime as follows: “1) restrictions on the hours and scheduling of work; 2) paid time-off work; 3) leaves of absence from

labour market regime in which it is embedded. Yet here too, federalism has left its imprint, as industrial relations and employment standards legislation is split between the federal government, which is responsible for federally-regulated industries, and the provinces, which are responsible for the majority of workplaces and employees. Certainly, the federal government played a pace-setting role for the provinces in the postwar era, and it has used unemployment insurance, which is under its jurisdiction, to continue to do so by extending the period of paid parental and now compassionate leave(see below). Nevertheless today innovation comes as much from certain provinces, like Quebec, as from the federal government. Just as in the area of child care, there have been important advances, especially in the area of parental leave and, once again, Quebec stands out as a “social democratic” path-breaker.

### *Maternity and parental leave*

British Columbia was the first to introduce the right to unpaid maternity leave in the 1920s but the right to maternity leave did not become universal in Canada until 1971, when the federal government introduced into the unemployment insurance program a maternity leave provision of 15 weeks for all eligible women(Fudge, 2006: 8, fn 4). Most provinces follow the pattern established in the Canada Labour Code for federally-regulated employees, who are now eligible for 17 weeks maternity leave, but Alberta grants less(15 weeks) and Quebec and Saskatchewan offer more(18 weeks). Most provinces have also followed the federal norm regarding the right to(unpaid) parental and adoption leave of 37 weeks, though in Quebec and Nova Scotia it is 52 weeks. In all provincial jurisdictions, except Quebec and Manitoba, the combined duration of maternity and parental leave cannot exceed 52 weeks. The majority of jurisdictions permit both parents to take the full parental or

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work; and 4) the treatment of working-time arrangements that deviate from the norm” (2008:4).

adoption leave, but in Alberta, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, leave is to be shared between parents. To qualify for leave under federal jurisdiction, an employee must have six months of continuous service, in Manitoba, 7 months and Alberta and Nova Scotia, 12 months. Quebec, New Brunswick and British Columbia do not require a specific length of service.<sup>34)</sup>

When the federal government included maternity leave in the unemployment insurance program, mothers were able to collect benefits for the specified period at the same rate as unemployment insurance. In 1990, the federal government added a provision for parental leave benefit – 10 weeks in addition to maternity leave, which could be taken by either parent or shared. Similar leave benefits were granted to adoptive parents. In 2001, the federal parental leave benefit was extended to 35 weeks, the two week waiting period was eliminated for the second parent to encourage(his) participation, required hours worked were reduced from 700 to 600, making it easier for women working part time or in unstable jobs to qualify, and allowing retention of earnings up to 25% of benefits(or \$50 a week, whichever is higher). This reform places Canada among the more “gender equality” countries of the OECD in terms of the duration of leave benefits, but the rate of remuneration(55% of insurable earnings, with a ceiling of \$39,000 a year) is relatively low, and thus provides little inducement for the often higher-waged fathers to share the leave.<sup>35)</sup> Moreover, the self-employed and those who have worked less than 600 hours fail to qualify for the benefit. As a result, in 2003 63% of new mothers in Canada qualified for maternity/parental leave, with the majority taking eleven months of leave. One third of self-employed mothers, however returned to work within two

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34) Taken from Length of maternity, parental and adoption leave in employment standards legislation (unpaid) [www.hrsdc.gc.ca/cgi-bin/hrscd-rhdsc/pring/pring.asp?Page\\_Ur=/en/lp/spila/ccli/escl...](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/cgi-bin/hrscd-rhdsc/pring/pring.asp?Page_Ur=/en/lp/spila/ccli/escl...) accessed 6/26/08.

35) As the OECD study noted, “low income parents in Canada are eligible for the EI family supplement which can raise the replacement rate up to 80% of previous earnings” (2004:189).

months of giving birth(OECD, 2005: 190-191).

Most Canadian parents secure maternity/parental leave benefits under the federal program, with the exception of Quebec, which introduced its own program in 2006. In addition to a longer maternity leave benefit, the Quebec plan has eliminated the waiting period, includes a five week paternity benefit similar in effect to the “daddy quota” in certain Scandinavian programs, and offers a higher rate of remuneration(75% to a maximum of 57,000) for seven weeks. The Quebec plan also includes the self-employed and, instead of the 600 hours of work qualification, requires minimum annual earnings of \$2000 a year. This has had an impact not only on eligibility levels for women(77% versus 62% in the rest of Canada) but also on father’s participation rates, as a recent study found. Thus in 2006, 56% of eligible Quebec fathers claimed versus 10% of fathers in the rest of Canada. Moreover, 55% of fathers claiming parental leave benefits outside of Quebec had a spouse who didn’t(and presumably couldn’t) claim(Marshall, 2008).<sup>36)</sup>

Employees may seek top ups from their employers to compensate for the low replacement rate in the federal maternity/parental program and the two week waiting period. This is the case for employees of the federal government who can receive 93% of their salary for the duration of their leave(OECD, 2005: 190). Yet the OECD notes that “additional maternity pay is limited to only 17% of collective agreements in Canada(2004:189). Moreover, as the majority of the Canadian labour force is not covered by a collective agreement, it is unlikely that these workers are even worse off.

### *Other care related legislated leave provisions*

The federal government and all provinces except Alberta and British

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36) In September, the all party federal House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women recommended broadening federal maternity and parental leave coverage to include self-employed workers and the elimination of the two week waiting period. The Conservative government refused(CRIAW, 2006:2)

Columbia also have provision for compassionate leave.<sup>37)</sup> Federal labour legislation provides the right to up to 8 weeks for the care for support of a narrowly defined range of family members who are certified by a medical doctor to be facing imminent death.<sup>38)</sup> Saskatchewan extends the leave to 16 weeks where the individual is receiving a federal benefit, however, and Quebec extends it to 12 weeks, or 104 days for a child who is a minor. Some provinces include foster parents or foster children(Ontario), siblings(Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan), grandparents(Quebec and New Brunswick) or grandchildren(New Brunswick). New Brunswick also offers the right to leave for someone facing imminent death who “whether or not related by blood, demonstrates an intention to extend to one another the mutual affection and support normally associated with a close family relationship”(Fudge, 2006: 48). Eligibility requirements also vary. To be eligible in Manitoba and Newfoundland, one must have worked for 30 days with the same employer, in Quebec and Nova Scotia, six months. Through the federal unemployment insurance program, employees have the right to 6 weeks(following a two week waiting period).

### *Flexibility - on whose terms?*

As Fudge notes, “the question of flexibility often comes down to the issue of control: who gets to choose how hours of work are scheduled. Laws and policies influence not only who gets to make the choices, but also the range of choices that can be made”(2006: 16). While the Canadian parental and compassionate leave programs do reflect public awareness of the growing importance of time to care, they fall short not only of those offered in the Scandinavian countries but also in Quebec. When it comes to securing

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37) This section draws heavily on Fudge’s(2006) excellent study, prepared for the Arthurs Commission.

38) These include one’s spouse, common law partner, child, parent of the employee or their spouse or partner’s parent.

working people's right to time off or flexible schedules allowing them to deal with other "life" issues, little has been achieved. In its report, the OECD noted that "In Finland and Sweden, comprehensive social and family support models have been developed in close co-operation with employers and unions: time-related work-place support for parents is provided collectively. By contrast, parents in Canada...rely to a much greater extent on support made available in individual workplaces(2004: 178). In other words, with the(partial) exception of paid parental and compassionate leave, the Canadian system relies more on the market – or more specifically, the market power of individuals. This means that the balance is tilted in favour of employers.

Thus while the Canada Labour Code still officially holds to the postwar standard of an eight hour day, 40 hour week, there are numerous exemptions permitting overtime, all of which "reduce the cost of employing workers for long hours"(Fudge, 2008: 7). Fudge notes that a series of studies of the relevant section of the Code indicated "widespread failure to comply with hours of work rules in the federal jurisdiction, that overtime hours were increasing and that work-family conflict was on the increase" (2008: 7). The Canada Labour Code does not provide for equal or comparable treatment(wages and benefits) for part time workers moreover, nor does it give employees the right to request shorter or longer hours to deal with familial or other requirements or the right to time off work to attend to family members. Most provincial jurisdictions also permit differential treatment of full- and part-time workers(Fudge, 2006: 32).<sup>39)</sup> Here again, Quebec(and Saskatchewan) constitute the exceptions. Quebec legislation prohibits payment of a lower rate to part-time workers performing the same task as their full-time counterparts. Saskatchewan obliges employers to pay prorated benefits to those working between 15 and 30 hours(Fudge, 2006:33). Fudge goes on to note however that "no jurisdiction in Canada imposes an

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39) *The Canadian Human Rights Act* does however offer an avenue for raising these issues (Fudge, 2006:32).

obligation in labour standards legislation to accommodate a request to modify hours of work or working time for any reason, including caring for family members”(2006:33).

There have, however, been some attempts to change labour legislation in order to establish a better balance of rights. Thus in 2000, the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation(CAALL) struck a committee to look into work-life balance, which reported to the federal and provincial Ministers of Labour in 2002. The report called on the Ministers to play a leadership role on the issue of work-life balance and to encourage stakeholders to work together on these. Although there has been no follow-up on this through CAALL, when the OECD conducted its study of “family-friendly” policies in Canada, it noted that a review of the federal labour code was taking place, and encouraged the Canadian government to use this opportunity to encourage appropriate changes(OECD, 2005: 27).

The review, headed by Harry Arthurs, did indeed take up these issues. In fact, Fudge’s thorough report was prepared for the commission. The final report submitted by Arthurs, *Fairness at Work*, recommended, inter alia, that “While Part III [of the Code] cannot provide the necessary financial supports, it should do what it can to create an awareness of the issues and to enable workers to find some time for necessary social and civic functions as well as to accommodate religious and cultural needs. New unpaid leaves should be established that will enable workers to deal with family responsibilities, medical issues, bereavement, education or court attendance”(2006: xiii). More specifically it recommended:

- Maternity, parental and compassionate leave should be made more flexible;
- Workers should have the(limited) right to refuse overtime to meet family obligations;
- Workers should have the right to request individual accommodation

concerning hours and location of work;

- Part time and temporary workers should receive equal pay if they perform the same work as full time and permanent employees;
- As many temporary and part time workers, as well as those working for small firms, do not have access to benefits, the government should look into the possibility of establishing a “benefits bank” to enable them to get such benefits;
- The federal government should return to its former leadership role in setting the minimum wage, based on the principle that “no Canadian worker should work full time and still live in poverty” (Arthurs, 2006: xvi)

The Conservative government has not however implemented these recommendations.

## 4. Conclusions

For the most part, Canadian policies on work-life balance conform to the liberal mould. Although there have been several attempts to establish a pan-Canadian child care system built on the “QUAD” principles, these have never granted child care the same status as health care, that is enshrined in federal legislation. As such they have remained highly vulnerable to changes in government, such as the 2006 election of a Conservative government whose vision is inspired by a blend of neo-liberal and neo-familial values. In terms of the “right to care”, Canada’s liberal industrial relations regime has given employers substantial flexibility, while limiting the rights of the majority of employees. Important steps were taken to establish the right to paid parental leave, but the relatively low replacement rate and eligibility limits make the program unattractive to most fathers and render ineligible a

significant proportion of Canadian women. The same problems limit the value of the federal compassionate leave program. Although the previous government appointed a commission to look into reforms to the Canada Labour Code that would strengthen employees right to care, the current government chose not to act on its recommendations.

Are Canadian families – and, in particular, Canadian women – thus caught within the confines of a liberal regime? As this paper has argued, Canadian federalism does have the virtue of allowing for inter-provincial (and inter-municipal) innovations. Some, as in Alberta, have used this room to chart a more pronounced neo-liberal, neo-familial course. Thus whereas over the last decade, other provinces have added substantially to their child care spaces, Alberta has actually reduced the number of regulated spaces and has pioneered programs like “kin care” and supports for early childhood education for stay-at-home mothers. It is thus not surprising that the labour force participation rate of mothers of pre-school children is the lowest in the country despite the high demand for labour and concomitant rise in provincial wage rates. Alberta also offers the most limited rights to care leave in the country. In contrast, the Quebec government has looked to the Scandinavian social democracies. Its “\$5” (now 7) a day child care program aims to provide affordable, high quality child care for all preschool and school aged children. More recently, it has introduced a parental leave program which includes the equivalent of the Scandinavian “daddy months” and offers a higher rate of benefits, without a waiting period. It is thus not surprising that more fathers in Quebec have been prepared to share the leave. The program also includes the self-employed and others who are excluded by the federal requirement of 600 hours worked over the previous year. A greater share of Quebec women than in the rest of Canada is thus able to benefit. Its employment standards legislation does more to protect the rights of part time workers. Higher union density also means that more workers in Quebec can benefit from collective agreements.

Quebec is not alone in this, of course. Other provinces, and some municipalities, have also attempted to establish work-life measures that push the beyond the limits of liberal market economies. In the past, as the example of health care shows, provincial innovation has stimulated federal initiatives in the same direction. In fact, the previous federal government's child care initiatives were inspired by Quebec's achievements. The current federal government's values lead it to favour Alberta's neo-liberal, neo-familial response to contemporary work-life challenges but it enjoys limited support in Canada's urban areas, where the majority of the population is located. In other words, the "giant steps backward" may in the end be followed by new, path-breaking initiatives.

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Table 1. Provincial Birth Rates (per 1000) and % Workforce Participation by Mothers, by Age of Youngest Child, 2005

Province	birth rate per 1000	Youngest child less than 3	Youngest child 3–5	Youngest child 6–15
Newfoundland and Labrador	8.5	65.5	71.6	77.3
Prince Edward Island	10.1	80.6	84.0	86.5
Nova Scotia	9.2	76.2	76.7	81.6
New Brunswick	9.1	71.3	79.7	81.8
Quebec	10.3	74.1	78.5	82.7
Ontario	10.5	69.4	75.6	83.7
Manitoba	11.8	63.9	76.3	85.0
Saskatchewan	12.2	67.0	76.9	87.2
Alberta	12.6	62.5	68.7	81.0
British Columbia	9.6	64.3	75.7	79.4

Calculated from data provided in Early childhood education and care in Canada 2006, M. Friendly, J. Beach, C. Ferns and M. Turiano (2007) Childcare Resource and Research Unit

Table 2: Women's participation in non-standard employment in Canada

Year	% of women employed part time	% of men employed part time	% of women self employed	% of men self employed
1976	23.6	5.9	8.6	14.2
1986	27.6	8.9	9.7	17.1
1996	29.0	10.8	12.2	19.4
2006	26.1	10.8	11.3	18.6

Source: [www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89F01XIE/2006000/tables/tab10.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89F01XIE/2006000/tables/tab10.htm) and [tab7.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89F01XIE/2006000/tables/tab7.htm)

Table 3. Children 0–12 with mothers in the paid labour force, Regulated child care spaces, by province, and federal transfers to the provinces (\$ million)

Province	Total number of children 0–12 with mothers in the paid labour force	Total regulated spaces 2004	Total regulated spaces 2007	Federal Transfers 2006–7	Federal Transfers 2007–8
Newfoundland and Labrador	38,300	4,921	5,868	MFA 4.7 Bilateral 10.3	MFA 5.4 Transfer: 3.9
Prince Edward Island	14,500	4,771	4,824	MFA 1.3 Bilateral 2.8	MFA 1.5 Transfer 1.1
Nova Scotia	83,900	12,759	13,247	MFA 8.6 Bilateral 18.7	MFA 10 Transfer 7.1
New Brunswick	67,300	11,897	14,170	MFA 6.9 Bilateral 15.0	MFA 8 Transfer 5.7
Quebec	700,400	321,732	364,572	MFA 70.4 Bilateral 152.7	MFA 81.9 Transfer 58.5
Ontario	1,249,900	206,743	243,488	MFFA 116.7 Bilateral 252.9	MFA 136.5 Transfer 97.5
Manitoba	114,900	25,634	26,375	MFA 10.8 Bilateral 23.7	MFA 12.8 Transfer 9.0
Saskatchewan	97,700	7,910	8,850	MFA 9.1 Bilateral 19.9	MFA 10.5 Transfer 7.5
Alberta	314,100	63,351	66,288 <sup>40)</sup>	MFA 31.0 Bilateral 66.0	MFA 36.3 Transfer 25.9
British Columbia	361,700	80,230	82,386	MFA 39.6 Bilateral 85.6	MFA 46.4 Transfer 33.1

Data taken from Early Childhood Education in Canada 2006 by M. Friendly, J. Beach, J. Ferns and M. Turiano, Tables 6 and 28, page 228 and Child care space statistics 2007, CRRU, 2008, Table2, page 15.

40) No data for 2007 so figure given is for 2006

# IV

## *Answers to Work–Care Dilemmas: Initiatives in the Netherlands*

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## 1. Introduction

Like other Western European countries, the Netherlands has seen an increase in the female labour market participation rate in recent decades. In 1975, only 29 percent of Dutch women had a job of one hour or more a week; in 2002 this had increased to 65 percent. After a short period of stabilisation due to rather unfavourable economic conditions, a slight increase became visible again in 2006 and 66 percent of Dutch women between 15-65 years of age are now in employment (Portegijs & Keuzenkamp, 2008). As elsewhere in Europe, the rising number of female workers implies that the single-earner family is disappearing in the Netherlands. More and more families need and wish to combine paid work with family responsibilities.

This paper addresses the question what kinds of work/life balance policies have been developed in the Netherlands since the 1990s and whether they have been successful or not. In order to answer this question we will review research on the satisfaction with work-life balance in the Netherlands. Existing work-life policies in the Netherlands will be discussed in more detail: childcare policy, leave arrangements, the life course saving scheme and working time policies.

## 2. Trends and policies in response to diversification

Working part time is a widely used strategy in the Netherlands. A majority of couples combine paid work with care for young children. By implication, the “one-and-a-half earner” family – in which one partner (usually the man) works full-time and the other (usually the woman) has a part-time job – has become the new norm. In 2005, 46 percent of all couples with children under the age of 18 followed the one-and-a-half earner model, while only 6 percent of these couples had two full-time workers. About 40 percent were

single-earner families by that time, and in 6 percent of these couples, both parents had part-time jobs(SCP/CBS, 2006).

Another important trend in the Dutch labour market is the ageing of the workforce. The population in the Netherlands is getting older, a fact it shares with all European countries. The workforce is following the general ageing trend. By 2020, about half of the potential Dutch workforce is expected to be 45 years and older(CBS, Statline).

Trends in feminisation and the ageing of the workforce are part of a general increase in the diversity of the labour market population. As elsewhere in Europe, the labour force in the Netherlands is made up of a rather diverse group of people working full time, part time, in flexible jobs and in temporary jobs, and who are fathers, mothers, and belong to different ethnic and age groups. This process of diversification goes along with the increasing variation and diversification of modern workers' life courses. The standard life course, mainly of men who worked 40 years without interruption for the same employer, is disappearing rapidly. In contrast to the traditional, standard life course, the modern life course is characterised by frequent transitions, or at least more than in the past, and by a combination of activities and tasks. Life courses have become less similar and people no longer experience important life events, such as marriage, having children, or entering the labour market, in the same sequence(Schippers & Sap, 2006).

More variation in life courses does not mean, however, that there are no longer any institutionalised phases in modern life. The "modern biography" is thought to consist of five different life stages. The first two are not of interest to this paper: childhood, a phase of socialisation and receiving care, and young adulthood, with education and work but generally speaking no care duties. The following two life stages are of interest: firstly, the "rush hour" or busy middle phase, where people combine many different tasks in terms of work and career, build up a family and provide care, a particularly busy period, with – sometimes – ageing parents growing dependent.

Secondly, the phase of the “younger elderly”, who are sometimes still in paid work, but often not, and where care duties change from caring for children to caring for grandchildren, and on average leisure time grows. The final phase is the “intensive care” phase in which elderly people may need care from their family or from institutions.

For a long time, social policy in the Netherlands was heavily influenced by the breadwinner model. This model was based on the traditional division of paid and unpaid work between women and men, with men earning a living and women taking care of the children. Individualisation and policies supporting the combination of paid work and care responsibilities came relatively late to this country, compared to other European countries. In the 1980s, *gender equality reforms* focused on individualisation accompanied by demands for a more equal division of paid and unpaid work between men and women (Sainsbury, 1996). It was not until the 1990s that the Dutch government started developing measures to support the combination of tasks. The growing concern for the combination of work and care responsibilities in the 1990s was closely related to societal changes such as the increasing labour market participation of women with children since 1970, the growing demand for childcare, and the changing workforce, which was no longer dominated by the male single earner but increasingly characterised by employee diversity.

The focus of government policy in the 1990s was very much directed at working mothers, enabling them to combine paid work with the care for young children. Policy measures introduced in that period included leave arrangements, childcare provision and the encouragement of part-time work. The Dutch government did not see itself as the sole actor responsible for the development of work-family policies; a shared responsibility of the state, employers and employees was promoted. Hence, a major role for collective

agreements and individual employer provisions was envisioned (Den Dulk, 2001).

Not until the start of the new century, the life course perspective emerged in policy discussions. The life course debate was framed in terms of task combinations, time pressure, and a better allocation of workload over the life course. Ideas about the *life course policy* are therefore closely connected to the reconciliation of work and care and to allowing time for family life. A new element in the life course debate was the focus on lifelong learning and the optimisation of human capital during the life course. The latter aspect introduced the problem of the ageing society into the life course debate. In today's knowledge-driven society, people need to invest in education throughout their entire life course in order to keep up with technological change and knowledge generation. As a consequence of the ageing population, fewer younger workers will enter the labour force bringing in new knowledge and technologies. Older workers will therefore need to invest in their professional development throughout their working careers. Moreover, to ensure the sustainability of the welfare state people should not only work longer but also more hours. In particular, increasing female participation rates is regarded as essential to ensure that the welfare state remains affordable.

### 3. Work-life balance policies<sup>41)</sup>

Central aim of the present Dutch government regarding the development of work/life balance policies is to ease the combination of paid work and care responsibilities. People should be able to combine paid work with caring tasks if they wish to do so from a live long employability point of view. Policies should ease time pressures, difficulties regarding outsourcing of care,

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41) The description of work-life policies is partly based on a previous paper 'Life course policies in the Netherlands: an answer to work/care dilemmas and an ageing society' (Den Dulk & Van Doorne-Huiskes, 2007).

and financial and organizational problems caused by combining work and care tasks. Support for the combination of tasks is considered important because difficulties in combining work and care eventually result in reduced labour supply and the under-utilization of human capital. In addition, time pressure as a result of combination difficulties increases the risk of burn out and sick leave. Moreover, the government considers caring for children and other relatives as an important value in society. Finally, policy development is impacted by international agreements and policy directives, such as the EU Directive on Maternity leave(92/185/EG) and Parental leave(96/34/EG)(SZW, 2006).

Core elements of the Dutch work-life balance policy are: the Work and Care Act containing various types of leave arrangements, *the Childcare Act*, *the Working Time Adjustment Act*, and the Life Course Scheme. Below these elements are discussed in more detail. A few additional policy measures do exist that are also relevant to the combination of work and care but are only mentioned briefly are: care facilities during the school lunch break, the incentive scheme 'Daily routine' introduced in 1999 to promote and support local initiatives to make it easier for people to combine work and care tasks(Keuzenkamp, 2003), tax measures to support dual earner families and legislation on opening times of shops(SZW, 2006).

Traditionally, children had lunch at home. In order to accommodate this day structure, schools had and often still have relatively long lunch breaks. Since the 1980s schools are obliged to offer the possibility for children to stay at school during the lunch break. These care facilities between school hours, however, do not fall under the *Childcare Act*. More generally, school hours and opening hours of shops and other public facilities and the degree to which they match working hours have a large impact on the way people are able to organize the combination of paid work and caring tasks. In particular school hours do not match general working hours since the school day ends around 15:30 hours and young children have one or two afternoons

free from school during the week. The incentive scheme 'Daily Routine' contained, among other things, many initiatives and experiments in finding new ways to diminish these type of organizational issues both within organizations and within the public domain(Keuzenkamp, 2003).

Since 2001 the Dutch tax system no longer contains breadwinner facilities. This is an important change in policy. In recent years, tax measures have been introduced to support dual earner families. With the introduction of the *Childcare Act*(2005), government support for childcare costs have also been included in the tax system. In the next section the development of the Dutch childcare policy will be discussed.

### *Childcare*

Day care for children has long been regarded as primarily a private responsibility in the Netherlands. Public provision of childcare has only been expanded since the 1990s. In 1990, the Dutch government introduced the Incentive Measure on Childcare, designed to encourage childcare facilities for working parents. The measure included the provision of central government funding to local authorities for establishing new childcare centres(1990-1996). The Incentive Measure actively encouraged employers to participate in and to buy or hire childcare places for their employees in childcare centres. As a result, childcare in the Netherlands has become a public-private partnership between government and employers. During the Incentive Measure period, employers were reimbursed for part of the costs involved. In 1989, employers contracted 13 per cent of childcare places. In 1998, this was already 44 percent(Niphuis-Nell, 1997) and in 2002 more than 50 percent of places(Portegijs, et al., 2002; 2004). In 1990, 5.7 percent of children under the age of 4 were enrolled in childcare centres; in 2004 this was 24.9 percent. Of children between 4 and 12 years, 0.4 percent were enrolled in after-school care in 1990; in 2004 this was 5.8 percent(Portegijs et al., 2006).

Table 1. Dutch employers offering childcare facilities in 1995 and 2005 (in %)

	1995	2005
Total economy	14	42
sector		
Manufacturing/agriculture	22	38
Construction industry	6	31
Commerce, hospitality & recreation	9	37
Transport	5	29
Commercial services	17	45
Government	58	88
Health and welfare	53	68
Other services	31	49
Education	11	47
size		
5-9 employees	8	29
10-19 employees	9	40
20-49 employees	14	60
50-99 employees	24	73
100-499 employees	43	82
500 or more	70	92

Source: Institute for Labour Studies(OSA), Labour Demand Panel, 1996 & 2006

Accessible and high quality childcare is an important condition for reconciling work and family life. After years of Incentive Measures, a *Childcare Act* came into force in January 2005. The Act redirects financial support from providers to parents in order to increase parental choice. The notion of tripartite funding is retained, whereby employers are expected to contribute voluntarily to childcare costs. Although employers had increasingly offered childcare support to their employees, large differences between employers remained(see Table 1). Overall, public sector organisations and large employers were taking the lead, while manufacturing, construction and transport companies and small employers lagged behind. This raised the question of equal access to childcare support, and after years of voluntary employer contributions, employer participation became obligatory in January 2007. Nowadays, parents, the state and employers all pay one third of the

formal childcare costs(the employers of both parents sharing the costs).

Despite the increase in childcare provisions, an ambivalent attitude towards childcare remains in the Netherlands. This ambivalence is reflected in figures about the use of formal and informal childcare. A study by the Social and Cultural Planning Office shows that in households with children aged 0-4 years, 26 percent of the parents make use of formal childcare, which means professional, paid childcare, mostly in childcare centres. Within this group, 15 percent of the parents use only formal childcare, while 11 percent combine formal childcare with informal help from grandparents, other relatives or friends. In 31 percent of the households with children aged 0-4 years, the parents use only informal childcare to enable them to have paid jobs. In other words, informal childcare is more common in the Netherlands than formal care. Also relevant are figures on the number of hours and days per week that parents make use of formal and informal childcare. Parents using formal childcare do so about 18.3 hours per week, which means 2.3 days per week on average. They use informal childcare for 11 hours per week on average(1.7 days)(SCP, 2006).

As mentioned above, the actual use of childcare reflects the attitudes of parents towards childcare. These parental attitudes, in turn, are embedded in a more general societal attitude towards the role of parents, other persons and institutions in raising children. When their first child is born, 60 percent of the young mothers feel that they should stay at home all day to take care of their child. Low educated parents in particular prefer to have their children at home and looked after by themselves or by close relatives(SCP, 2006). Highly educated parents seem to trust formal childcare more than parents with a low or secondary education level.

This does not mean, however, that these parents want their children in childcare the whole week. On the contrary, the number of days parents think

their children should be looked after by persons other than themselves is limited. Many parents think two days is a desirable maximum. Here again, we see differences between higher and lower educated parents: higher educated parents think that up to three days of outsourced childcare is possible, whereas lower educated parents feel that one day is desirable (SCP, 2006).

These normative views of parenthood and, more specifically of motherhood, are an important cultural explanation for the popularity of part-time work as a strategy for combining work and family care in the Netherlands. Interestingly enough, it is not uncommon in the Netherlands for childcare institutions themselves to advise young parents to make use of their services for a maximum of three days per week only.

The most recent development in childcare is the policy on after-school care: since August 2007, schools have been obliged to offer before and after-school care in addition to lunch break supervision. The official aim is to offer childcare between 7.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. (CPB, 2006). This latest development is closely related to the government's somewhat recent aim of increasing women's working hours in order to meet the demands of the ageing population. Schools, however, are receiving some support to meet this obligation. Many schools struggle in practice to provide adequate day-long care. One could argue that the government is transferring and has transferred responsibility for proper after-school care to schools without giving them sufficient means to meet that responsibility. Schools, in turn, were initially reluctant about implementing the measure. However, at the start of the 2007 school year, parents started to claim their after-school entitlements and schools realised that they had to respond. This situation reflects the ambivalent attitude towards professional childcare in the Netherlands, despite a general desire to increase women's working hours in order to meet the rising costs of the welfare state.

### *The Work and Care Act: statutory leave arrangements*

In 1991 parental leave was introduced; working parents, both fathers and mothers, were given the right to take 13 weeks of leave when they have a young child. At first parental leave could only be taken up on a part-time basis. The reason was to ensure that employees keep in touch with the labour market. However, as a result of the EU Parental leave Directive, working parents were also allowed to take three months full-time leave if the employer agrees (Brunning & Plantenga, 1999).

*The Parental Leave Act* was considered as a minimum, to be supplemented by *collective agreements* or policies of individual firms. Ways to supplement legislation are, for instance, the extension of the period of leave or offering partly paid leave. Research investigating employers' involvement in additional work-life policies shows that Dutch employers display a greater involvement in childcare policy compared to leave arrangements. While almost all large-scale organizations with more than 500 employees have childcare facilities (see Table 1), there has been a smaller increase in the number of employing organizations that have parental leave arrangements over and above those required by law (see Table 2). Research analysing collective agreements found that only a small proportion of agreements supplement parental leave legislation (Den Dulk, 2001; Portegijs et al., 2006). A notable exception is the collective agreement for civil service workers that offers a generous financial compensation during parental leave (70% of salary). International comparative research confirms that Dutch employers display a greater involvement in childcare policy than their counterparts elsewhere; they are active in this area, but are less concerned about supplementary leave arrangements (Den Dulk, 2001; European Foundation, 2006; OECD, 2001).

Table 2. Percentage of enterprises with formal and informal parental leave arrangements over and above those required by law, 1992, 1999 &amp; 2001

	Official	Unofficial	None
1992	3	–	97
1999	10	50	40
2001	15	27	58

Source: Institute for Labour Studies(OSA), Labour Demand Panel 1992, 1999 & 2001

The years thereafter saw a rise in the number of statutory leave arrangements, which were concentrated in the *Work and Care Act*(2000) (*Wet Arbeid en Zorg*). The Work and Care Act gives working parents the right to take 16 weeks maternity leave, 13 weeks parental leave and ten days of care leave, two days of paternity leave and four weeks of adoption leave. In June 2005 long-term care leave was added to the *Work and Care Act*. This Act entitles workers to take up 6 weeks of unpaid leave to care for seriously ill relatives(see Figure 1).

Characteristic for the Netherlands is the emphasis on relatively short leave periods and limited compensation for loss of income when taking leave. Maternity leave is fully paid. Short-term care leave is only partly paid(70 percent of salary), and parental and long-term care leave are unpaid. The principle of shared responsibility between government, employers and employees is applied in the financial structure of the leave arrangements. The government offers maternity and adoption leave allowance to compensate workers for the loss of income during the time of leave. Employers can use the normal wages as a mean to hire replacement. During paternity leave, emergency leave and short-term leave the employer(partly) continues paying wages. Employers receive, however, a tax deduction for part of the cost of short-term care leave. Employees need to take care of the loss of income during parental and long-term care leave. They receive some support by the government through the

life course saving scheme that allows saving part of your gross salary for a period of leave later in life(see Section 2.3)(SZW, 2006).

Table 3. Overview statutory leave arrangements in the Netherlands

Maternity leave	16 weeks: four to six weeks before the birth and 10 to 12 weeks after, fully paid.
Parental leave	13 weeks for each parent with a child under 8 years of age, unpaid
Paternity leave	2 days, fully paid
Adoption leave	4 weeks, fully paid
Emergency leave	In case of special personal circumstances, paid
Short-term care leave	10 days a year in case of a sick child, partner or parent, paid at 70% of salary
Long term care leave	6 weeks per year to care for a seriously ill partner, child or parent, unpaid

Source: Portegijs et al., 2006

Leave arrangements are viewed as temporary solutions for caring tasks and are directed at supporting employees. Self-employed however, are excluded and need to find their own solutions. Furthermore, all leave arrangements are individual rights rather than family entitlements as is the case in some other European countries. In the case of family rights, partners can divide the leave between them. In practice, it is usually the mother who takes up the majority of leave. To encourage take up among men the Dutch government opted for individual rights.

Some of the existing leave arrangements contain a clause that allows social partners to deviate from the legislation, also when this means a reduction of the entitlement. This applies to paternity leave and short- and long-term care leave(SZW, 2006). For instance, collective agreements can include an agreement in which employees need to take annual holiday leave instead of short-term care leave.

Leave can be taken flexible, on a full or part-time basis. For instance, parental leave can be taken one day a week over one year or as a period of 3 months full-time leave. Only maternity and adoption leave need to be taken on a full-time basis. However, with respect to maternity leave, employees can vary the starting date between 6 to 4 weeks before the expected birth.

For many employees the unpaid character of leave arrangements is a barrier to its use. In 2005, 3 out of ten parents entitled to parental leave did take up leave; in 2000 this was 2 out of 10 parents. Mothers take up parental leave more often than fathers: in 2005 44% of mothers and 19% of fathers used parental leave. In comparison to mothers, fathers take up parental leave when children are older and they spread out the leave over a longer period of time. Fathers often use parental leave to cut down their working hours with one day a week for a year. Utilization of parental leave is higher among higher educated women compared to lower educated women and among sectors that offer partly paid leave: public administration, education and health. The utilization of more recent leave arrangements, such as short- and long-term care leave is still rather low; around 5 percent of employees who take care of sick relatives or family members take up care leave (Portegijs et al., 2006). When in need of leave to care for ill family member most employees take up annual leave (Van Luijn & Keuzenkamp, 2004).

Research on the utilization of leave arrangements among entitled employees shows that the take up of leave varies greatly across the leave arrangements. Most fathers (90%) take up paternity leave and often extend their leave by taking additional annual leave to stay home with their new born child. Moreover, employees do not always use the legal entitlements regarding emergency and short-term care leave when the need arises; instead they take up annual leave. Non-use of leave arrangements is often related to work related factors, such as an unsupportive organizational culture. Employees report they do not take up

leave because the job does not allow it or because they fear career damage when requesting to use leave arrangements (Van Luijn & Keuzenkamp, 2004).

### *Life course policy*

In 2002, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment published an explorative policy study investigating life course policies. The study investigated the contours of an adequate life course policy, showing that social policy was based not only on the breadwinner family model but also on the standard life course, with a fairly uncommon combination of tasks, transitions and individual choices. An adequate life course policy, as was assumed, should facilitate the combination of tasks, the transitions between life domains and variations in biographies (SZW, 2002). More specifically, a life course policy should tackle three important issues: time pressure during the “rush hour” of life (combining a career with care for young children and other relatives); optimisation of human capital throughout the life course; and preventing the under-utilisation of older workers (Sap & Schippers, 2004).

Putting life course measures into practice in the Netherlands turned out to be a difficult process. Especially, mainstreaming the life course perspective into social policies proved problematical. What we did see were some policies being adopted across different fields, for example making early retirement less attractive, encouraging after-school childcare (see previous section), and sparking off discussions of an individual life course voucher system in education (Sap & Schippers, 2004). One specific life course policy was accepted by Parliament: the life-course saving scheme (*levensloopregeling*). The life-course saving scheme was introduced in 2006 and aims to enable people to save time or money for unpaid leave later in life, in particular during the busy middle stage of life when they combine work and care tasks.

The life-course saving scheme allows people to save a maximum of 12 percent of their gross yearly salary each year. The money saved may be used for early retirement, sabbaticals, or parental leave. The life-course saving scheme

offers a tax break for scheme participants(€ 183 for every year of participation) and an extra tax break for participants who are using the scheme to finance parental leave(half the statutory minimum wage or € 639 a month maximum). The latter was a temporary measure to encourage people to use the scheme for paid parental leave. The money is saved in an independent savings account.

The scheme had not yet been launched when already doubts were being raised as to whether it would actually support working parents in the rush hour of life. To explore this issue, the Social and Cultural Planning Office(SCP) performed an ex ante assessment of the scheme before it came into force. The assessment considered the impact of the scheme on the labour market participation of women. On average, Dutch women work for nine to ten years before having their first child and therefore have enough time to save up to finance parental leave. The SCP showed however, that young people starting their careers tend to prefer spending money on other things. They may not yet know whether or when they will want to take up leave later in life. It is unlikely that young people will save up money for leave that they may or may not need. In addition, lower-income couples and single parents have less money to save. The SCP concluded that the life-course saving scheme is unlikely to increase women's working hours because utilisation is likely to remain low and will be restricted to saving up for full-time or part-time parental leave; that will only postpone the more permanent transition to part-time employment among Dutch women(Keuzenkamp et al., 2004).

As predicted by the Social and Cultural Planning Office, the life-course saving scheme is not as widely used as was hoped for by the government. In 2006 5.5 percent of workers between 15-65 years of age who work 12 or more hours a week participated in the scheme; that is 344,000 Dutch employees in a working population of about 7 million people. Of the 5.5 percent of workers participating in the scheme, half of them save for early

retirement. A third (29 percent) do not know yet how they are going to use the period of leave, only 6 percent of participants are saving for paid parental leave, and 5 percent for a sabbatical. Leave to care for sick relatives, to study or to do voluntary work is rarely mentioned as a reason. Older workers participate more than younger workers and male workers more often than female workers. Higher educated employees tend to participate more than lower educated ones. This is probably income-related, as higher-educated workers earn enough to save part of their earnings for later. The general profile of the life-course saving scheme user is an older, higher-educated, full-time working male on a regular employment contract (Köster, 2007). Recent figures show an increase in utilisation: in 2007, 10 percent of workers participated in the life-course saving scheme, two-thirds doing so to save for early retirement. Few people used the scheme in 2007 for its stated aim, i.e. to take up paid leave during the rush hour of life (CVS, 2008).

### *Working time policy*

While leave arrangements supporting the combination of work and care remain relatively modest and the externalisation of childcare is still limited, the main strategy of workers for combining paid work with care responsibilities has been to cut working hours. Since the 1980s, employers too have discovered the advantages of flexible working and part-time employment. One could argue that the interests of employers and employees converged in part-time and flexible working, specifically in lower-level service jobs with a large female workforce. The government has boosted this process by improving the position of part-time workers in several ways. As a result, part-time work does not necessarily mean marginalised work in the Dutch context.

In 1996, for instance, the Dutch government introduced an act on equal employment terms for full-time and part-timer employees. Consequently, employers are obliged to treat part-timers and full-timers equally with regard to conditions of employment, such as holiday pay and entitlements, overtime

payment, bonuses and training(TK 1996-1997).

In 2000, the *Working Time Adjustment Act*(WAA) came into force. This law gives people the right to reduce or increase their working hours. Employers have to grant requests unless they can show that doing so will be contrary to serious business needs. Every refusal has to be justified by the employer. Employees on the other hand, do not need to motivate their request. Only employers with fewer than 10 employees are excluded from this obligation. Generally, this act seems to have formalised existing work practices related to part-time work; research shows that the majority of requests to reduce working hours are granted and that the number of court cases is very limited.

Table 4. Part-time employed(% of total employment), by sex, 1985, 1995, 2005

	Men			Women		
	1985	1995	2005	1985	1995	2005
Sweden	7	7	12	46	36	40
Finland	6	8	9	17	15	19
Denmark	8	11	13	44	35	33
Belgium	2	3	8	21	31	41
Germany	2	4	8	30	34	44
France	3	5	6	22	29	31
<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>75</b>
Austria	3	4	6	23	27	39
Ireland	2	5	6 <sup>2</sup>	16	22	32 <sup>2</sup>
UK	4	8	10	45	44	43
Portugal	3	4	7	10	13	16
Greece	3	3	2	10	8	9
Italy	3	3	5	10	13	26
Spain	2	3	5	14	16	24
Poland	n.a.	8 <sup>1</sup>	8	n.a.	14 <sup>1</sup>	14
Hungary	n.a.	2 <sup>1</sup>	3	n.a.	6 <sup>1</sup>	6
Bulgaria	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	3
Slovenia	n.a.	8 <sup>1</sup>	7	n.a.	10 <sup>1</sup>	11

Source: Employment in Europe, 1999, 2006.

<sup>1</sup> 1997

<sup>2</sup> 1998

To illustrate the popularity of part-time work in the Netherlands: in 2005 75 percent of working women have a part-time job compared to 23 percent of men(see Table 3). This is well above the EU average. In other Western European countries between 30 and 44 percent of working women are working part-time. Finland is an exception to the Northern European employment patterns, there only 19 per cent of women are in part-time employment. In Southern and Eastern European countries part-time work is also less common, although Italy and Spain witnessed a sharp increase of women in part-time employment between 1995 and 2005.

In the Netherlands, men usually have a part-time job while they are students and in the final phase of their working life. Women tend to reduce their working hours when they have children. This fits in very well with prevailing views of what is proper care for young children, i.e. parental care at home. A considerable proportion of the Dutch population believes that family life will suffer if women work full time(Portegijs & Keuzenkamp, 2008).

Compared with women in other European countries, Dutch women without children are more likely to have part-time jobs. A recent study by the Social and Cultural Planning Office shows that part-time work is not only common among women with young children but also among women without children or with older children. The popularity of part-time work in the Netherlands is therefore not only related to its ideals of motherhood. This means that part-time work is not a temporary situation in the life course, as was envisaged, but rather a much more permanent one. Portegijs and Keuzenkamp(2008) conclude that more research is needed to understand the preference for part-time work among women without children at home, and that policy measures to increase female working hours need to focus much more on this group. One of the likely reasons for women not to increase their working hours is the lack of any financial need. A one-and-a-half-earner family model still seems to be sufficient to maintain a family in the Netherlands.

In summary, part-time work has been normalised in Dutch society, but it is not an uncontested phenomenon. The Dutch government worries that the ageing workforce will make the welfare state unsustainable in the near future. Increasing female employment is seen as crucial to maintaining the welfare state. However, it must be acknowledged that women's current working patterns are very much a consequence of the social policies and cultural signals of recent decades that value and safeguard care at home as well as spare time. So far, none of the Dutch political parties have explicitly encouraged the option of households combining two full-time jobs. Only recently has there been a public discussion suggesting that part-time work under-utilises the human capital potential of women and, in turn, continues the under-representation of women in senior management positions.

#### **4. A better integration of work and family life?**

Over the past 18 years the Dutch government has introduced numerous work/life policies. Within Europe, the level of public provisions in the Netherlands can be considered as modest, compared to before when it was low. Public provisions are not as substantial as is the case in North European countries like Sweden, Norway, Finland or Denmark (see Appendix) but similar to other Western European countries and a bit more generous than most South European countries. Although the Netherlands has witnessed an increase in formal childcare provisions, utilization remains modest in particular when taken into account the amount of time parents use childcare facilities. Leave arrangements are relatively short and only partly paid. However, the length of parental leave is now under discussion and it is being debated to extend this leave up to 26 weeks. With the introduction of the life course saving scheme, government wants to encourage people to save up part of their salary to finance parental leave or long-term care leave. So far very few people do so. In contrast, reduction of working hours is widely used

resulting in the dominance of the one-and-a-half earner family model, with women being relatively inactive in the labour market compared to men.

The question can be raised whether the introduction of work/life policies has indeed enabled Dutch workers to better combine different tasks. This is a difficult question to answer. Longitudinal research is needed and many context factors need to be taken into account, such as labour market conditions and the supportiveness of organizational cultures.

In 2006 the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment conducted an evaluation of existing work-life policies to determine the effectiveness of current childcare and leave provisions. Indicators to determine the effectiveness of existing policies were the utilization of policies and the number of employees combining work and care. Data show that 21 percent of employees that wish to combine work and care are not yet able to realize this preference. For women care responsibilities are a barrier to the combination of work and care and for men work related factors prevail. Non-utilization among those in need of leave arrangements is still fairly common: 54 percent of those in need of parental leave; 31 percent for short-term care leave; and 56 percent of those in need for long-term leave refrain from using the leave. For the longer leaves, non-utilization is related to financial reasons while regarding short-term care leave work-related reasons or lack of awareness of the entitlements reduces take up (SZW, 2006). The Ministry concludes that cultural change is needed at workplaces to increase feelings of entitlement towards leave arrangements. The life course saving scheme was introduced to take away the financial barrier regarding longer leaves, but has not yet the desired effect.

In the scientific literature on work-life balance, much attention has been given to the conflict employees perceive when they combine paid work and caring responsibilities, and the consequences it might have for their well-being. Research considering work-family conflict indicates that around

40 percent of Dutch employees sometimes experience difficulties finding the right balance (Geurts et al., 2002). Another way to get an idea of the successfulness of work-life policies is to consider how satisfied Dutch people are with their work/life balance. Focussing on the overall appraisal of satisfaction with the management of work and personal life takes into account that the relevance of work and care responsibilities can differ between individuals and includes both employees with and without children. This positive approach follows the trend of “positive psychology” and the changed focus in public health from possibilities to cure illness to health promotion (Frone, 2003).

### *Satisfaction with work/life balance*

In order to know how satisfied Dutch employees are with their work/life balance we will make use of data recently collected by the EU project Quality of work and life in a changing Europe (Quality)<sup>42)</sup>. In this study data is collected among service sector workers working and living in 8 different European countries: the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, the UK, Portugal, Germany, Bulgaria and Hungary. Quality is a collaborative cross-national research project with partners in each participating country. In each country, a national team of researchers<sup>43)</sup> surveyed employees from 4 different service sector organizations: a bank/insurance company, a retail company, IT/telecom company and a public hospital. The questionnaire contained questions on

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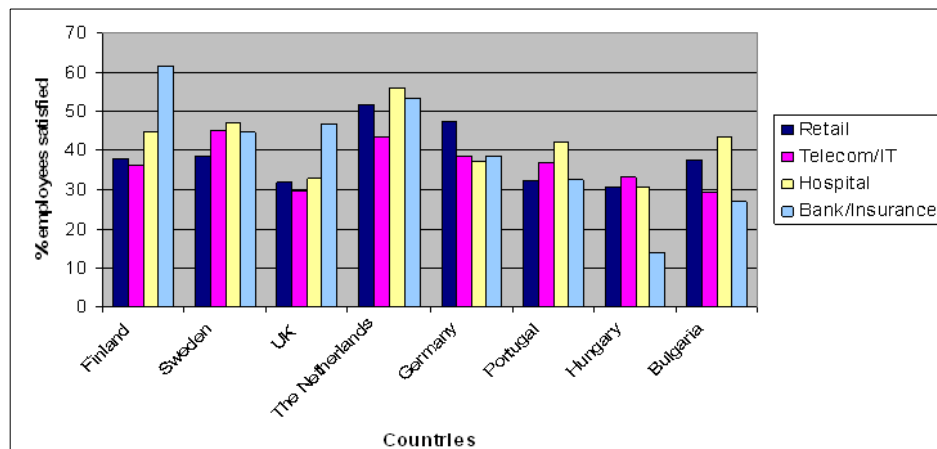
42) This project was funded by the European Union, see [www.projectquality.org](http://www.projectquality.org)

43) *Utrecht University* - Tanja van der Lippe, Anneke van Doorne-Huiskes, Laura den Dulk, Joop Schippers and Els van Kampen; *University of Hamburg* - Sonja Drobic, Barbara Beham, Roland Verwiebe and Patrick Praeg; *CIES-Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology* - Maria das Dores Guerreiro and Eduardo Rodrigues; *University of Jyväskylä* - Jouko Nätti, Timo Anttila and Sakari Taipale; *Central European University* - Eva Fodor and Dorottya Redai; *New Europe Centre for Regional Studies* - Siyka Kovacheva and Stanimir Kabaivanov; *Göteborg University* - Margareta BäckWiklund, Linda Lane and Stephan Szücs; *Middlesex University* - Suzan Lewis, David Etherington and Mick Brookes.

satisfaction with work/life balance, working and household conditions. In total 7869 employees participated in the research working in 32 service sector organizations across the eight countries.

In this study the focus is on overall satisfaction with work-life balance rather than examining the cross-domain transfers of experiences such as work-family conflict or enrichment (Valcour 2006). To measure satisfaction with work-life balance three items were used: how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way you divide your time between work and personal life; your ability to meet the needs of your job with those of your personal or family life; the opportunity you have to perform your job well and yet be able to perform home-related duties adequately? Answer categories ranged from very satisfied to very dissatisfied on a 5-point scale (alpha of 0,89).

Figure 1. Satisfaction work life balance



Source: Quality of life in a changing Europe, 2007

Figure 2 shows the percentage of employees that are (highly) satisfied with their work-life balance across countries and sectors. Notable is the relative high proportion of satisfied employees in the Netherlands. Satisfaction with work/life balance among Dutch service sector employees is similar to countries like Sweden and Finland that are famous for their substantial statutory work/life provisions. The major difference between the Netherlands and other European countries is the tradition of part-time work and protection of part-timers. Low average working hours allows space for caring tasks and leisure time and seems to lead to a high average satisfaction with work-life balance among the Dutch. The lowest rates of satisfaction are found in the Eastern and South European countries: Hungary, Bulgaria and Portugal, countries in which couples often combine two full-time jobs. In many countries hospital employees tend to be more often satisfied with their work-life balance while Telecom/IT employees seem to be the least satisfied. However, there are some notable exceptions to this pattern, such as the Hungarian Telecom company and the Finnish bank. Both companies are having a relatively high percentage of satisfied workers compared to the other organizations in their country.

When trying to explain satisfaction with work/life balance not only national work/life policies should be taken into account but also workplace and household conditions. In fact, growing literature on workplace support suggests that workplaces play a significant role in helping employees balancing work and private life (Warren et al., 1995). Moreover, it is in the workplace in which actual implementation of work-life policies take place and in which take up can be encouraged or discouraged. Discussions on supportive workplaces often focused on three types of support resources: family friendly organizational culture, supportive supervisory practices, and available workplace work-life policies over and above national legislation (e.g. Den Dulk, 2001; Warren et al., 1995; Thompson et al., 1999). Benefits and arrangements like telecommuting, flex-time, part-time work, job sharing,

employer supported childcare and care of the elderly, career break, enhanced maternity, paternity, family leave and other family-friendly organizational policies can be seen as instrumental support (Shaffer 2005; Frone 2003). Instrumental support can be defined as “tangible support one receives directly from others” (Burke, 2006:254), such as time and money. Emotional support is the “individual’s perception of the presence of caring others with whom they can discuss their experiences and feelings” (Burke, 2006: 254). Emotional support in the workplace comprises support from the supervisor and from co-workers as they show empathy and understanding for the work-life balance situation of the employee. A family friendly organizational culture can be seen as a consequence of both. “The classification of an organization’s culture as family friendly implies that its overarching philosophy or belief structure is sensitive to the family needs of its employees and is supportive of employees who are combining paid work and family roles” (Warren et al., 1995: 163).

Support on the private level gained less research than work-related resources. Nevertheless, it is likely that support factors on the private level also impact satisfaction with work-life balance. Support factors at the private or household level can be for example affective experiences with family members and friends like caring and listening. But also help with domestic tasks can make the combination of work and family life easier. Prominent in research among these sources of support are studies on spousal support. Existing studies show both a direct and a buffering effect of spousal support on work-family conflict (e.g. Kim & Ling, 2001; Matsui et al., 1995; Van Dallen et al., 2006). Other sources of support, such as help from grandparents, friends, neighbours and paid domestic help, are less frequently topic of research (Abendroth & den Dulk, 2008).

Findings of the Quality study indicate that in the Netherlands experienced workplace support is relatively high, comparable to the level of support found

in the Swedish and Finnish workplaces. Dutch employees report relatively high levels of job autonomy, which gives people latitude to deal with work/life balance issues(see also Houtman, Smulders & van den Berg, 2006). Furthermore, Dutch service sector workers in the Quality study report a relatively high level of emotional work/life balance support from their direct supervisor and co-workers. These two types of workplace supports are highly relevant for the experienced satisfaction with work/live balance(Abendroth & den Dulk, 2008). The Quality study indicates that also household support matters, in particular having good quality social relations with relatives and social relations in general. Few employees have paid domestic help or receive informal help with domestic tasks and no impact was found on the satisfaction with work/life balance from these two types of support at the household level. Moreover, flexible work arrangements, such as flexible working hours, compressed workweek or telework, often presented as solution to work/life balance issues did not make a difference in the Dutch sample. Remarkable, flexible working hours have a negative impact: the use of flexible start and finishing leads to less satisfaction rather than more. This might be caused by the fact that freedom regarding working hours leaves more room for doing overtime in particular among employees having a lot of task responsibility(Peters, den Dulk & van der Lippe, 2007). The number of working hours, however, does make a difference: the more hours people work, the less satisfied they are with their work/life balance(see Table 4). The same applies for work pressure: the more pressure people experience at work the less satisfied they are with their work-life balance. Overall, women are less satisfied with their work-life balance than men.

Table 5. Linear regression analysis explaining satisfaction with work–life balance among Dutch service sector workers (N=1026)

	Beta
Work pressure	-.197***
Actual working hours	-.234***
Caring responsibilities	-.008
Children at home	-.043
Job autonomy	.156***
Flexible start and finishing hours	-.070*
Compressed work week	-.008
Working from home	-.008
Supervisor support	.020
Colleague support	.067*
Informal help with domestic tasks	-.054
Paid domestic help	.023
Quality of relationship with relatives	.093**
Quality of social life	.246***
Education	-.070*
Partner	.063
Female	-.125***
Age	.018
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.25

\*\*\* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.05

Findings from the quality study indicate that satisfaction with work-life balance is relatively high among Dutch service sector workers. It is not only the availability of formal and instrumental support that matters but also emotional support, both at home and at the workplace that makes a difference. This findings confirms other studies in which the importance of cultural change is emphasized. Findings of another Dutch study among financial sector workers indicate that it is not so much the utilization of policies that determines how successful workers feel regarding their work-life balance but a supportive organizational culture; i.e. the lack of career

demands that conflict with caring responsibilities and supportive supervisor and colleagues (den Dulk & Peper, 2007).

## 5. Concluding remarks

To summarize, to increase workplace support that offer employees greater job autonomy, as well as to optimise existing flexible work arrangements more, seems to be a promising way to increase working hours of women. It is, however, not an easy task since it involves not only government measures but also agreements between social partners and changes in organisational culture and practices at workplaces. In addition, opening hours of schools and childcare facilities should also be taken into account. Furthermore, high quality childcare, well organised and reasonably priced as well as government signals that it is a good alternative for parental care could persuade women to increase their working hours and to move from a small to a large part-time job.

Part-time work is now widely used as a strategy to combine different activities and responsibilities in life. Moreover, part-time work has become a more or less permanent solution, used throughout the entire life course of women, instead of a temporary strategy to overcome time pressures in the busy middle stage of life. Leave arrangements are temporary solutions in case of high care demands. Utilization reveals that take up is not uncontested for most leaves. Regarding leave arrangements sense of entitlement can be improved and requires cultural change in organizations in order to develop a more supportive organizational culture. Challenging question of course for the near future is, how the concept of work-life could become an integral part of strategies of companies in order to create more supportive organizational workplaces.

Regarding childcare use, feelings of ambivalence remain and generally only limited use is preferred encouraging part-time work schedules among working

mothers. Hence, the one-and-half-earner model, in which the male partner works full time and the female partner part time, seems to be the new balance within Dutch households.

Research indicates that the part-time employment model is likely to remain popular in the Netherlands (Bosch, Deelen and Euwals, 2008). Even though part-time work is no longer uncontested, it is going to be difficult to encourage Dutch women to increase their working hours when they no longer have dependent children at home. Both financial and cultural factors explain the popular and permanent nature of part-time work in the Netherlands. For many women there are few financial incentives to increase working hours, as the combination of one full-time and one part-time job is enough to sustain a decent standard of living for many people in the Netherlands. While ideals of motherhood encourage women to reduce their working hours when they have young children, working part time also reduces career opportunities and women may see few possibilities to re-start a career when children are older. Career ambitions may also fade over time. Moreover, couples get used to having leisure time and a certain division of tasks. Workers are generally satisfied with their work-life balance even though gender roles are not really challenged. Consequently, inequality between men and women on the labour market and regarding the division of unpaid work is likely to remain a stable and persistent characteristic of the Dutch society.

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**Appendix 1. Statutory leave arrangements and public childcare across European countries, 2005/06**

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Availability public childcare
Denmark	18 weeks, 100% paid (up to DKR 3115 p/w)	2 weeks, paid 90% (up to max.)	32 weeks per child, per parent, 90% paid (up to max. DKR 3115 per week)	Full coverage
Finland	17.5 weeks, paid between 100–60% of earnings	18 days (extension 1–12 days possible when taking parental leave), payment between 100–60%.	158 days, payment around 60% (home care leave up to child is 3 years of age, flat rate payment)	Since 1996 all children under school age are guaranteed a municipal childcare place
Sweden	7 weeks pregnancy leave and 60 days of parental leave, paid at 80% of earnings	10 days, 80% paid (up to max.)	480 days to be shared between parents, 60 days reserved for each parent, first 390 days 80% of earnings after that flat rate	Right to childcare for children between 1–12 years of age
Norway	9 weeks (part of parental leave), paid between 100–80% of earnings (max 590 EUR)	4 weeks fathers' quota out of parental leave, payment between 100–80%.	42 or 52 weeks parental leave per child to be shared between parents, payment between 100–80%.	Full coverage is a political goal since the 1980s
France	16 weeks (1st and 2nd child), 26 weeks (3rd child), 100% paid (max 2432 EUR per month)	2 weeks (3 in case of multiple births), 3 days 100% paid, afterwards up to max.	3 years per child, flat rate payment in case of 2+ children	Full coverage for children older than 3; 20% of children under 3 are enrolled in nursery facilities and 20% are cared for by a registered child minder
Belgium	15 weeks (17 multiple births), paid between 82–75% of	10 days, payment between 100–82%.	3 months per parent, per child, flat rate payment	30% of 0–3 year olds covered by public

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Availability public childcare
	earnings.			provisions; almost all 3–6 year old in education based care
Germany	14 weeks (18 multiple births), 100% paid	none	3 years (incl. maternity leave) per child, payment is means tested, income related benefit	In West Germany 3% and in East Germany 37% of young children enrolled in public childcare. Since 1996 federal law entitle children older than 3 years to public childcare but places are on a part-time basis.
Netherlands	16 weeks, 100% paid	2 days, 100% paid	13 weeks per parent, unpaid	Increase of childcare facilities since the 1990s, 22% of 0–4 years old are enrolled in public childcare
Switzerland	16 weeks, 100% paid	none	None	Limited and large regional differences
Austria	16 weeks (or 20 for medical reasons), 100% paid	none	2 years, flat rate payment	Very limited for children under 3 years of age
UK	52 weeks, 6 weeks paid at 90%; 20 weeks	2 weeks, 100 GBP p/w or 90% of earnings is this is	13 weeks, unpaid*	Very limited, since 1997 National Child

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Availability public childcare
	flat rate; 26 weeks unpaid	less.		Care Act that is mostly targeted at 3–4 years old.
Ireland	26 weeks, 18 weeks paid at 70%.	none	14 weeks per parent, unpaid	Very limited
Spain	16 weeks (18 in case 3 or more children), 100% paid	2 days (+ 2 days if another town), 100% paid.	3 years per child (incl. maternity leave), unpaid	Very limited for under 3; full coverage for 4–5 year old.
Portugal	17 weeks, 100% paid	5 days, 100% paid.	3 months per parent, unpaid	Target set at coverage of 20% for under 3; 90% coverage for 5 year olds.
Greece	17 weeks, 100% paid (max 42 EUR per day)	2 days, 100% paid.	3,5 month per parent, unpaid	Very limited for under 3 years of age; more extensive between 3 and school age
Czech	28 weeks (37 multiple births), 69% paid (max 25 EUR per day)	None	156 weeks, flat rate payment (121 EUR p/m)	1% of children between 6 months and 3 years of age are enrolled in public care
Bulgaria	19.3 weeks, paid at 90% of earnings	None	24 months, partly paid (minimum wage)	Decline of provisions, enrolment beginning of 2000 is circa 10% 1–3 year olds; 95% 4–6 year olds.
Estonia	18 weeks, 100% paid	14 days	34 weeks, 100% paid	Very limited for under 3,

	Maternity leave	Paternity leave	Parental leave	Availability public childcare
Slovenia	21 weeks (105 days), 100% paid	90 days, 15 days are 100% paid	260 days can be shared between parents, 100% paid	guarantee of provisions for children older than 3 but insufficient supply  Increase of provisions, 40% 1–3 year olds; 65% 4–6 year olds.

Source: OECD Family database, December 2006; ([www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database)); Plantega & Remery, 2005; OECD, 2004

V  
*Whose “Work and Life”?*  
*Whose “Balance”?*  
*Work–Life Balance Policies in Japan*

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## 1. Introduction

In July 2008, the Fukuda government announced the new plan regarding social security, “Emergency plan for functional enhancement of social security: Five security plans.” Five plans are, (1)society where the elderly can lead secure lives in good condition, (2)society where if you are in bad health, everybody can take good medical treatment, (3)society where children, the next generation, are well grown, (4)society where temporary workers can have hope in future, and (5)reestablishing trust in government. Since some scandals regarding pension system occurred, the government is trying to regain people’s trust in them and focusing on “security.” Regarding work-life balance, the government is focusing on restructuring society for “working with hope in future and rearing children without anxiety” and “working at any age with security and living secure lives in their local communities and families.”

As widely known, Japan has been implementing pronatalist policies since the beginning of the 1990s. The fertility rate in 2006 was recorded 1.32(1.26 in 2005), policy reforms regarding childcare and support for reconciling work and family have developed in recent years within this context. In those reforms, the relationship between the state, market and family has been called into question.

This paper has three lines of discussion. Firstly, I consider some theoretical issues for examining the development of “Work-life balance” policies in Japan, the so-called “familialistic” or “male-breadwinner” welfare state(→1).

Secondly, I examine the background of the development of “Work-life balance” policies in Japan. Some features of changes of family formation and working conditions are examined through comparative analysis(→2).

Thirdly, I explore the features of the recent policy responses to these social changes, regarding “work-life balance.” The political discourses and the recent policy implementation regarding “work-life balance” are examined(→3, 4).

Finally, through these analyses I consider recent policy developments' implications on gender, and indicate some future challenges in the context of the Japanese welfare restructuring(→5,6).

## 2. Theoretical points for examining "Work-life balance" policies

### *The two sided-ness of defamilialization and refamilialization*

In the so-called "familialistic" "male breadwinner" welfare state of Japan, the rapid declining birthrate shows *the paradox that a familialistic welfare state in a postindustrial order prohibits family formation*(Esping-Andersen 1997: 186, stress by author).

Through feminist literature, the complexities in the relationship between women and the welfare state, the degree and characteristics of the citizenship of women and its contributing factors, have been revealed from a comparative perspective(Lewis, 1992; Orloff, 1993; Siaroff, 1994; Osawa, 1996; Sainsbury, 1996; Lister, 1997; Siim, 2000; Osawa, 2002). From gender perspective, one of the characteristics of the welfare states in East Asia is said to be the "Familialistic" or "Family-Centered Welfare Regime"(Miyamoto, Peng, and Uzuhashi 2003: 303). While the state has played a limited role in welfare, women have played its alternative role on the basis of division of labor by gender role. Through the concept of "defamilialization", this gendered welfare structure has been questioned.

In addition, the concept has more dynamic nature; the two sided-ness of defamilialization and refamilialization.

Firstly, social rights, once reaching a stage of aiming to achieve actual equality in capitalist society, not only eliminates various inequalities, but paradoxically is also connected with the phenomenon of expanding existing inequalities. It is these two sides of citizenship that Esping-Andersen<sup>44)</sup> and

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44) Acknowledging feminist criticism, Esping-Andersen analyzed the connections between

feminist comparative literature of the welfare state examine. T.H. Marshall follows A. Marshall’s argument that, “basic equality, when enriched in substance and embodied in the formal rights of citizenship, is consistent with the inequalities of social class”. He stated that “the two are still compatible, so much so that citizenship has itself become, in certain respects, the architect of legitimate social inequality (Marshall and Bottomore, 1992: 7).

Secondly, drawing from discussions regarding familialization, “defamilialization and refamilialization” are key concepts needed to clarify the paradoxical relationship between the two sides of citizenship, being the simultaneous elimination and reconstruction of inequalities for women. As Saraceno indicates, the issue is not whether people are completely defamilialized, but rather the extent to which packages of legal and social provisions have altered the balance of power between men and women, between dependents and non-dependents, hence, the terms and conditions under which people engage in familial caring relationships (Saraceno, 2000: 149). Policies oriented to re-familialize or defamilialize might have quite different meaning for men and women, for different class and ethnic groups (Saraceno, 2000: 150).

### *Compressed Experiences*

To suggest the so-called “familialistic” “male-breadwinner” welfare state of Japan exhibits the paradox of prohibiting family formations, is not to suggest that social democratic or liberal welfare states don’t prohibit family formation. Rather, each country has its own problems and tends to bridge (or widen) gaps between changes of family formations and social policy by

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family and welfare by bringing the concepts of ‘defamilialization’ and “decommodification” together. However, as Miyamoto points out, Esping-Andersen’s analysis is a dualistic theory of “decommodification” and “defamilialization”. It works when focused on the spectrum of “defamilialization”, nevertheless, when advanced to include labor commodification he says it is difficult to suggest dualistic “decommodification” and “defamilialization” are not measuring the same thing (Miyamoto 2003:33). Miyamoto says further that the dimensions of “stratification” weaken due to this dualism.

restructuring social systems through trial and error. It can be said that there is much policy irresponsiveness to changing family formations and working conditions in the so-called “familialistic” “male-breadwinner” welfare states than other regimes.

In addition, this is also related to the post-modern state nature of Japan. They have had to respond to intergeneration and generation problems in such a shorter period of time. These problems can be said to be three types of conflict, namely class, gender and generation conflict.

Japan has experienced these three conflicts in a much more compressed time frame than Western countries. This means that Japan also has experienced the three phases of the welfare state in a much more compressed time frame. The three types of conflicts correspond to the three phases of the welfare state.

The first phase is the emergence of the welfare state, which was created due to the aging society(Wilensky, 1975). The welfare state was originally created for the elderly(Myles, 1989), at that time men were designated as the “bread winner” of the family, and the main issue was focused on class conflict. The second phase is the welfare state restructuring period, with the main issues being how to restructure the welfare state for women. Gender conflicts were the main issues. The third phase is the adjustment period of the welfare state and the welfare society. There is the issue of how to restructure them for women and children for problems such as the declining birthrate, child abuse, and child poverty. Problems of redistributing the social security costs of the elderly generation to future generation(children) become the focal issues. In the middle of sluggish growth after a period of rapid economic growth, the post-modern state of Japan has to more effectively distribute limited resources for the elderly, women and children in a shorter period of time than Western countries.

In this compressed time frame, “work-life balance” policy takes an important place.

### 3. Recent changes of family formation and working conditions

#### *The paradoxical phenomenon*

The recent “work-life balance” policy trend has emerged for the political discussion on how to restructure this “familialistic” “male-breadwinner” welfare state. As Esping-Andersen stated, what specifically are *the paradox* in the so-called “familialistic” welfare state?

The first is the dramatic decline of the birthrate. In 2006, the Japanese birthrate was recorded at 1.32. The second is the change of attitude for marriage. It is said the rising mean age of first marriage and the percentage of unmarried people is connected to the dramatic decline of the birthrate.

However, the rate of and speed of change of its mean age is not so significant, for example, when compared with United Kingdom (Table 2). In 1985, the mean age of first marriage was 25.5 years old. In 2000, that was 27.0 (1.5 years older). However, in United Kingdom, that was 23.9 in 1985 and 27.5 in 2000, about four years older.

The percentage of unmarried people has been increasing (Table 3). In Japan, that of men in their 30s was 32.6% and 19.0% in 1990, however, it was increased to 42.9% and 25.7% in 2000. That of women in their 30s was 13.9% and 7.5% in 1990, however, it was also increased to 26.6% (doubled) and 13.8% (doubled) in 2000.

Table 1. Total Fertility Rate

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005
Japan	2.00	2.13	1.75	1.54	1.36	1.32	1.29	1.29	1.25
Korea	–	4.53	2.83	1.59	1.47	1.17	1.19	1.16	1.08 <sub>y</sub>
Italy	2.41	2.43	1.64	1.33	1.24	1.26	1.29	–	–
Denmark	2.54	1.95	1.55	1.67	1.77	1.73	1.76	–	–
Sweden	2.20	1.92	1.68	2.13	1.54	1.65	1.71	–	–
France	2.73	2.47	1.95	1.78	1.88	1.88	1.89	–	–
Germany	2.37	2.03	1.56	1.45	1.38	1.31	–	–	–
Netherlands	3.12	2.57	1.60	1.62	1.72	1.73	1.75	–	–
United Kingdom	2.71	2.43	1.89	1.83	1.64	1.64	1.71	–	–
United States	3.64	2.46	1.84	2.08	2.06	2.01	2.04	–	–

Source:

Japan: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, *Vital Statistics of Japan*(each year).

Korea: National Statistical Office, Vital Statistics. <http://Kosis.nso.go.kr/> National Statistical Office, Preliminary Results of Birth Statistics in 2005. <http://kosis.nso.go.kr/>

The United States: U.S.Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*(1995, 2005).

The other countries: Council of Europe, *Recent demographic developments in Europe* (2004).

Table 2. Mean age of first marriage

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Japan	24.2	24.7	25.2	25.5	25.9	26.3	27.0
Korea	–	–	–	24.5	24.8	25.4	26.5
Italy	23.9	23.7	23.8	24.5	25.5	26.6	27.4
Denmark	22.8	23.5	24.6	26.2	27.6	29.0	29.5
Sweden	23.9	24.8	26.0	27.2	27.5	28.7	30.2
France	22.6	22.5	23.0	24.2	25.6	26.9	28.0
Germany	22.5	22.3	22.9	24.1	25.2	26.4	27.0
Netherlands	22.9	22.6	23.2	24.4	25.9	27.1	27.8
United Kingdom	22.4	22.5	23.0	23.9	25.0	26.2	27.5

Source:

Japan: Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, *Vital Statistics of Japan*(each year).

Korea: National Statistical Office, Vital Statistics. <http://Kosis.nso.go.kr/> The other countries: Council of Europe, *Recent demographic developments in Europe*(2004).

Table 3. Percentage of unmarried people(by age)

Japan								
Year/age	Men				Women			
	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39
1990	92.2	64.4	32.6	19.0	85.0	40.2	13.9	7.5
1995	92.6	66.9	37.3	22.6	86.4	48.0	19.7	10.0
2000	92.9	69.3	42.9	25.7	87.9	54.0	26.6	13.8

Korea								
Year/age	Men				Women			
	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39
1990	96.4	57.3	13.9	3.8	80.5	22.1	5.3	2.4
1995	96.3	64.4	19.4	6.6	83.3	29.6	6.7	3.3
2000	97.5	71.0	28.1	10.6	89.1	40.1	10.7	4.3

Source:

Japan: Statistic Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, *Population Census(each year)*.Korea: National Statistical Office, *Census Population(each year)*.*Imbalanced structures between work and life*

In this pronatalist context, there have been three structures to be indicated; structure of *imbalanced* structures between work and life, strong structures or tendencies towards investment in children<sup>45)</sup>, and *intra*-marital birth<sup>46)</sup>. This

45) There have been strong structures or tendencies towards investment in children. From the perspective of childrearing, the “male breadwinner model” could be said to be a model of “having fewer kids to raise them better”(Soma 2005). From the stand point of children, this might be said to be imbalanced structures between the work(study from the stand point of children) and life of children.

When viewing the expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP for all levels of education, the percentage of educational costs in household expenses of Korea is 4.75%, the highest in the world, and that of Japan is 2.22%, not low at an international level(Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office 2005). Most preschool kids in five East Asian cities usually have extracurricular activities other than attending preschool or childcare facilities(Benesse Educational Research and Development Center 2006).

46) Unlike other countries in Europe, extramarital births have not shown a significant increase in Japan. It was 0.9 in 1970, 1.6 in 2000. This means that the birth rates of

paper focuses on the first point, structure of *imbalanced* structures between work and life.

### *Imbalanced structures between work and life for women*

In the current employment environment, it has been difficult for women with children to keep working. The percentage of women who wants to keep working after having a child has been increasing for these thirty years. The number of double income households has been slightly increasing. However, there was only slight change in the employment rate of women after 1990. However, when looking at the women's employment rate in the period of marriage and raising children, Women's employment in their prime childbearing years has plateaued in both Korea and Japan from 1990 to 2004(Table 4).

Table 4. Employment Rate of Women(by age)

	Women' s Employment Rate(15-64)					Women' s Employment Rate(25-29)				
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004
Japan	54.4	51.6	55.3	59.6	60.1	45.1	49.4	61.2	69.9	74.0
Korea	33.3	41.5	50.0	51.8	54.1	31.7	30.2	42.8	55.9	63.9
Italy <sup>1</sup>	29.9	38.5	44.3	46.3	48.3	36.2	58.5	64.8	61.8	64.2
Denmark <sup>2</sup>	52.3	70.7	77.8	75.8	76.3	58.7	86.6	86.9	80.7	81.0
Sweden	51.4	67.5	82.6	75.5	75.7	54.5	73.6	87.1	78.1	78.5
France <sup>3</sup>	48.0	53.7	56.1	61.6	63.8	62.7	69.7	78.5	79.3	77.9
Germany <sup>4</sup>	-	-	62.6	63.0	65.2	-	-	75.5	74.7	73.3
Netherlands <sup>5</sup>	30.1	38.8	53.1	65.4	67.9	28.2	49.0	69.9	83.0	84.8
United Kingdom <sup>6</sup>	51.9	55.9	66.8	-	-	43.0	55.5	71.7	-	-
United States <sup>7</sup>	46.0	60.0	66.5	70.8	69.2	-	69.0	73.5	77.1	73.1

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Japan and Korea are actually composed of intramarital birth rates, so marriage rate is connected directly to birth rate. The background behind the non-increase of extramarital births is connected to family law.

	Women' s Employment Rate(15–64)					Women' s Employment Rate(25–29)				
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004
Japan	47.3	46.5	50.7	57.1	61.4	56.3	55.5	59.4	61.4	62.4
Korea	36.3	33.5	49.6	48.5	50.4	43.1	43.0	58.0	59.1	58.9
Italy <sup>1</sup>	31.2	52.8	62.1	64.1	65.8	29.5	46.2	59.0	63.0	65.2
Denmark <sup>2</sup>	54.7	84.7	90.7	84.9	84.4	56.6	83.4	90.3	86.6	87.3
Sweden	52.7	74.6	91.1	83.8	83.7	58.8	78.6	93.0	85.5	86.0
France <sup>3</sup>	54.6	65.2	72.8	77.9	79.4	50.6	61.5	71.0	79.2	81.3
Germany <sup>4</sup>	–	–	73.6	76.1	76.8	–	–	75.5	77.8	79.1
Netherlands <sup>5</sup>	–	40.3	61.3	77.4	80.1	–	43.0	61.2	74.5	77.1
United Kingdom <sup>6</sup>	44.9	53.2	69.7	–	–	54.0	62.3	74.4	–	–
United States <sup>7</sup>	–	67.1	73.7	75.6	74.0	–	66.7	75.7	75.8	74.5

1 1970 is year of reference 1971, 1980 is 1981, 1990 is 1989, 2004 is 2003

2 1980 is year of reference 1981.

3 1970 is year of reference 1975, 1980 is 1982.

4 1990 is year of reference 1995.

5 1970 is year of reference 1971, 1980 is 1981, 2004 is 2003

6 1970 is year of reference 1971, 1980 is 1981, 1990 is 1993

7 1980 is year of reference 1982, 1990 is 1991.

The datas of Sweden and United Kingdome after 1990, United States after 1980 is those of 16-64 years old.

Source: ILO Bureau of Statistics, <http://laborsta.ilo.org/>

### *When employed mothers have their first baby...*

In addition, the national panel data of Japan revealed their reality, facing the alternative of “work or care”.

While the percentage of women who take a maternity leave has been increasing, the employment rate of women who keep working after having their first baby has not increased. In fact, about 66.4% of employed mothers with no kids quit their job when they had their first baby, while about 33.5% of them kept working. When their first babies became two and half years old, the percentage of unemployed mothers slightly decreased to 55.1%, while that of employed mothers slightly increased to 45.0%(Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare 2003).

### *Anxiety and stress while childrearing at home*

Furthermore, in Japan, the problem of isolated mothers, especially housewives who are experiencing anxiety and stress while childrearing at home have been defined as a group needing support by some researchers for about twenty years. Only recently, they have been identified as a group needing policy development by some policy makers on the basis of housewives' higher degree of that anxiety and stress than working mothers'. However, according to the national panel data in Japan in 2001, the degree of burdens, which is the percentage of mothers who report feeling burdened during childrearing, is not so different between housewives(80.2%) and working mothers(77.1%)(Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare 2001).

There are different statistical results regarding housewives' and working mothers' degree of experiencing anxiety and stress while childrearing. As will be stated later, recently more housewives' tend to be highlighted by new policy developers than working mothers'.

### *Imbalanced structures between work and life for fathers*

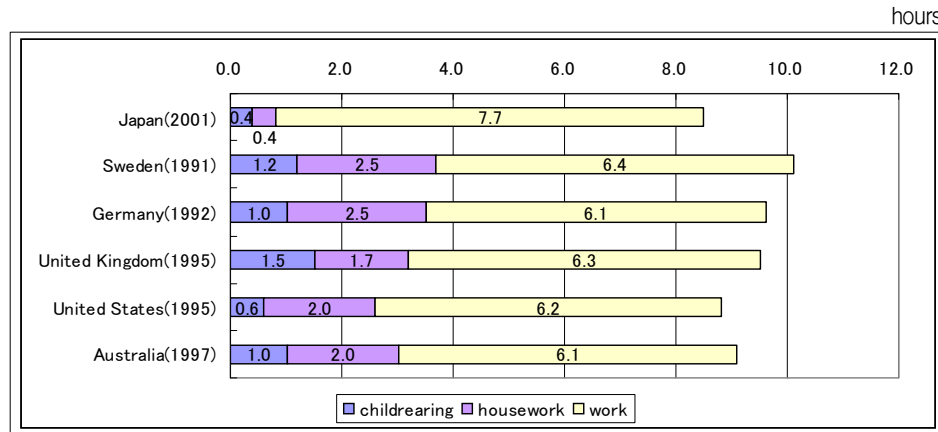
It has been difficult for men with children to reconcile work and life. The comparative research in East Asia shows that fathers in Tokyo come back home the latest of all of five Asian cities(Tokyo, Seoul, Taipei, Beijing, Shanghai)(Benesse Educational Research and Development Center 2006). Men in their 30s are working the longest of all age groups. 22.5% of men are working for more than 60 hours per week.

Another research showed that 30% of men wished to reduce their working hours when they had their first baby, however, only 6.5% did in reality(UFJ Institute 2003). The time for housework of fathers who have under six-year-old kids in Japan is the shortest of all seven countries(Graph 1)<sup>47)</sup>.

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47) The percentage of mothers who don't expect their husbands' involvement in childrearing is much higher in Tokyo and Seoul than in the other cities. Their

Graph 1. Hours of fathers' with children under five<sup>1</sup> childrearing, housework and work



1 Japan: fathers with children under six years old

2 Original data are from OECD “Employment Outlook 2007” and Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications “Basic survey on Social life 2001”

Source: The Cabinet Office(2007) White paper on gender equality, p. 25.

### *The increase in temporary workers*

The number of non-regular workers has been increasing, while that of regular workers has been decreasing for these ten years. When the percentages of non-regular workers are examined by age, those of them in their 20s are expanding dramatically. The marriage rate of regular workers of men is higher than that of non-regular workers when examined by age. The government is concerned that the increase in temporary workers accelerates the decreasing birthrate.

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expectation itself is not high in Tokyo and Seoul(Benesse Educational Research and Development Center 2006).

### 3. The development of the framework of “work-life balance” policies

#### *New framework of “work-life balance” policy*

The new framework of “work-life balance” policy emerged in political discourse from 2006.

Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare established “council for promotion of work-life balance in order men to share childrearing.” This council announced the report “Toward work-life balanced companies so that men could share childrearing” in October 2006. They presented a suggestion that (1)Balancing work and life can strengthen companies’ competitiveness, (2)it’s necessary for the needs of men who want to balance work and family life to be met, and (3)to change working styles so that men can share childrearing, not only supports for families with children, but also promotion of work-life balance for all of workers in companies.

In June 2007, Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy presented “the basic reform program 2007.” This 2007 program indicated the necessity for labor market reforms, countermeasures to the falling birthrate and women’s reemployment after marriage or childrearing. Especially it focused on the importance of labor market reforms so that all can keep working with hope and secure, engaging in satisfying job. The council proposed that “Charter on work-life balance” and “Action guidelines to change working styles and Japan” should be made for the first step of labor market reforms.

Also, the expert committee of Council for Gender Equality had intensive discussions on this topic and presented “Basic direction for promoting work-life balance” in July 2007. At the same time, “Public-private leaders’ council for promoting work-life balance” was established in July 2007. This council consisted of business leaders, union leaders, politicians and experts and formulated the “Charter on work-life balance” and “Action Guidelines for promoting work-life balance” in December 2007.

According to “Charter on work-life balance,” the society where people can balance work and life means the society where each can engage in satisfying job, fulfill their job responsibility, choosing and realizing various way of living at each stage of their life, for example, during childrearing or at middle-aged stage. Specifically, (1)the society where people can achieve economic independence, especially for the younger generation to have good satisfying job, achieve their economic independence and secure economic foundation for their hope for marriage or childrearing, (2)the society where people can secure their own private time for having healthy and affluent life, especially for workers to keep in healthy, having private time with family or friends, and joining in activities for self-development or in local activities, (3)the society where people can choose various way of working and living. Specifically people can have opportunities to challenge various way of working and living actively regardless of age and sex, and can choose various and flexible working styles under fair conditions, for example, when they have to care for the elderly or children. To realize these societies, the government indicated that national movements should be promoted with corporation among companies, people, and the national and local government.

On the basis of this charter, “Action Guidelines for promoting work-life balance” set the numerical targets in ten years. Under these numerical goals, measures are being reorganized in the new framework of work-life balance.

Table 5. The numerical target

	Index	Now(2008)	2012	2017
I	① employment rate	Men (age:20-34) 90.3%  Women (age:25-44) 64.9%  Total (age: 60-64) 52.6%	93-94%  67-70%  56-57%	93-94%  69-72%  60-61%

	Index	Now(2008)	2012	2017
		Total (age: 65-69) 34.6%	37%	38-39%
	② growth rate for labor productivity	1.6%	2.4% (2011)	—
	③ number of temporary workers	1,870,000	Less than 1,628,000	Less than 1,44,7,000
II	④ the rate of having opportunities for negotiations between management and labor	41.5%	60%	All
	⑤ the rate of workers who works for more than 60hours per week	10.8%	Fall to four-fifth	Fall to half
	⑥ the rate of taking paid holiday	46.6%	60%	All
	⑦ the rate of companies' having mental care supports	23.5%	50%	80%
III	⑧ the rate of teleworkers	10.4%	20% (2010)	—
	⑨ the rate of companies where workers can choose short-time working hours	Less than 8.6%	10%	25%
	⑩ the rate of workers who are doing a self-development activity	46.2% (regular workers) 23.4% (non-regular workers)	60% (regular workers) 40% (non-regular workers)	70% (regular workers) 50% (non-regular workers)
	⑪ the rate of women who keep working before or after having a first baby	38.0%	45%	55%
	⑫ the rate of childcare facilities	Childcare (under 3) 20.3%	29%	38%
		After-school program (1-3grade) 19.0%	40%	60%
	⑬ the rate of parents taking childcare leave	Women 72.3% Men 0.50%	Women 80% Men 5%	Women 80% Men 10%
	⑭ fathers' time for sharing childrearing and housework with children under six year old	Sixteen minutes (day)	an hour and forty-five minutes	Two and a half hours

Source: "Action Guidelines for promoting work-life balance"

In January 2008, Cabinet office established the special office for promoting work-life balance. The government defined 2008 as the “First Year of Work-life Balance” and has focused on the importance of joint efforts of the public and private sectors for promoting work-life balance measures.

In March 2008, the expert committee of Council for Gender Equality developed “Indexes to measure work-life balance.” This indexes were developed in order to recognize major constrains for realizing work-life balance and to sort out policy priorities by measuring and analyzing the degree of work-life balance in society in quantity.

In April 2008, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare announced the ten big companies which join in “Model projects for promoting work-life balance.” They are trying to encourage small and medium-sized companies to introduce work-life balance measures and to establish “Advisor for promoting work-life balance” from 2009, training 5,000 advisors in five years.

Why has the new framework of “work-life balance” developed in Japan? To understand this point, it’s necessary to examine the Japanese context: the trend of declining birthrate and neo-liberal childcare reforms. Let’s have a brief look at these points as follows.

### *Increasing awareness of declining fertility*

While “childbirth and rearing” has been regarded as something personal, its public and private boundaries are gradually shifting within a pronatalist context. Unlike Korea, Japan has not had a direct approach towards family matters. Although “childbirth and rearing” has traditionally been considered as a “personal matter”, it has now become a quasi social matter.

The term “childrearing support”(“Kosodate shien” in Japanese) appeared in Japan’s “Annual Report on Health and Welfare” in 1989 for the first time. The declining birthrate and family change made it necessary for the government to extend support to both child and elderly care. At that time, the issues were already pointed out; issues regarding provisions of various

childcare services, environmental development for balancing work and life, financial support, development of a system of counseling for childrearing and health support.

In 1990 the birthrate declined again to 1.57, so it appeared on the social scene as the “1.57 Shock”. A comprehensive plan to respond to this crisis was not soon created, however. Four administrations later, the “Basic Direction for Future Child Rearing Support Measures”(so called the “Angel Plan” in Japanese) was announced in 1994, in the Year of the International Family. This Plan emphasized the roles of corporations and the local community rather than state or local authorities in sharing roles for child rearing. As “Five-Year Emergency Measures for Childcare Services”, the improvement of various childcare services and the establishment of local child rearing support centers became top priorities.

In 1998 the Annual Report on Health and Welfare featured the special topic on “Thinking about a society with a fewer number of children: Society with the ‘dream’ of childbearing and child rearing.” during the last term of the Hashimoto Administration. It focused on developing an environment for dreaming about enjoyable childbirth and child rearing, by supporting relationships based on respect for one another within family.

After the shift to the Obuchi Administration, the “Standard Policy on Promoting Measures Against Low Fertility(1999)” was proposed as a guideline against overall low fertility, which was to be promoted by the government in the medium-to-long term. Three viewpoints were proposed; 1)Marriage and childbearing being the free choice of an individual, 2)Development of a society in which both men and women were participating equally, and creation of a society where today’s generation of children may be raised in good health both physically and mentally, and 3)Shaping a nationally broader understanding towards support for families with children were proposed. Based on these viewpoints, the eight fields were raised as important issues to be promoted in the “Specific Plan of Measures Against

Low Fertility to be promoted as a major focus (1999)”(so called the “New Angel Plan” in Japanese); 1)childcare 2)Employment environment for the balance of work and child rearing 3) Working styles (gender role division of work / change of business culture in the workplace), 4)System of Medical care for mothers and children, 5)Local support for child rearing 6)Educational environment, 7)Decrease in financial burden, 8)Creation of housing / living environment.

### *Support for mothers with anxiety and stress*

There was found not only a tendency to marry later, but also a new phenomenon of a decline in the fertility of couples in the population statistics of 1999. The government formulated the “Low Fertility Measures Plus One: Proposal Related to the Overall Improvement of Countermeasures to the Falling Birthrate(2003)” under the Koizumi Administration. It presented not only past efforts to stop declining fertility trends, but also a further step(plus one) was tacked on. “Past efforts” were indicated as “childcare measures. Past efforts focused on measures related to childcare. In particular from the perspective of the support needed for balancing child rearing and work. However, from the perspective of all families with children, “overall and balanced efforts will be needed.” The higher priority issues were stressed; 1)Rethinking working styles, including men, 2)Support of child rearing in local community, 3)Support for the next generation in social security, and 4)Improvement of the socialization of children and promotion for their independence. Further, the necessity of “Society as a whole advancing to make overall efforts” and “the country, local governments and various organizations and agencies such as corporations making systematic and active efforts” were emphasized in the “Low Fertility Measures Plus One”.

In the same year, the “Law for Basic Measures to Cope with Declining Fertility Society (2003)” was formulated. The viewpoint slightly shifted to an issue of social action and national awareness. It says with a sense of

emergency that Japan faces an unprecedented situation in the course of recorded human history. Faced with a rapid decline in the number of children, the remaining time to deal with this problem is extremely short. Not only the responsibilities of the state, local authorities, and corporations, but also the responsibilities of the nation's citizens are exaggerated. It says that citizens should hope for family and child rearing and make efforts for developing a society in which they feel secure about bearing and raising children, while marriage and childbirth is the free choice of an individual. In this way, the government took a step towards stressing citizen's awareness, while emphasizing the roles of the state, local governments, corporations and local communities.

According to this law, the "Outline of Measures to Cope with Declining Fertility Society(2004)" was proposed. It focuses on four perspectives; 1) support for the independence and social skills of children, 2) support for reconciling work and family responsibilities, and changing the working patterns of men especially, and 4) new solidarity for supporting childrearing. In accordance with this Outline, the "the New Plan for Children and Childrearing(2004)" was proposed. This shows specific measures and targets to be implemented within the five years from 2005 to 2009 in a very broad range; for example, support for the employment of young people, expanding scholarships, encouraging the reconciling of work and life, promoting men's childrearing, strengthening community-based support for families with children, expanding flexible and high quality childcare services, creating networks for preventing child abuse, support for single parents and children with disabilities, easing the economic burden of families with children.

Under decentralization, local authorities and Non-Governmental Organizations(NPO) have had wider roles in implementing these measures recently. The "Law for Measures to Support the Development of the Next-Generation(2004)" specifies the responsibilities of the state, local governments, corporations, and the nation's citizens<sup>48</sup>). The state and local

authorities have to make efforts for an overall and effective promotion for Measures to Support the Development of the next-generation. It became mandatory for local governments to make an action plan for it. Currently, local authorities are implementing their own policies on the basis of their own action plans, and there are various other implementations in local communities.

### *Neo-liberal Care policy reforms: Promoting Private Sector Activities*

Private sector activities were also promoted in the two trends; “structural reform of social security” and “fundamental structural reform of social welfare” from the 1990’s. The public and private relationship of childcare is transforming in these trends.

The first “Structural Reforms of Social Security” was one of the “Six Major Reforms” raised under the Hashimoto Administration. “Self-independence and solidarity”, “the preference for users”, “the roles of local authorities and the private sector” were stressed. The second “Basic Structural Reforms for Social Security” were implemented, focusing on “the establishment of equal relations between the service user and the service provider”, “overall support in local areas”, “promotion of participation of various organizations”, “improvement of service quality and efficiency”, “securing transparency”, “an equal and fare share of burden”. The “Social Welfare Service Law” was amended into the “Social Welfare Law” in 2000. This amendment had the following effects; 1)a system of administrative measure was changed to a user-centered system, 2)local welfare became a written policy, and local authorities made plans for local welfare, assuming a central role.

Along with this “Structural Reforms”, the area of “medical health and

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48) Furthermore, nation’s citizens have responsibilities for deepening understanding of the importance to support the next-generation, and have to cooperate with these measures to be implemented by the national and local governments.

welfare services” has been considered as an important economic policy in coping with the declining birthrate and an aging society. This field has been thought to be “one in which great growth can be expected in the future.” It has become important to make welfare services more efficient and utilize public sectors to develop new business and reconstruct industry, with the view to creating an economic society with freedom and vitality. Recently, the slogan “From public to private: The Government Market’s Opening to the Public Section” has been stressed, so public services and social areas such as health care, welfare, education, agriculture and labor etc are being targeted for “Structural Reforms”.

What trends does a series of childrearing support policy have, when considered along with these “Structural Reforms”? As Kitaba(2005) has pointed out, the public sector is trying to withdraw its main role as a provider of welfare services. Day-care centers which are not approved by the authorities had not been promoted as supplementary public day care centers, however, they are currently considered as actors playing a role in the expansion of childcare. The role of NGOs and the voluntary sectors are also considered to be important.

In a series of expanding the private-sector’s role, authorized childcare systems(the plans to introduce a direct contract system between users and providers, direct grants to users, etc)are targeted for the next reform. By the bill passed in June of 2006, the “Authorized Child Center,” which is a comprehensive facility integrating early childhood education and childcare, will start in October of 2006<sup>49)</sup>.

In addition, while planning to introduce this direct contract and direct grants system, creating the “Childrearing Insurance(tentative name)” is being discussed. This is one of the ideas to share economic burdens of childrearing in a wider way among the nation’s citizens, integrating a national fund for

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49) In Tokyo, a unique system of another “licensed childcare centers” has been created in 2001, which introduces a system of direct contracts and free setting of childcare fees (national standard to limits)

childrearing support and introducing insurance fees.

It may be said that childcare measures are seen through the looking glass of economic policy, utilizing the private sector through a series of deregulations, under the slogan “from public to private” or “from state to market”, rather than developing a universal childcare policy.

## 5. The Features of Recent Policy Reforms

What are the characteristics of recent policy responses? Let’s have a look at them from the outline of policy schemes.

### *Childcare policy: Early Childhood Education and Care(ECEC) Scheme*

Childcare is related to not only the reform of *imbalanced* structures between work and family of adults, but also investment in children and guarantee of high quality environment for children. Japan and Korea have similar dual system of kindergarten and childcare facilities(Table 6), which can be said to be colonial legacy. In Japan, the percentage of children attending childcare facilities is 35.7%, that of kindergartens 49.4%.

The problem of care deficit has also been targeted for reform. The problem of childcare policy and waiting lists for childcare are serious in Japan and the shortage of childcare is also a serious issue. The government has not supported the expansion of childcare, so, private sector childcare facilities have actually expanded(Soma, 2005).

Table 6. Early Childhood Education and Care(ECEC) Scheme

Admin.Agency	Ministry of Education		Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare			
Name of ECEC Institution	Kindergarten		Childcare Facilities			
Types of ECEC Services by the establisher	National/ Public	Private	Licensed		Non-licensed	
			Public	Private	Home	Others(including “baby hotels”)
A Range of Children Served	3 to 5		0 to 5		0 to 3 (depend on local authority)	0 to 5

Source: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research(2003)

Table 7. Early Childhood Education and Care(ECEC) Participation

		Under 1yr	1yr-old	2yr-old	total	3yr-old	4yr-old	5yr-old	total
Japan	Child care	3.9	16.3	22.9	14.4	31.9	38.2	36.8	35.7
	Kinder garter	—	—	—	—	33.5	55.5	59.2	49.4
Korea	Child care	1.6	7.7	19.8	9.7	30.8	31	23.6	28.5
	Kinder garter	—	—	—	—	12	26.8	45.1	28.0

Source:

Japan: Ministry of Education(2002), Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare(2002), Census(2002).

Korea: Na, Jung and Moon, Mugyeong(2003:42)

### ***New Plan for ECEC(February 28, 2008)***

The Fukuda government introduced “New plan for cutting the number of children and parents who can’t enter childcare facilities.” The goal of this new plan is to increase (1)the percentage of the three-year-old children who use childcare facilities from 20% to 38%(an increase of one million children), and (2)the percentage of the children who use after-school care programs from 19% to 60%(an increase of 1.45 million children) in ten years.

To achieve the goals, the government announced that the quantity of

childcare should be expanded by increasing mainly family daycare centers, new national accredited childcare system, childcare in kindergartens and companies. Also, the national government is trying to revise the law, “Law for measures to support the development of the next-generation(2005)” to make local governments establish the plan for increasing the supply of childcare without fail.

### *Working time policy*

For the reform of *imbalanced* structures between work and family of adults, to support families trying to reconcile work and family, schemes of parental and maternity leave have been targeted for reforms.

In Japan and Korea, childcare leave schemes are changing. A working parent can receive childcare leave until their child becomes one year old. In Japan, from 2005 if necessary, it can be extended until one and half years old. In 2001, through employment insurance, a parent can receive a total of 40% of salary during and after leave, prior to which it was 25%. The total of 40% means 30% of salary during leave and 10% after leave, when coming back to work. From April in 2007, a parent can receive a total of 50% of salary, which means 30% of salary during leave and 20% after leave. The goal of the government for childcare leave for working women is 80% and working men is 10%, however, in reality, 70.6% of women and 0.56% of men take it.

Regarding maternal leave schemes, in Japan, duration was extended to fourteen weeks; six before childbirth and a compulsory eight after childbirth in 1985. Working mothers who are enrolled in health insurance for more than one year can get a maternal allowance of their 60% of salary for 42 days before childbirth and 54 days after childbirth. This was reformed from 60% to two-thirds their salary in 2007.

Table 8. Childcare and Maternal Leave Scheme

		Japan
Childcare Leave	Duration	One year ( or 1.5) →2004~ Including part-time worker
	Pay	30%(during leave)+10%(after leave) (employment insurance) →30%(during leave)+20%(after leave) for a parent who returned to work after leave from April in 2007 and those who will enter a leave by March in 2010 (temporary measure)
Maternal Leave	Duration	14 weeks
	Pay	60% (health insurance) →2007~ two-thirds of salary

### *Changing working environment*

Corporations also became responsible for developing employment environments towards reconciling work and family with this law. Employers with more than 301 workers became obligated to enforce an action plan for supporting employees' reconciling of work and family, while those with less than 300 workers became obligated to make efforts towards its enforcement. Currently, big corporations are implementing their own measures on the basis of their own action plans.

To make the employment environment more adjustable for workers with children, the bill of amendment of the "Equal Employment Opportunity Law between Men and Women" passed in June of 2006. By this amendment, the following acts for employers of women in pregnancy and childbirth will be prohibited; 1) reshuffling of personnel who would bring disadvantages to women, 2) shifting a position from a full time worker to a part time worker, and 3) not doing renewal of a contract. Furthermore, dismissal due to pregnancy and childbirth will be vitiated during pregnancy or within a year after childbirth.

### *Cash policy*

Regarding strong structures or tendencies towards investment in children, easing an economic burden of family is said to be one of the top issues for reform. For this purpose, the issue of how to ease its burden has been focused recently. Although Korea does not have this scheme, the necessity has been discussed from the 1990s. Korea has a dependent deduction scheme as Japan and deduction for educational costs.

In Japan, maternal allowance of ¥300,000(when childbirth) was increased to ¥350,000 from October of 2006. In addition, child allowance was reformed. While the monthly amount of payment has been kept at a small level with an income ceiling threshold, the target and income threshold has been extended recently. In 2000, the target was extended from parents and guardians(mostly fathers) who were rearing children who were under the age of three, to that of six(before entering elementary school). In 2004, it was extended to those who had not finished third grades.

In 2006 it has again been extended three years, to those who have not finished elementary school(sixth grade). While the income ceiling threshold has kept two tiered, it is different between self-employed and salaried workers, and the level has been slightly extended<sup>50)</sup>. In addition, the level of contribution of local authorities was extended through this 2006 reform, and thus has become a new fiscal burden for them.

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50) Regarding child poverty, there is no direct measure targeting children from low-income families in Japan. However, the number of children living in poverty is increasing. The poverty rate of Japanese children rose from 10% in 1990 to 14% in 2001, which is by no means a low percentage internationally(Abe 2005). Although children from low-income families are a common issue for both Japan and Korea, they have been regarded as a political issue in Korea and it has been difficult for it to be regarded as a political target in Japan.

Table 9. Child Allowance Scheme

	Japan
Monthly amount of Payment	First child ¥5,000 Second child ¥5,000 Third and subsequent child ¥10,000
Payment Targets	Parents and guardians who are rearing children who have not finished elementary school (sixth grades), up to March 31 of a school year in which they reached twelve years old
Income Ceiling threshold	Different between the Self-employed and salaried workers
Financial resources	The state, local authorities, and employers

### *Subsidies for companies*

The government has been introducing some subsidies for companies to have “work-life balance” measures. There are mainly three categories.

Firstly, there are subsidies for small and mid companies to encourage to have work-life balance measures.

Secondly, several subsidies have widely developed for companies to build childcare facilities in their companies, to support their workers’ babysitter fee, to support an alternative manpower when their worker takes childcare leave, and to implement work-life balance measures, especially for supporting flexible working hours, to encourage fathers to have childcare leave, and to encourage workers who are taking childcare leave to have training courses for improving their skills.

Thirdly, subsidies for companies to encourage their workers to have childcare leave and to use flexible working hours measures.

## 6. Discussion: Simultaneous Reforms of family and policy within a pronatalist context

Japan has been trying to promote simultaneous reforms in economic support, ECEC, changing the working environment, and extended support for families and children under a pronatalist context.

Within their pronatalist contexts, these policy measures now resemble a patchwork quilt. Basically, economic measures, ECEC, changing the working environment, and pronatalist policy have different objectives. This patchwork could be said to be composed of welfare and education policy, labor policy, economic policy, and pronatalist policy, which have developed in their individual process, and objectives for each policy are not always consistent. Pronatalist policy is to increase birthrate, develop high quality population and develop sustainable state, welfare policy to secure women's rights, welfare and education policy to secure children's rights, family support measures to rebuild family with independent relationship, labor policy to expand job opportunity, economic policy to create new employments and spur economic growth. In this quilt, each patch is being assembled, and sewn into the social fabric, having a substitutional or contradictory relationship.

Under these simultaneous reforms, the relationship or combination between these quilts has not been well discussed yet. Now the government has reached a new stage in making various combinations of measures in the new framework of “work-life balance” policies. Across the spectrum of reforms dealing with gender, generation, and class, there is a high degree of inter-connectivity, and in certain respects, unpredictability in positive or negative outcomes.

What the post-modern welfare state of Japan is experiencing in a compressed time frame has a more complicated nature when viewing “work-life balance” policies within their own social contexts. Japan is implementing simultaneous reforms of a patchwork nature, which sometimes overlap and spin off contradictory objectives, which can have a broad array of consequences.

## 7. Conclusion: the policies' proper balance between work and life

When viewing the dynamic nature between defamilialization and refamilialization, and various facets of citizenship, this patchwork could be said to have bred a hybrid of policies oriented to defamilialize and refamilialize. Therefore, while Japan has been looking for the reforms, in other words, making patches, it has been getting complicated to clarify the characteristics of the reforms only from the simple dichotomy of whether to defamilialize or refamilialize. Rather, in this hybrid, it is important to examine the interaction among the simultaneous reforms or possible unexpected consequences, beyond analysis of *quantitative* welfare expansion in these East Asian countries.

When examining this interaction, through policy reforms, the balance between policies of support for work and family are changing, striving to strike a proper(or compromised) balance between them. The Japanese society has been seeking its own proper balance within their pronatalist contexts. In Japan, the government has been focusing on policy targets of housewives who suffer from anxiety and stress in childrearing now. Since the Angel Plan and the New Angel Plan, limitations of pronatalist policy just focusing on childcare have emerged, and a balanced approach as a whole has been emphasized rather than policy just focusing on two-income households. And further efforts have been called for in terms of support for reforming men's work styles and change companies' behaviors, as well as support for mothers in local communities.

While decentralization has progressed, the local government has a significant role in plan-making, implementation, and in investigating citizens' needs. However, investigation of needs to clarify men's work styles as well as men's needs has not been much carried out(Association of Prefectural Governors 2005). It uncovers or reconstructs most of mothers' needs. For local governments, support for mothers in local communities is easier to

implement than support for changing fathers’ work styles. Therefore, the implementation rate of male support is extremely low. More men’s needs and companies’ needs should be investigated beyond mainly uncovering mothers’ needs and targeting them.

In a still unclear situation, through policy reforms, the Japanese society is seeking to strike the *policies’* proper balance between work and life. While the birthrates serves as a catalyst, childcare, changing a work environment, support for family reconstruction, and a pronatalist policy have become a patchwork. Among this patchwork, the Japanese measures have focused on “childcare” matters and it can be said that the policies’ balance per se has been imbalanced in the pronatalist context.

In this patchwork, what if the policies’ balance between work and life becomes imbalanced? If the policies’ balance between work and life disrupts towards family, especially for mothers’ childcare supports, the patchwork may exhibit more refamilialized effects than defamilialized. Not only is the people’s balance between work and life itself, but also *policies’ balance per se* and priorities among simultaneous policy reforms with contradictory objectives being questioned in the compressed experiences.

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# VI

## *Work–Family Balance and Policy Directions in Korea*

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## 1. Introduction

Korean society has been putting its entire effort to economic development since the industrialization of the 1960's. For the sake of intensive economic development, the main focus of the policy had to be on the creation and the maintenance of the labor market, and labor and job became the basis of social structure as well as the principle by which it was organized. Family remained a private sector which supported the labor market.

As of 2005, Korea's labor hours top ranked among OECD nations, with male employment at 73.9%, and female employment at 50.1%. Also, female participation rate for economic activities is growing continuously, which is to say that Korean society is showing a tendency to increasingly become a dual-earner family model.

On the other hand, the family structure is showing as dramatic a change as the female participation in the economic activities increase. Traditionally, the Korean society is patriarchal family and with strong familism. The family has been playing a main role in child care and support of the elderly. The care for the elderly has very recently been carried out in a very family oriented fashion. However, the value of the family is undergoing rapid change with the recent societal and economic changes.

Another aspect of change involves a steady decrease in birth rate. Having hit the bottom of 1.08, the world's lowest record, in 2005, the rate is showing a sign of slight recovery in 2006 and 2007. However, there is no evident indication that makes one to interpret this sign as a clear tendency of increasing birth rate.

As we have seen so far, Korean society is undergoing changes of such multifaceted nature as it includes the challenge of social formation centered around work, the weakening of the childrearing function of the family due to the increase of female participation in economic activities, and low birth rate.

Thus, a significant turn in reaction to these changes is inevitable, although the work-family balance has not appeared in the discussion of the policy agenda until very recently. With the rapid change in society and environment, female participation in the economic activities and the dual-earner families are expected to show steady increase. It is needless to say that it is not only a practical but also a historical task to provide the needed systematic and social support that enables a harmonious co-functioning of work and family life with the male and female workers so that they could safely enjoy their work and family life with minimum family conflict.

This article surveys the societal change which calls for a policy measure for work-family balance, and then looks at the policy measures so far introduced in response to such calls.

## 2. Work and Family Life in Korean Society

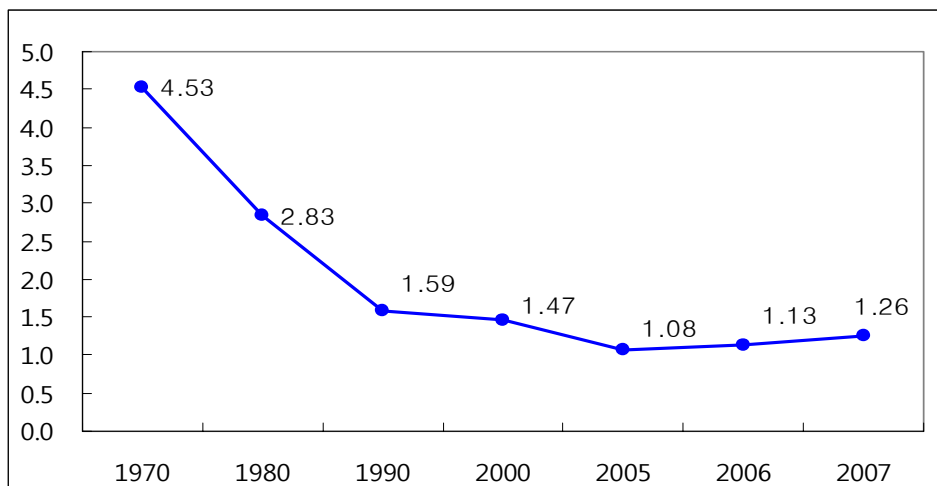
### *Demographic Change*

Beginning after 1990s and continuing to this day, the Korean society is experiencing rapid decrease of birth rate. Up until 1970s the total birthrate recorded 4.53, as opposed to the 1.59 in 1990, 1.47 in 2000, 1.08 in 2005, and 1.26 in 2007, which hit the bottom of the world record.

However, the decreasing birth rate is not simply a demographic issue; it springs from social circumstances that have made bearing and raising children difficult. While in the past, raising children in the extended family was thought to be an inevitable task imposed by life, today individual families consider giving birth and raising children in terms of the societal and economic costs they would incur, and even regard them as a burden, as the families meet the instability of the labor market and see the parents' desire to educate their children in Korean society. Marriage and having children are avoided or delayed for sheer survival in a competitive society. Having

children is delayed or minimized so that families can lessen the burden of raising them.

Figure 1. Changes in Birth Rate(1970~2007)



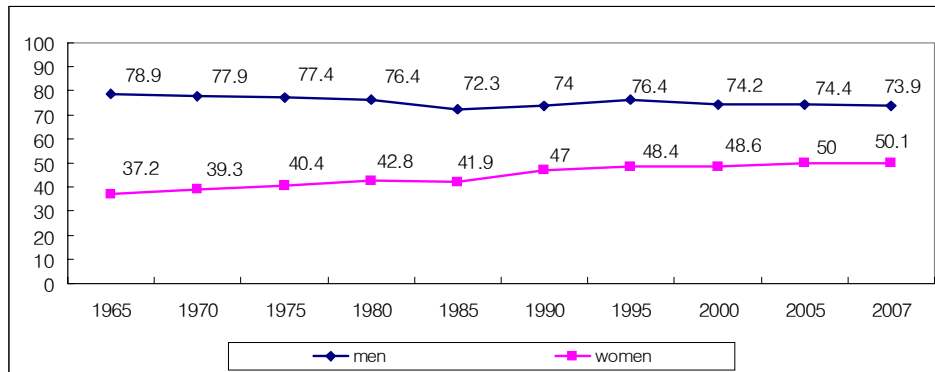
Source: KNSO

### *Changes in the Labor Market*

Female participation rate in economic activities has been showing a steady increase since the beginning of 1960, and at the same time, the gender gap between male and female in economic participation has been decreasing. Half of the total female population shows a rate 50.1%<sup>51)</sup> as of 2007. After a sustained increase of female participation, it is now deemed a normal practice. The gap between male and female participation in economic activities shows an apparent decrease from that in 1965. We can see this steady decrease in gender gap as a sign that Korean society is transforming into a dual earner society.

51) The rate has now slightly decreased from the 51.3% of 2006 (Korea National Statistical Office)

Figure 2. Participation Rate in Economic Activities According to the Gender



Source: KNSO

Let's look at women's economic activities. If you look at the graphs of 1980, 1990, and 2007, they are all M-shaped, although the collapse in the middle of each M becomes progressively gentle, and the point of the collapse falls in progressively older age range.

To elaborate, as in the 1980s, there is a vigorous economic participation rate for people in their early 20's, while it shows a rapid decrease after the late 20's, followed by a gentle increase afterwards. The case in 1990 shows roughly the same tendency. However, in 2007, the economically active period starts from early 20's, and extends to late 20's and all the way to the early 30's. 2007 has also the highest participation rate ever for those in their 40's. What does this mean? The fact that the collapse at the middle of the U-shape has become less steep means that the suspension in women's participation in economic activities due to marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth has decreased. Also, however, the still M-shaped figure of the graph means that there still exist realistic barriers to women's economic participation due to the aforesaid reasons. Thirdly, the graph also tells us that women are giving birth at an increasingly older age, added to the noted fact that birth rate is decreasing.

To summarize, the movement of collapsed point of the M-shaped graph shows that the portion of women who continue to participate in economic

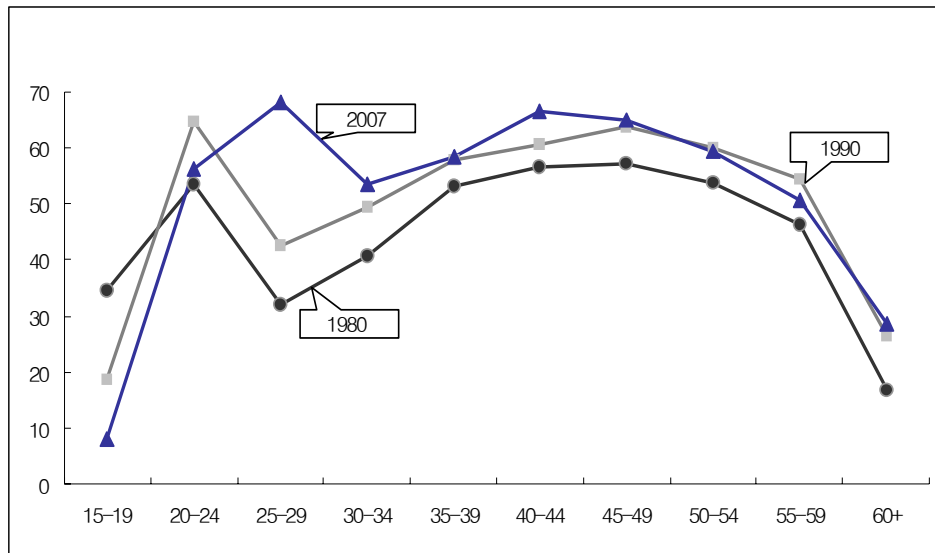
activities regardless of childbirth and child care has been on a continuous increase, which also signifies delay of childbirth, fewer number of children, and intentional childlessness.

The fact that the M graph has become less steep does signify that the problem has become ameliorated to a certain extent, but the persistence of the M shape shows that the childcare issue, the biggest barrier to women's economic activities in Korea, continues to this day.

Let us examine it more substantively. According to a research on changes in female occupation, married women prefer working part-time, as opposed to the unmarried women who prefer full-time employment. This shows that the conflict arising from work-family balance results in the discontinuity in employment and short careers, which in turn lowers mastery and expertise at work, which then drives women to the outskirts of their professions.

That is to say that the reasons behind the suspension and instability in women's work do not come from human-resource issues but from problems regarding the female role in the family. According to the Korea National Statistics Office conducted in 2005, the main barriers to female entrance into the workforce are childcare(34.9%), societal prejudices and established practices(18.5%), unfair work environment(11.6%), and lack of ability(5.9%). If, as appears in the data so far discussed, the processes, and the responsibilities involved in marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth play a major role in detaining women from economic activities and marring the continuity of occupation, what is above all required would be to support and create a favorable environment for such desires which arise in women on a societal scale.

Figure 3. Female participation rate in economic activities according to age difference



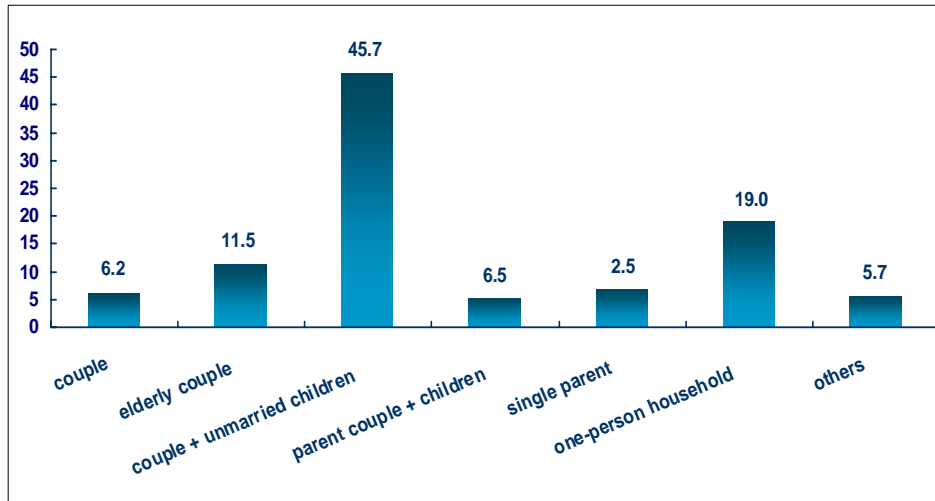
Source: KNSO

### *Changes in the family*

As for the Korean family structure as of 2005, about half(45.7%) consists of nuclear families in its traditional sense, which is composed of a couple and their unmarried children. What is also notable is that 19% of the whole families are single-membered families, and 11.5% accounts for elderly couple – a sign of change in family structure.

The fact that a major portion of Korean families are nuclear, single-member, and elderly couple families shows the reality where raising children and supporting seniors can no longer be ascribed to the traditionally defined duty and responsibility of the family, and testifies to the need for the system and support which can help male and female workers balance their work and family.

Figure 4. Family structure according to family types



Source: Korean Survey on Family

Such state of things is again confirmed in the National Research on Marriage and Childbirth conducted by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs in 2005 on single men and women.

In response to the item that states, "I think marriage is a must," 29.4% of single men, and 12.8% of single women agreed. This shows a decrease in the number of young people who think of marriage as a required process of life.

In addition, as to the reasons for delay of marriage, men's responses included instability of income and marriage expenses, and women's responses included difficulty of managing work and family balance and marriage expenses, which are indicators of the amount of worries the young generation has about the difficulties in maintaining work and family where family responsibilities are increasingly imposed on women.

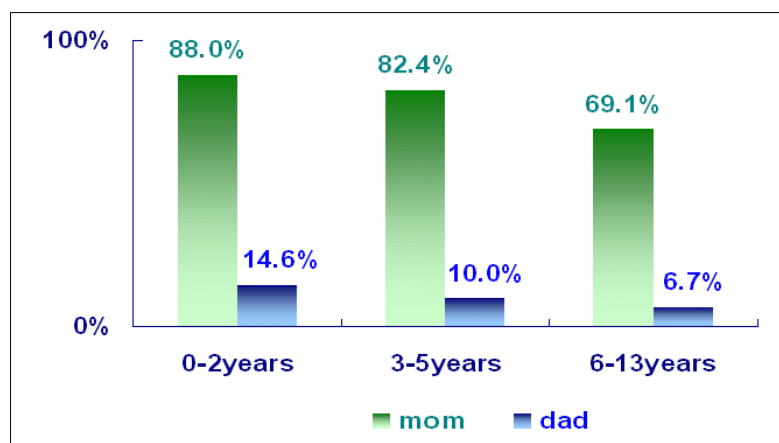
Table 1. Single men and women's thoughts on, and reasons for delay of marriage

		Single Men	Single Women
Thoughts on Marriage	Marriage is a Must	29.4	12.8
Reasons for Delay of Marriage	Instability of Income	36.5	10.8
	Difficulty in Maintaining Work-Family Balance	5.4	17.8
	Marriage Expenses	21.3	13.2

Source: Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs(2005). 2005 National Survey on Marriage and Childbirth

Then, just how much family responsibilities are imposed upon women? According to the Nationwide Survey on Family, the result of the comparison between the hours women and men devote to childcare shows that the hours men work for childcare were almost insignificant compared to the number of hours females work. This can be explained in two ways. First, women are still primarily responsible for child rearing, and second, the social conditions yield too little extra time for family activities. This is to say, the culture of long working hours now established in Korea leads to burdensome work hours and decreasing family time at home, and necessarily makes it impossible for men to participate in child rearing.

Figure 5. Comparison of Child Rearing Hours Between Father and Mother



Source: Korean Survey on Family

### 3. Policies to Balance Work and Family

Korea's work-family balance policy is a very recent phenomenon. The background of the development of such policy includes not only the support for women's participation in economic activities, but also the government's effort to react to the extremely low birth rate. As it reported that Korea hit the world's lowest birth rate, 1.08, in 2005, the government passed Act on Low-Birth and Aging Society, and established The 1st Action Plan for Low-Birth Aging Society. The Action Plan includes 'intensification of society's responsibility for childbirth and childcare(lessening of economical and societal burden of the family with children, preparation of diverse and quality infra for support of childcare, expansion of support for pregnancy and childbirth), nurturing of family-friendly and gender-equal culture, and support of healthy future generation(Low-Birth and Aging Society Council, 2006).

Moreover, the government also reformed *The Equal Employment Act* into *The Law for Equal Employment and Support of Work-Family Balance*, and established The Fourth Action Plan for Gender Equality in Employment and Work-Family Balance(Ministry of Labor, 2008).

On the other hand, there has been an emphasis in Korean society on the importance of introduction and activation of family-friendly corporate policy. In addition, what is needed is the environment and infra which could incorporate the various changes and policies, and changes in social consciousness and value system.

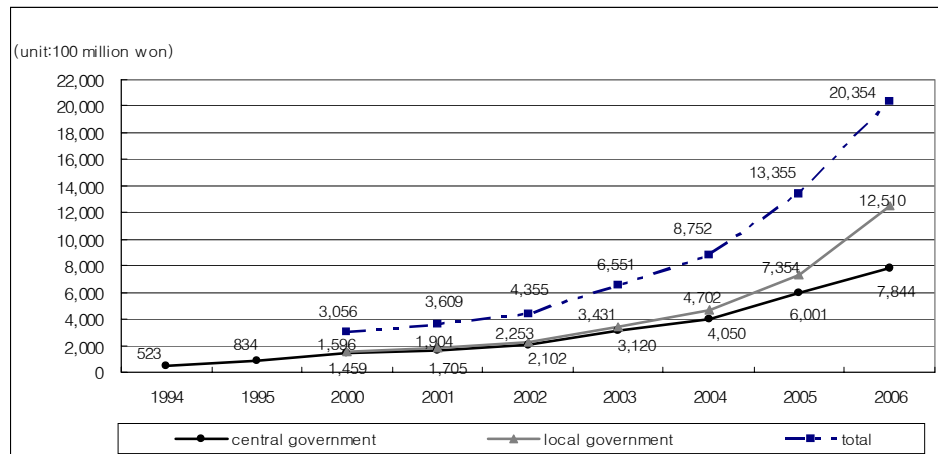
Now, let us look at childcare policy, maternity leave, and childcare leave and other policies which fall in the category of Korea's work-family balance policy.

#### *Childcare*

Childcare policy has been at the center of attention of the departments in charge of relevant policy development since the 1990's. *The Childcare Act*

was established in 1991 and, as a result, a number of day care centers were established in the 1990's. Beginning with the year 2000, childcare policy was on its full swing. Among all the policies executed by the concerned departments, childcare policy has been carried on most continuously, receiving focused budget and recognized as a key project. Such turn in the policy directions is reflected in the exponential increase of childcare budget.

Figure 6. Changes in childcare budget(1994~2006)



There are two types of childcare policy: direct supply of service and financial support. The latter is the main case for Korea, reflected in the fact that, among all the childcare facilities, the public ones constitute 4.8%, and the private ones, 85.3%. This shows that Korea largely depends on the private sector for childcare service.

Table 2. Childcare facilities according to type

	public	non profit	private	home childcare	childcare at work	parents- cooperatives	total
No.of facilities (%)	1,352 (4.8)	2,257 (9.1)	12,701 (45.3)	11,178 (39.9)	251 (0.9)	31 (0.1)	28,040 (100.0)
No. of children (%)	106,443 (10.9)	185,413 (19.1)	540,588 (55.6)	126,740 (13.0)	12,517 (1.3)	690 (0.1)	972,391 (100.0)

Source: Ministry of Gender Equality and Family(2005b)

The government has taken an indirect type of childcare support by offering subsidy and childcare facilities to the families. When it initially began in 2002, the basis for childcare allowance policy was on the amount of each family's financial asset. However, the standard for selection of recipients has become gradually income-related, thus classifying recipients according to income and at the same time extending coverage to more recipients. Today, for families that earn up to 120% of the minimum cost of living, the entire childcare cost is covered, and for families earning around 100% of the average income of urban workers, about 20% of childcare cost is covered. All in all, as of 2005, 29.8% of the total children are using childcare facilities, and 44% of the children using childcare facilities are receiving childcare subsidy. The extent of the support is scheduled to expand. Beginning with 2007, families earning less than the average income of urban workers(3,690,000 won for a 4-member family) are receiving childcare allowance.

Charles(2000) categorizes state childcare system according to the type of the welfare regimes of a country. For instance, in a liberal country, childcare is part of poverty policy; in a conservative welfare nation, childcare is part of family policy; and in a social democracy, it is offered as part of labor policy. Seen from this perspective, Korea's childcare policy is partly poverty policy that supports poor children with childcare subsidy, and partly family policy that shares the responsibilities of the family on a social scale, rather than that of labor policy that would support women's economic activities.

Also notable is the fact that, while there is a total of 3,158,538 children from 0 to 5 years of age, only 29.8% or 941,388 children use childcare facilities. Considering the continuous expansion of childcare facilities that began in the 1990's, the rate of the users is low compared to the rate of increase of supply. This can be explained by the incompatibility of the quantity and the quality of the service. While the quantity has been on a steady increase, the quality of service does not seem to meet the requirements of the potential users. Responses to the various surveys express a demand of 'reliable enough' service for the children.

One out of ten female workers quit work within three years after getting maternity leave, and 68% of them cite "difficulty in raising children" as their reason for leaving their jobs. Specifically, the reasons include "because it is impossible to find a place where I can reliably leave my child"(37.3%), "because of the difficulty in working and raising children at the same time"(34.3%), and so on(Ministry of Gender Equality, 2006a). Moreover, according to a survey on working moms, 61.9% of working moms relying on blood relations such as grandparents or other relatives for childcare, and only 25.8% use day care centers. In addition, 38.4% said "yes" to whether they had ever quit a job because of the burden of managing both work and childcare. Their reasons for quitting include "to raise children"(64.9%), "because of the unfavorable consequences at the workplace for pregnancy and maternity"(12.6%), and "to focus on housework"(8.4%). All in all, it is evident that the main reasons that force women to leave their jobs after marriage are pregnancy and childbirth(Ministry of Gender Equality, 2005b).

Table 3. Childcare service enrolment and childcare subsidy

age(year)	total (0~5)	childcare service enrolment		childcare subsidy	
		no of children	enrolment rate(%)	no of children	recipient rate (%)
0	479,102	33,467	7	14,013	42
1	478,115	89,403	18.7	37,681	43
2	479,029	179,301	37.4	71,357	40
3	513,930	223,628	43.5	93,567	42
4	594,759	219,954	37	97,037	45
5	613,603	195,455	31.9	95,000	49
0~5(total)	3,158,538	941,388	29.8	408,655	44

source: KNSO(2004). You and Seo(2006) recalculation

Despite the steady expansion of the childcare policy through the establishment of day care centers and the provision of childcare allowance, the effectiveness of the policy is not apparent in the eyes of the users. As we have seen, childcare service does not meet the demands of the users for a 'reliable enough service' for their children. In this light, efforts are under progress to improve the quality of childcare service, and raise the professionalism among childcare workers, and to give this workforce better treatment. The working hours of teachers at day care centers(with an average working hour of 10.05 hours a day), and the poor treatment they receive make it difficult to procure quality workers, which in turn negatively affects the quality of childcare service(Ministry of Gender Equality, 2006). Therefore, there have been efforts to strengthen the teacher training system, and to professionalize the workforce in childcare by intensifying the standard for day care centers and introducing the state certification program. Moreover, beginning in 2006, the system for evaluation and certification for day care centers has been established to improve the quality of the centers. There is an effort on the part of the government to promote the growth and development of infants and children and to enhance the quality of childcare. Beginning in 2007, the state takes charge of the development and distribution of the standard education program.

On the other hand, as part of the in-home care service project that began in 2007, babysitters are dispatched to individual homes to help working parents and support nurturing infants. But the prospect of this policy need much more discussion in the academy, politics, and childcaring women.

Also, there are out-of-school-hours programs in Korea. This program is operated by Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, commission on youth protection, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Ministry of Education and Human Resources. The names of this program are diverse by the operating administration, for example “after-school academy for juveniles”, “juveniles’ study”, “after-school study”, and “after-school classroom”. But we need some coordination between the administration due to the duplication of the same activities and services.

table 4. Out-of-school-hours program (2005.8)

	MHW <sup>a</sup>	commission on youth protection		MGEF <sup>b</sup>	MEHR <sup>c</sup>
name of program	community children's center	after-school academy for juveniles	juveniles' study	after-school study	after-school classroom
no. of centers	902	46	459	1,459	48 <sup>d</sup>
eligibility	low-income families (6~17 yrs)	9~13 yrs	low-income families (10~14 yrs)	6~11 yrs	6~17 yrs
coverage	30 persons /center	60 persons /center	25~100 places	15 persons /center	30 persons /classroom
no. of children	23,000	2,350	27,333	23,321	85,000
program schedule	8hours/(11~19)	5hours/(15~22)	15hours/(8~23)	at least 4hours/ weekends open	variously
fee	free	160,000~178,000 won/month	300~500/day	0~300,000 won/month	appro. 18,000 won/month

<sup>a</sup>Ministry of Health and Welfare

<sup>b</sup>Ministry of Gender Equality and Family

<sup>c</sup>Ministry of Education and Human Resources

<sup>d</sup>over 90% of the all school are providing out-of-school-hour program

source: Ministry of Gender Equality and Family

### *Maternity Leave and Childcare Leave*

As for maternity- and childcare-related measures, female workers are provided a 90-day maternity leave and one-year childcare work suspension. Maternity leave(pre- and post- childbirth) lasts for ninety days and comes with regular wage(limited to 1,350,000 won) in case the employee works at one of the priority support corporations(construction business with 300 or less employees, manufacturing business with 500 or less employees, and other businesses with 100 or less employees). Large company employees get paid at their ordinary wage for the days which exceed 60 days out of the total of 90 days.

A childcare leave offers workers with a one year off and a salary at a set rate of 500,000 won a month.<sup>52)</sup> Only employees with employment insurance with the unit period of 180 or more days can receive the payment during the suspension of work. Support for encouragement of childcare work suspension(20,000 won a month) and support for employment of replacement workforce(200,000 - 300,000 won a month) are paid to the owner of the business.

However, although the workers are given the rights to take the childcare work suspension, there is little practical use of the rights. Among those who took maternity leave, a mere 27.4%, only a quarter, took childcare leave program as of 2006(Kim et al, 2007). This low turnout is primarily due to the culture of the workplace and the social attitude towards workers who take the leave.

It is also problematic that it is largely only female workers who make use of those leaves. From 2001 and continuing to the present, only 2% of the men made use of the leaves. The major reasons behind this includes the patriarchal character of the Korean labor market, the culture of long working hours, and insignificance of the amount of payment during the leaves, which

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52) This is approximately 26.7% of the ordinary wage(Ministry of Labor, 2008), which is far too little to work as an alternative to income.

makes it impractical as an alternative to actual payment.

Not only was the period of childcare work suspension extended, but also, beginning in 2008, the employees would be able to split the leave and take on an hour-based arrangement. These were done for the sake of a more active use of the leave programs. It is notable that the employees can better use the childcare leave by taking the leave on an hourly basis, while they used to be able to take it only on a whole-day basis. For this aim, the "Working Time Reduction During Childcare Period" was introduced, and with the insertion of the statement that business owners are responsible for supporting childcare and family care, this rule prepared the legal ground for the support of the compatibility between work and family.

Moreover, men are encouraged to take part in childcare by introducing paternity leave for partners (three days, unpaid). By raising the support for the employment of replacement workforce, individual businesses are encouraged to offer leaves to their employees.

These measures are significant in that they fill the holes of the policy system, and that they are the fruits of the effort to advance the system for the sake of its practical use. However, possible side effects should also be considered, such as working time reduction or irregular employment of women, and it should not be forgotten that the measures, by the fact that their application is limited to regular employees usually working at large businesses, can leave the majority of female irregular workers in a systematic blind spot (Kim, 2008). These considerations should be incorporated into policy making.

Speaking in terms of the policy making process, the childcare leave basically has an initial shape. What matters now is how to establish it as a working system. To answer this question involves the consideration of the system from the perspective of the workers and from that of the business, and the recognition of the practical problems they face in the course of the execution of the system. The solution of which should be the top priority for the sake of the active use of the measures.

What are the difficulties of the workers for using the leaves? According to

a survey conducted by the Korean Labour Institute, the reasons for not using leaves include, in the order of the number of the answers, economic situations, worries as to the possibilities of returning to work, increase of workload of colleagues, and the office atmosphere. As to the economic worries, what is required is to raise the payment during leave so that it can function as a practical alternative to one's real income, and on top of it, to regulate and observe the execution of the measures so that workers are legally guaranteed to return to the workplace. As to the office atmosphere, it is a problem that can only be solved through societal-cultural change. It requires a frame of mind which regards the use of childcare work suspension as part of the workers' rights and as a process of taking social responsibility. There must be a mindset that is ready to get rid of the negative attitude towards childcare leave. In addition, what is needed is the change of value system, so that one sees maintaining the balance between family and work as an important and indispensable process of living.

According to the 2007 survey, "The Current State of Execution of Work-Family Balance System", conducted on people in charge of human resources in 1,084 businesses with ten or more employees, the measures for the support of work-family compatibility were implemented in a partial and limited way. Despite the growing consciousness of businesses on the issue of harmonious coexistence of work and family, they appeared extremely cautious when it comes to tangible introduction of the systems or the programs thereof. The companies that showed a relatively strong will to contribute to the maintenance of work-family balance were those in the public and administrative sector, finance and insurance, entertainment, culture, sports, among others. And it appeared that the higher the company's annual sales, the larger the size of the company, and the more female employees the company has, the stronger the will of the company towards incorporating the measures for balancing work and family.

### *Family-Friendly Policies*

*The Family-Friendly Social Environment Promotion Act* was established in 2007 and has been in operation since 2008. According to this Act, a 'family-friendly social environment' refers to the general environment where work and family life can be balanced and responsibilities of childcare and support of family are shared between individuals and the society. Family-friendly policy includes a flexible working arrangement, support system for birth, childcare, and education (maternity leave for partners, childcare leave, workplace childcare support, education support program, and so on), aid for support of dependents (family-care work suspension), employee support program, and others. Seen in this light, the Act can be considered as laying the foundation for legal support for work-family balance.

In 2005, the Ministry of Gender Equality developed the FFI (Family Friendliness Index), as an indicator for the domestic businesses' degree of family friendliness in order to have an objective sense of the workings of the family-friendly policy. FFI is composed of 124 items grouped into six categories, which include flexible working arrangement, support program for care and education of children, support program for dependents, support program for employees, culture of family friendliness, and results of the execution of family friendly policy. Flexible working arrangement include flexible working time, working-time choice, working at home, short-term work, and long-service leave; support program for caring and educating children include maternity leave, childcare leave, education program for pre-schoolers, and educational program for children in schools; support program for dependents include leave for dependent care and additional support for dependents; programs for employees include consultation, educational programs on work-family balance, and additional programs for support of employees; culture of family friendliness include on-time finish of the work of the day, degree of effort of the organization for the sake of forming a family-friendly environment; and finally, results of the execution of

family-friendly policy include reasons for running a family-friendly policy, barriers to running a family-friendly policy, and benefits to the organization as a result of implementing a family-friendly policy.

According to the survey of 705 organizations including central administrative agencies, local self-government agencies, corporations, and universities, the average FFI turned out to be 37 out of 100 points, showing that Korea has a very low FFI as of yet. Specifically, organizations at “Entry Stage” or Stage 1, meaning those that fully adhere to the legal guideline, consisted of 15.5% of the total organizations; Stage 2 organizations, “Beginning Stage”, were 41.5%; the third, the Middle Stage had 11% of the total organizations; and only a mere 2% of the organizations met the high-level Stage 4 (Ministry of Gender Equality, 2006).

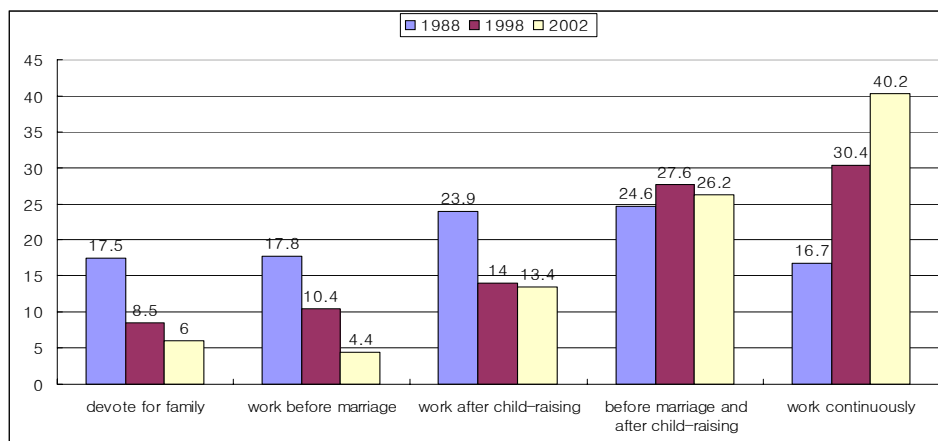
The Low-Birth and Aging Society Council (2007) introduces family-friendly management as a strategy that creates a new corporate culture by enabling employees to harmonize work and family, free from the difficulties from birth-bearing and childcare, by offering them with various programs, policies, and educational training.

#### **4. Conclusion: Beyond Work-Family Balancing**

The biggest change in the last 20 years or so is the increase in women's participation in economic activities and in their attitude towards, and value system on, the issue of work. Whereas in 1988 the majority of women thought that it was desirable to work before marriage and after the growth of children, Figure 7 shows the change in women's attitudes towards work, according to which in 1998 the majority thought that they wanted to work regardless of whether it was before or after marriage, or whether the children has grown up or not. In 2002, majority opinion has begun to regard employment as a life-time commitment regardless of the states of the family,

which is indeed a big change of mindset. While women regard employment as something that continues throughout life independent from family matters, the society is still imposing the responsibilities of childbirth and childcare on women and individual families. This shows that there is indeed a serious gap between idea and reality. In the given circumstances, women still opt to delay or avoid marriage, delay or avoid childbirth, or minimize the number of children if they do decide to have children, thereby minimizing the burdens of maintaining a family. The consequences coming from such practices cannot be an answer to the problems our society now faces, such as low birth rate and the issues of appropriate use of female human resources. What would become the most applicable and direct solutions to our situation now is to supply the official system and social support so that work-family balance can be sustained.

Figure 7. Women's attitude towards work



Source: KNSO(2002), Social Indicators in Korea

Specifically, it is a stage of transition of social value where the old principle of social formation built around work is turning into that which regards both family and work as central. In the process of industrialization, Korean society

was constructed on a value system that regarded work as top priority, and as such put emphasis on the function of the male patriarch as the breadwinner of the family. However, in the field of labor market, the income system centered around the male breadwinners and their lifetime employment has become unstable; on the other hand, the family's caring function is also extremely weakening due to women's participation in economic activities and the nuclearization of the family. What is needed at this point is a social reorganization that harmonizes and equally distributes male and female fields of work and family, and the process which initiates and moderates the shift in the center of the gravity in society.

It should be remembered that work-family balance cannot just be deemed as part of activating the female workforce. A policy which objectifies women, and which only aims to raise female economic participation, cannot go beyond being a piecemeal policy, and it will end up producing a wider gap between the genders within the family and the labor market. The beginning point of any serious consideration of work-family balance policy should be with the recognition of 'male and female workers with family responsibilities'. Here, family responsibilities include not only childcare, but also the responsibilities towards family members who need care, such as caring for the elderly. Division of responsibilities, moreover, means construction of a support system so that women and men can divide responsibilities equally.

In a larger sense that goes beyond the current work-family balance issue, we should be beginning to think of ourselves as the leaders of our lives who can set an appropriate center of gravity in the various tasks and areas of life including work and family. The question here should be, "How should I balance life and work?" An appropriate direction for a policy in order to balance life and work will be found in the possibility wherein a worker can, as a subject of his life, choose and place various work and family responsibilities in every stage of life, and the tasks which one faces in the course of her life.

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# VII

## *Swedish Family Policy and Work–Life Balance*

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## 1. Introduction

Sweden is often commended for its generous family policy. It is seen as a main reason for a relatively high fertility at the same time as women have entered the labour force and presently work almost to the same degree as men (see for example Sundström and Stafford, 1992, Duvander, Ferrarini, Thalberg, 2006, Andersson, 2007, Oláh and Bernhardt, 2008). It is also seen as a major reason for low poverty among children in Sweden (Ferrarini, 2003). Sweden was the first country in the world to introduce paid parental leave also to fathers in 1974, and the policy has since continuously been reformed to strengthen the gender equality dimension. Swedish family policy is based on the dual-earner family and asserts the same rights and obligation regarding family and labour market work to both women and men.

Although family policy has existed during a long period with the consistent ambition to support the dual-earner family, it should be seen as part of other political and societal development in Sweden, not least the demographic and economic development. Presently, Swedish social insurance, with parental insurance as an important part, is re-evaluated to fit a changing society with increasing globalisation and migration, as well as a changing labour market. New reforms may be motivated by other goals and ideologies, and may thus be seen as contradictory to earlier reforms. This fits well with a general development of many countries' family policy towards a pluralistic policy that tries to serve several, sometimes conflicting goals (Duvander et al., 2006). Nevertheless, Sweden is still a good example of a dual earner family policy model with strong support for dual earner and low general family support (Ferrarini, 2006). The dual-earner support is income-related and individual, which together with individual taxation indicates several advantages to *two* incomes in a family rather than *one* high income.

The purpose of this presentation paper is to give a brief overview of the Swedish family policy and its consequences in the specific Swedish context. It is important to stress that the same family policy implemented in another

country, with other history, culture and population composition is likely to lead to other consequences (Neyer and Andersson, 2007). Nevertheless, only by looking at the success and failure of other countries' attempts to attain the aspired goals, can policy makers make informed choices about the future. I will start with a short description of Sweden's demographic situation with focus on the fertility dimension. I will also shortly describe the labour market situation for women and men in Sweden and the basic rights for parents. Thereafter I will go into the main topic of family policy. I will present a general background of the parental insurance as part of the social insurance in Sweden and I will present the different parts of the family policy but concentrate on the parental leave benefit. I will conclude with the Swedish development associated with the family policy, and its future challenges.

## 2. Social background

### *Demographic situation*

Out of the 9 million people living in Sweden, just under a quarter of the population are children under 19 years of age. Less than a fifth, are over 65 years old, a proportion that will increase in the coming years. However, there are no dramatic increases in the older population to be expected in Sweden in the coming years, as the population can already be considered an "aged" population.

The foreign born population is just over one tenth (13 percent) and immigration has been large in the latest decades. It has been dominated by refugee and family migration, as well as labour market migration mainly from the other Nordic countries and more recently Eastern Europe. The immigration means that a considerable part of children born in Sweden have roots in other countries; as much as one fifth of all children have one or two foreign-born parents. This is a relatively new phenomenon as Sweden historically has had minor migration flows.

A large proportion of the population is unmarried. For example, as much

as 53 percent of women, and 61 percent of men aged 35 are unmarried (www.scb.se). The reason is that cohabitation without marriage is widespread and the dominant union form among young people. This can be exemplified with that the mean age at marriage(31 for women and 34 for men) is higher than the mean age at first birth(29 for women and 31 for men). The development where cohabitation has taken the place of marriage started already in the 1960s. A very small proportion starts co-residential union in other ways than through cohabitation(Duvander, 1999). It should be noted that it is not common to enter parenthood as single and that most children are born into cohabiting unions. Cohabiting unions, also with children, are however more likely to break-up than marriages.

Out of all households, a third consists of households with just one member(see table 1). The single-person households include both individuals that have not yet entered unions and those who have experienced separation or loss of a partner through death. Almost another third of the households consists of individuals living together with a partner but without children; these are both households who have not yet had children and those whose children have already left the parental home to live on their own.

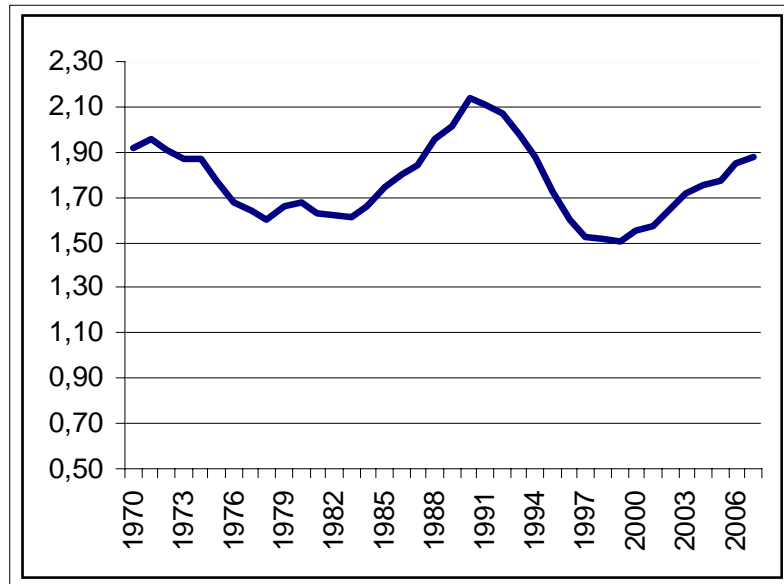
Table 1. Family units by type in 2005, children aged 0–17

Type of household	Percent
Cohabiting without children	27
Cohabiting with children	19
Single woman with children	4
Single man with children	2
Single woman without children	18
Single man without children	17
Other family units	13
	100

Source: Survey of Living Conditions, Statistics Sweden

What is of most interest may be the Swedish fertility. While many countries have had a declining fertility trend during the 1960s and onwards, this is not the case for Sweden(see figure 1). The Total Fertility Rate of Sweden has instead been called roller coaster fertility(Hoem and Hoem, 1996) and has sometimes been seen as a success story of a generous family policy. The ups and downs are closely related to the economic business cycle during recent years. Fertility went up at the end of the 1980s when the economy was good, unemployment almost non-existing and also the parental leave length was extended a number of times. The parental leave system in Sweden is earnings-related, and the benefit is depending of having worked before having children. Young women and men who have children before being established in the labour market will receive a low flat-rate benefit which is a strong incentive to establish oneself in the labour market before having children(Sundström and Duvander, 2002). During the 1990s Swedish economy entered into a deep recession. Young people became unemployed or went into higher education, two activities that are not easily combined with childrearing in Sweden. During the last decades, it seems that both men and women wait to have children until they have a relatively high income(Hoem, 2000; Duvander and Olsson, 2001; Andersson; Duvander and Hank, 2005). The pro-cyclical pattern of fertility and economic business cycle(Andersson, 2000) is not in any way general and for example Finland, a country with many similarities, but with good opportunities to combine childrearing and unemployment, has a different pattern.

Figure 1. Total Fertility Rate for Sweden, 1970–2007



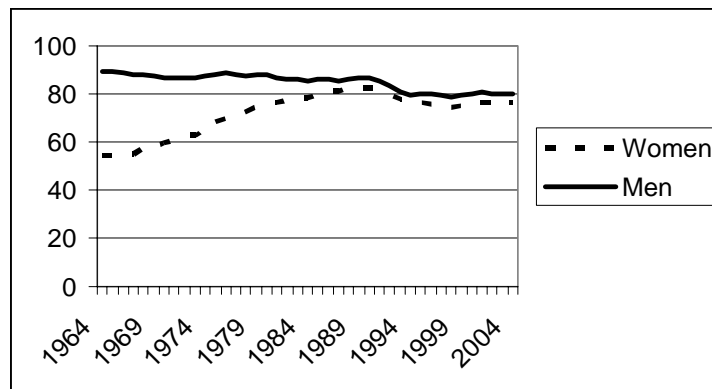
Furthermore, Sweden has kept a strong two child norm that seems not to be threatened so far (Statistics Sweden, 2002). The large families with more than two children may be decreasing somewhat when the mean age at first birth is increasing, but so far there is no trend of women ending up with only one child. Also the share of childless individuals in the end of the reproductive years is relatively stable, both for men and women. Thus, behind the roller coaster fertility we find a stable pattern of two-child families and stable cohort fertility. However, the age at when to bear these children has changed both for women and men.

### *Work*

The common and expected life cycle pattern of young men and women in Sweden today is to first get established in the labour market and then continue with having children (Hoem, 2000). Most women keep their position in the labour market when they start childbearing and after a period of

parental leave both women and men return to the labour force. It is thus unusual for women to end their employment when they start a family. Instead many women work long part time.

Figure 2. Labour force participation, Sweden, 1964–2004



Source: Labour force surveys, Statistics Sweden.

During the 1970s and 1980s the female labour force participation increased, which was at the same time as the public sector expanded. Many women got jobs in the growing public sector and the Swedish labour market is still considerably gender segregated. It should be noted that even before the 1970s, women in Sweden worked and the housewife period during the 1950s are often considered exaggerated and more of an exception than a suitable point of reference (Nermo, 1999). Nevertheless, in the 1970s the demand for female labour increased at the same time as the possibilities to combine work and family increased. Also, this is the time when gender equality ideology gets established in Sweden and support for women's independence and right to be able to support herself are building (Stanfors, 2003; Klinth, 2002).

The major reasons that made it possible to combine work and children for both men and women were the introduction of the parental leave insurance and

the expansion of day care services, but a number of regulations in the labour market covering all employed that facilitates the combination of work and children are also important. All employed have a right to a temporary leave of over two years to care for newborn children. The employer should guarantee a job at the same level of qualification and income for men and women who come back from parental leave. Furthermore, all employed with children under age 8 have a right to reduce the normal working hours to 75 percent with the same reduction in income. All employed also have the right to temporary leave when the child is sick and cannot attend day care. Most regulations are entirely gender neutral but women have some specific rights at the time around delivery. Most importantly, women have right to 7 weeks of leave before and 7 weeks after delivery. It is common to work a bit longer than that, but most women leave work some time in the month before the delivery.

Table 2. Employed parents with children(0–17) by length of working hours, number of children and age of the youngest child. Share of all employed

	Women		Men	
	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time
<b>1 child</b>				
0 years	82	18	95	5
1–2 years	57	43	92	8
3–6 years	58	42	91	9
7–10 years	71	29	94	6
11–16 years	70	30	90	10
<b>2 children</b>				
0 years	73	27	92	8
1–2 years	50	50	93	7
3–6 years	52	48	94	6
7–10 years	63	37	95	5
11–16 years	68	32	95	5
<b>3 children</b>				
0 years	60	40	96	4
1–2 years	52	48	91	9
3–6 years	47	53	93	7
7–10 years	56	44	95	5
11–16 years	66	34	96	4

Source Labour force surveys, Statistics Sweden.

Even though rules regarding parenthood apply to men and women equally they are in general used more by women than men(see table 2). For example, it is common among mothers to reduce work hours during the child's first years. Around half of all employed mothers with children in pre-school ages reduce their working hours to part time while less than a tenth of the fathers do the same. Mothers with more children do this more often than one child mothers.

### *Family policy*

The family policy is an important part of politics in Sweden, in part because it is intertwined with the labour market policy. Perhaps the most important underlying principle with strong political consensus is the idea that as many individuals as possible should be employed. To be in work and to be able to support oneself is an often mentioned as a basic right for all individuals, which of course also benefits the economy of the country. This is of great significance also for the family policy.

Family policy objectives have changed somewhat during periods of different governments, but the basic ideas are that the policy should facilitate good economic living conditions for all families, and facilitate the combination of work and children for all women and men. To attain good economic living conditions mean that special attention must be paid to vulnerable families who may need more support. The combination of work and family is a goal that is intertwined with the goal of gender equality. Moreover, the present government emphasizes the importance of choice and the opportunity to find individual solutions for families.

The family policy goals are attained in various ways but the most important are:

- Day care centres and after-school services
- Parental insurance
- Child allowance and other benefits

I will start by mentioning the day care situation. Day care exists so that parents can work, but it also has a strong pedagogic goal (Bergqvist and Nyberg, 2002). The personnel are generally well educated for the job, and the pedagogic activity has always been in focus. In addition, day care is a guarantee of adequate living conditions for marginalized groups, for example by offering social contacts, breakfast and lunch. In the beginning of the 1970s it was decided that all 6 year old children should be offered free day care that was also preparatory to school a year later. This was the start of a long row of programs expanding day care. The goal of the expansion was that all children over age 1 with working parents should be offered day care. Later the goal was expanded to all children, also to parents who are unemployed, studying, on parental leave or for other reasons not in the workforce (Duvander, 2006).

In the beginning of the 2000s, 74 percent of all children ages 1-3 participate in day care and 96 percent of all children in ages 4-5 years old (National Board of Education, 2004). Parents' educational level or country of birth do not affect participation rates. Also regional differences are minimal (Hank, Andersson and Duvander, 2004). Today one can talk about day care as a universal part of childhood in Sweden. The debate regarding day care revolves around *when* it is suitable for children to start, and not whether it is a suitable activity for children (Duvander, 2006). The cost of day care is means-tested and largely subsidized.

The other two components of family policy (parental insurance and other benefits) are administered through the social insurance. The social insurance covers the entire population and is based on residency in Sweden. The main parts are old-age pension benefits, sickness and disability benefits and benefits to families and children. Social insurance is a major part of the economy and comprises 16 percent of the GDP. Contributions come from

employers and employees, mainly through different ways of taxation.

A general principle in the social insurance is the one of income replacement rather than flat-rate benefits. This principle emphasizes the importance of a stable employment with relatively high earnings. Parental insurance, sickness (most parts of disability) benefits and old-age pension benefits are income-related. Another general principle is that benefits and insurances are individual. For example, sick leave insurance cannot be used by a spouse and the level of replacement is not dependent on the spouse's income. Another example is the parental leave benefit where half the leave period is assigned to the mother and half to the father. If one parent wants to use more than half the period, the other parent needs to sign a form that he or she agrees on a new division. This is often done as the mother uses the majority of leave, but it may be seen as an important symbol for shared responsibilities and rights in connection to children.

In addition, some benefits are universal and some are means-tested. Child allowance may be the best example of a universal benefit to all families with children. One example of a means-tested benefit is the housing allowance. This benefit is based on the household income and thus also an exception from the principle of individual benefits.

Table 3. Social insurance cost

	Percent of total costs
Families and children	14
Sickness and disability	32
Senior citizens	49
Other payments	3
Administration	2
Total	100

Source: Swedish Social Insurance Agency

Families and children are not the major part of the social insurance but makes up 14 percent of the costs. More than half of the costs designated to families are the costs of the parental insurance.

### *Parental insurance*

The parental insurance consists of pregnancy benefits, parental benefit and temporary parental benefit. The pregnancy benefit is an earnings-related benefit that can be used during pregnancy for women in occupations that are considered dangerous during pregnancy. Mainly this includes employments that are physically demanding. Parental benefit is aimed at the care of newborn children in the home by one of the parents. Temporary parental benefit is mainly leave for care of sick children one the parents have returned to work.

### *Parental leave benefit*

The parental insurance was introduced in 1974 and marked the shift from one-earner families to dual-earner families. An explicit goal is that both parents should use the parental leave benefit and it is closely connected to a goal of increased gender equality as well as the protection of children's rights. The insurance indicates that parents should have shared responsibility over economy and children. Essentially this means that fathers should take a greater part of the child responsibility by using more parental leave. This is related to children's rights as a child has a right to access to both parents. It is also related to gender equality in that fathers' leave facilitates women's return and involvement in labour market work.

Currently, the parental leave benefit is 16 months long, with 8 months intended for the mother and 8 months for the father. Out of these, two months cannot be transferred to the other parent. In other words, two "daddy

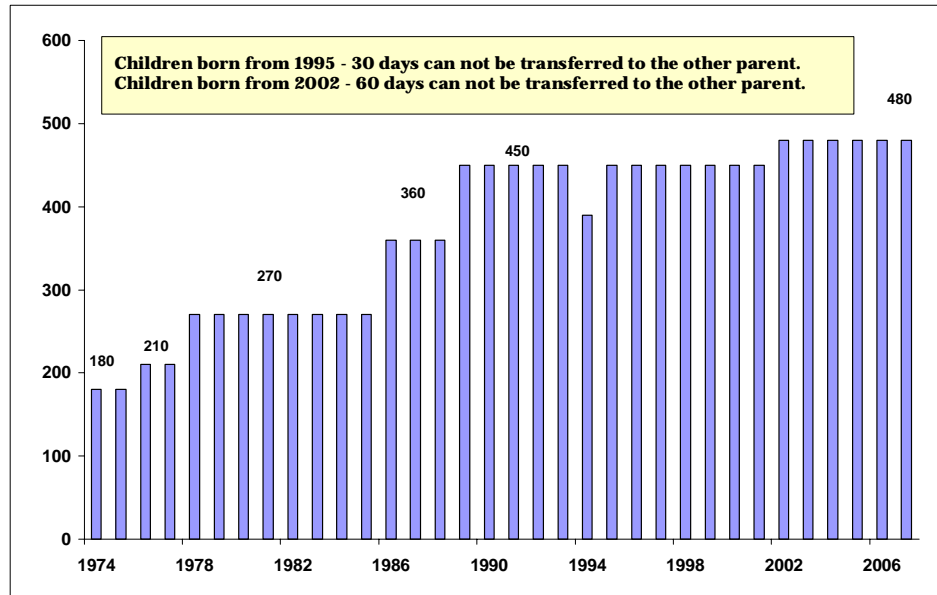
months” and two “mummy months” exist. These months will be forfeited if not used by the designated parent.

Out of the 16 months, the benefit for 13 months is income related. Today parents receive 80 percent of their previous income during these months. There is a ceiling to the 80 percent replacement which puts a cap to the replacement to high earners. The ceiling is price-indexed but was held constant during the 1990s which meant that an increasing proportion of parents actually received less than 80 percent of their previous income. The ceiling is now raised and the benefit covers the income of the largest part of parents. Also, today most employed parents have collective bargaining agreements with the employer to get extra benefits so that the income loss during parental leave will be minimized. For example, all state employed get 90 percent of their whole income, also over the ceiling.

The additional three months are replaced at a low flat rate of around 6 Euro a day. Parents without employment and no previous income receive a low flat rate for the whole period. The difference in benefit level creates a strong incentive to get an income to base the benefit on. In the middle of the 2000s the benefit for parents without previous income was raised to 18 Euro, but the incentive to work before childbearing is still strong.

A parent may use the leave whenever he or she wants until the child turns 8 years old. Many parents therefore save part of the leave to extend summer vacations etc during the child’s preschool years. Employers can never deny parents the claim to time off for parental leave, even if it may be sanctioned to different degrees by different employers. It is also possible to use the leave part time and thereby extend the leave period. If one accepts a lower replacement than 80 percent the period at home with the child can be prolonged considerably. This means that the parental leave length may vary quite a lot (Berggren, 2004).

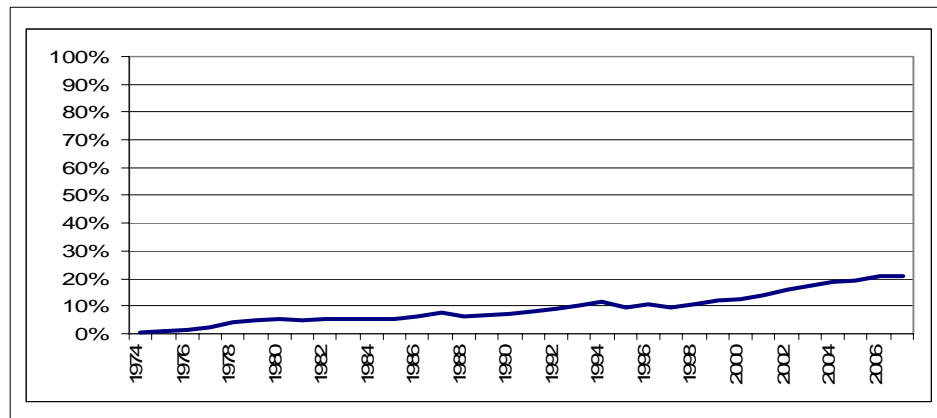
Figure 3. Development of parental benefit days 1974–2007



Source: Swedish Social Insurance Agency

The parental leave was originally (in 1974) six months. When the insurance was introduced it did not meet strong opposition and there seems to have been general agreement that this was an important step towards gender equality (Klinth, 2002). A common argument not to extend it was that it would affect women's labour market situation negatively in that they would stay out of the labour market longer. However, the parental leave has thereafter been extended in steps until it in 2002 became 16 months. The first non-transferable month was introduced in 1995 and the second in 2002.

Figure 4. Fathers' share of parental leave benefits days, 1975–2007



Source: Swedish Social Insurance Agency

Up until 1995, roughly half of all fathers used no leave at all, but after the introduction of the “daddy month” in that year this share was reduced to a fifth of all fathers (Sundström and Duvander, 2002; Ekberg, Eriksson and Friebe, 2005).

Most men use one to two months of leave, i.e. the two months that are non-transferable to the mother. However, the fathers' share of all used days is increasing, although the increase is slow. Fathers who have a weak attachment to the labour market, are unemployed, receive welfare benefits or have a low earnings, are over-represented among those who use no leave (Nyman and Pettersson, 2002). In other words, fathers who would receive a low benefit during parental leave most often chose not to take leave. The fathers who use a longer leave are the ones with high income, although the income ceiling in the insurance has discouraged longer leaves (Nyman and Pettersson, 2002; Sundström and Duvander, 2002). As the use of parental leave may be seen as a bargaining process between the parents, the relative income of the mother and the father are also of importance (Jansson, Pylkkänen and Valck, 2004; Sundström and Duvander, 2002). Furthermore, fathers with high education use longer leave. Also

mothers' education and income have a positive effect on fathers' leave use(Sundström and Duvander, 2002, Hobson, Duvander and Halldén, 2006). Studies have also found that other factors are important for how paid leave is divided, not least attitudes and values(Bekkengen, 2002), but also contextual factors such as workplace situation(Bygren and Duvander, 2004; Haas, Allard and Hwang, 2002; Näsman 1992, Hobson et al., 2006). Fathers often mention the workplace and employers' attitudes as reasons to not use the parental leave and it seems that small, private, male dominated workplaces inhibit parental leave use for fathers. The above mentioned income and educational factors are furthermore likely to act as proxies for differences between professions and types of workplaces.

Table 4. Reasons to the division of parental leave stated by parents(%)

	Mothers	Fathers
Mother's wish to be home	27	14
Father's wish to be home	1	
Wish to share equally	3	4
Mother's work	7	5
Father's work	18	21
Family economy	25	29
Other	19	21
Total	100	100

Source: National Social Insurance Board, 2003

It seems that considerations about the fathers' work place are more important than considerations about the mothers' work place when parents decide how to share the leave(Duvander and Eklund, 2003). Both parents also often mention that the mother wishes to be home longer. Another very important factor mentioned by parents is the economy, and as the father most often earn more than the mother, this is related to the effect of income mentioned above.

The division of leave in turn seems to have effects on the continued career of women and men (Albrecht, Edin, Sundström and Vroman, 1999; Statistics Sweden, 2007), and it is also associated with continued childbearing (Duvander and Andersson, 2006) and family stability (Oláh, 2001).

### *New reforms*

This summer two new reforms were introduced that will affect the development of parental leave use. First, a *gender equality bonus* will give an extra economic bonus to parents who share the leave more equally. The effect of the bonus is that for both families with low income and average income, the financial reasons for the mother to use most leave will be almost eliminated. That is, the income loss that is normally larger when the father is home will to a large part be covered by the bonus. The bonus is not as large as to cover the loss in families with high income, but it will still make a difference also in these families.

Second, the municipalities that so desires may offer a *child home care allowance* meaning that one parent may stay at home with children aged one to three instead of using the publicly financed day care. The allowance will be up to 300 Euro a month exempt from taxes. This is obviously much less than a normal income, also for part-time work, but will constitute a feasible solution for some families. The expectation is that women will use this benefit, especially women that have a poor or non-existing employment. The critique of the reform has been that it will marginalize a vulnerable group of women from the labour market. This may be even more important in a country like Sweden where so much is based on having employment.

These two reforms may be seen as reforms in different directions, one encouraging gender equality and shared child-responsibility, while the other emphasizes free choice and pluralistic solutions. The consequences may be larger variations between families, both regarding economy and gender equality.

### *Temporary parental benefit*

Temporary parental benefit is another important part of the parental insurance that facilitates the combination of work and family. The benefit was introduced in 1974 and covers employed parents with children aged 0 to 12. The benefit provides up to 120 days off work to care for sick children. The benefit is income related and will pay 80 percent of the normal earnings per day. The ceiling is however lower than that of the parental leave. It can be used for a full day or part of a day. For seriously ill children there is no limit in days.

Also, this part of the insurance includes 10 days that are normally used by the father when the child is born (previously called “daddy days”). Normally the parental leave cannot be used by both parents at the same time, but these 10 days are aimed at assisting the mother and child during the first period at home.

Even if the temporal parental benefit is very generous in length, few parents use a considerable amount of days. It is most common to use days for children that are 2 to 3 years old and the average number of days used are 6 a year per child. Only for 0~2 percent of the children 60 or more days were used. Many of these had serious disabilities or sickness. Fathers use a larger part of the temporal parental benefit than the parental leave (36 percent), but still mothers use the major part. Also, mother's proportion of used days increase with the total number of days used per child. That is, in families where the children need many days at home, the mother uses a larger part of the days. Almost 80 percent of the fathers used the 10 days in relation to the birth of the child. A large part of the non-users are fathers that are not employed and thus have no possibility to use this benefit.

*Child allowance and other benefits*

Apart from the parental insurance, the other major part of the social insurance that goes to families is the child allowance. This is a flat-rate benefit that all children residing in Sweden are entitled to. The parents receive approximately 100 Euro per child, with a supplement for families having two or more children. This benefit was introduced in 1948 and was a result of a concern over declining birth rates in the 1930s. Furthermore it was one of the first measures to create a welfare state.

In addition, families may receive a care allowance for sick and disabled children. This benefit is aimed at covering additional costs that are caused by the disability, for example by the need to reduce work hours or the need for special transportation. An increasing number of children get care allowance for psychological diagnosis and the majority are boys. Mostly, it is the mothers who are the recipients of the benefit.

Housing allowance is not only directed to families, but the main recipients are single parents, mostly women. It is a means-tested benefit that is based on the household income, the number of individuals in the household, the cost of housing and the size of the housing.

Finally, maintenance support may be paid in case the parents separate. It will be paid through the social insurance in case the parent who is liable to pay maintenance, that is the parent where the child is not living, fails to pay. The support may thus be seen as a guarantee that the parent living with the child will get maintenance on schedule every month. The maintenance is maximum 125 Euro per month and child and the liable parent who is not paying will gather a debt to the state. Of all children in Sweden, the social insurance pays maintenance for 13 percent.

#### 4. Development and challenges

We may all agree that family policy is a complicated area where policies and support systems with different constructions and with different objectives needed. In Sweden the general goals have been to create opportunities to be able to combine family and work, as well guarantee good economic conditions for all children. A common interpretation is that this combination has been successful and the goals obtained. Most women work, most men use part of the parental leave, and Sweden may be seen as a country with relatively high degree of gender equality and individual economic independence. Furthermore, most women and men decide to have children and child poverty is relatively low in Sweden.

Nevertheless, goals could become more ambitious. Women may in the future work on a gender equal labour market, with for instance less gender segregation and less income differences. Men may in the future fully share the responsibility over children and for instance use half of the parental leave. This has been a fiercely debated issue and there has been a strong lobbying to abolish the right to sign over days, thereby almost forcing men to use half of the leave. Also, women and men may have opportunities to realize their child bearing desires without the economic restrictions that still exist today. Child poverty may be decreased considerably.

There are also other aspects of the development that need to be mentioned as they can be associated with the family policy, albeit not in the same positive light as the “achieved goals”. It is necessary to scrutinize the family policy and also find the potentially negative development that can be associated with the family policy. The very generous parental leave may actually act as a disadvantage to women in the labour market. The flexibility of the leave makes it possible to stay out of the labour force for an extended time period and this has been found to act detrimentally to women’s

careers(Statistics Sweden, 2007).

It may also be that the strong connection between labour market work and parental leave benefits is a major reason that individuals postpone childbearing and age at first birth has increased. In this perspective the parental leave may act as a limit to childbearing, at least in times of economic downturns.

Also the strong connection between the labour market and the parental insurance, as well as most parts of the social insurance, may make marginalized groups even more marginalized. It may create barriers to exit marginalization and make it very hard to get “included” once having been “excluded”.

The major challenges for the future lies in that both the Swedish population and the labour market will become increasingly diverse. Both the population and the labour market have a history of being all-inclusive and relatively homogenous and the family policy is constructed to fit such a context. Not just migration and globalization, but the effects of different individual choices may create more diversity and variations in patterns. This can partly be seen as something positive, as an effect of individuals being able to act on their free choices. Diversity is generally perceived as enriching for any society. Partly, variations can however be seen as negative, when it means marginalization of some groups and when variations in behavioural pattern are caused by obstacles for some groups rather than different choices based on different preferences.

For the family policy, the challenge lies in adapting the system to the different preferences of how to use the benefits. The policy needs to formulate a response to larger variations between families. For instance it may be difficult to combine the goals of encouraging work and guaranteeing good economic conditions to all families in the parental leave insurance if

not the majority of those becoming parents follow the incentive to work before childbearing. In addition, many political issues are involved. For example, one issue is whether to strongly encourage shared responsibility over children, or to let families do as they please, which would mean that more families would act gender unequal as this in many ways, not least economically, includes less costs. Policy makers have to make these decisions informed by the development so far, and in the context of other dimensions of the societal development.

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VIII  
*Legal Instruments to Combat  
Work–Family Related  
Discrimination in Sweden*

Pia Engström Lindgren

Deputy Head, Equal Opportunities Ombudsman

Dear friends, I am honoured and delighted to have been invited to this seminar on Work - Family Balance Policy, an issue of great strategic importance for the work to achieve equal opportunities for women and men.

The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman's office is a government agency with the mission to combat sex discrimination and to promote gender equality. We monitor legislation that demands that employers and others take active measures in order to promote equal opportunities for women and men. We also receive and investigate complaints from individuals on sex discrimination. If we find that a person has been subjected to sex discrimination, we can take legal action on behalf of the complainant, ultimately representing her or him in court. Our third field of operation is information and opinion forming activities to spread knowledge and raise people's awareness of the issues of gender equality.

In 2006 the Swedish parliament laid down new goals for the national gender equality policy. The main goal is that women and men shall have the same power to shape society and their own lives. To reach this we need to reach four interim goals: an equal distribution of power and influence; economic equality between women and men; an equal distribution of unpaid care and household work; and, finally, an end to men's violence against women.

Compared to any other country, Sweden has come a long way towards gender equality. Still, we are still far from a society where a person's sex is not of decisive importance for her or his life prospects. To sum it up: men have more power and influence than women; men make more money than women; women have main responsibility for home and care; men's violence against women is still a prevailing problem.

As I said, how women and men living together choose to distribute the

responsibility for the paid and the unpaid work is of great strategic importance for the work to achieve equal opportunities for women and men. I'd like to show you a diagram that gives a very clear illustration of the problem we face.

This picture shows the median income for women and men in different age groups. And as can be seen, from the late 20's and onwards there is a big income gap between women and men. As it happens, this gap starts increasing roughly at the average age for when Swedish women have their first baby.

This is of course no coincidence. There are two factors to explain the gap: women work less hours than men do, and women get less paid for their job than men do. Both these aspects have to do with an unequal distribution of the responsibility for the unpaid care and household work.

If we look at parents with small children living together, the pattern is very clear. Women work almost twice as many hours unpaid per week than men do. As for paid work, the situation is the opposite (and yes, the statistics do include such "male" tasks as washing the car and cleaning the gutters...)

If we look at the other parameter, the salary, we have an equally clear pattern. The average salary for women is 84 per cent of the average salary for men (compared to roughly 85 per cent in the EU). If we compare women and men working in the same professions and in the same sectors, with similar age and educational level, the pay gap decreases so that the average salary for women reach 94 per cent of men's average salary.

However, the fact that you find many women in traditional women's low-wage jobs in the public sector is partly due to the fact that working part time and combining work and your responsibilities as a parent often is more easy to achieve there than in the private sector.

The main part of the remaining pay gap could be explained by the fact that more men than women reach managerial posts or get more qualified tasks at work. This is in part an effect of the fact that women are away more from work than men, making human resource investments in men more profitable for the employer than in women.

The rest of the pay gap is due to sex discrimination, to the fact that some women get less paid than a man would have been doing the same job.

So, having said this, I think I have made it clear that from our point of view, as a government agency with a mission to promote gender equality, all issues concerning work-life balance is of great importance.

It can also be said that we face a somewhat contradictory situation, where different aspects of gender equality seems to be at odds with each other:

On one hand, we have a fairly generous system of parental leave and parental benefit that allow women(and men) to combine gainful employment with family life. That has given us a high rate of women's economic activity, which is good for gender equality.

On the other hand, when applied in a rather traditional setting, this system leads to a big difference in presence at work between women and men. On average a father stays at home for a total of 3 months from the child is born until it's eight years old, while mothers stay at home for a total of 2,5 to 3 years, depending on their degree of part time working. This in turn gives women and men very different conditions on the labour market, which is not good for gender equality.

The question then is what we can do about it, what legal instruments there are to promote work - life balance in Sweden and to reduce the

discrimination that results from the fact that most women and men have children.

Basically, we distinguish between the anti-discrimination laws giving individuals the right to a redress when subjected to sex discrimination, and those legal provisions compelling employers to promote equal rights for women and men through different active measures.

Eight years ago, the EEO monitored only one act: the Equal Opportunities Act, banning sex discrimination in the work place and compelling employers to promote equal opportunities for women and men.

Since then, the protection against discrimination has been extended to cover students at universities, pupils in all levels of the school system, and ordinary people in a number of areas of society, such as the provision of goods and services, job agencies and the social insurance system.

The demand to promote gender equality now also covers universities and schools.

In general, when we speak about someone being discriminated against, we mean that she or he has been treated unfairly. In a legal context, we need to use a more specific definition. With direct sex discrimination we refer to a situation where a person is treated less favourably than a person of the opposite sex would have been in a similar position. Typically, this includes suffering some kind of loss or damage. It must also be clear that the unfairness has something to do with the victim's sex. That's why we have to establish whether a person of the opposite sex would have been treated different in a similar situation.

Discriminating a woman because she is pregnant constitutes a case of

direct sex discrimination, according to EC-law. Since men can't be pregnant, there is no need to make comparisons with how a person of the opposite sex would have been treated in a similar situation, it's enough to establish that the discrimination had something to do with the woman's pregnancy.

However, we also have what we call indirect discrimination. This is a form of discrimination that is not aimed at a specific individual, but follows from a seemingly neutral provision, criteria or procedure that effect women and men differently.

Sexual harassment or gender-related harassment, that is sexual behaviour or behaviour that is related to a person's sex and that violates a person's dignity, is considered to be direct sex discrimination when the perpetrator is an employer or someone representing the employer.

The law also prohibits instructions to discriminate. An employer who discriminate an employee by asking someone else to do it, still have the legal responsibility.

Finally, the law prohibits reprisals against a person who has filed a complaint about sex discrimination or has taken part in an investigation following such a complaint.

These are general principles that apply to all areas where sex discrimination is prohibited. If we take a closer look at the provisions covering working life, we find that the ban on sex discrimination covers practically all situations where an employer makes decisions regarding a job seeker or an employee: recruitment, promotion, work experience placement, education/training, pay and terms of employment, work supervision, notice to quit, dismissal and other interventionary measures.

Sex discrimination is not a criminal offence; there is no provision in the

penal code referring to sex discrimination. The legislation prohibiting sex discrimination is all within the area of civil law, particularly labour law.

What happens is that an employer who subjects an employee to sex discrimination, or a university that subjects a student, or a school that subjects a pupil, will be liable to pay damages to the victim. Any discriminatory agreements, provisions and other legal documents may be declared invalid.

Anybody who thinks they have been subjected to sex discrimination could sue the opponent in court. However, legal assistance would be costly, and if the case is lost you would have to pay the legal costs both for yourself and for the other side as well.

An important task for The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman then, is to provide legal assistance free of charge, and, if a case is lost, to cover the opponent's legal expenses.

Because of the successively extended legislation, the inflow of complaints about sex discrimination to the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman has been steadily growing for a number of years. In 2007 we received a total of 413 complaints, of which 96 were dismissed since they didn't concern the ombudsman's area of authority, leaving 317 cases to be investigated by our jurists.

In Sweden, a majority of employees are members of a union. The unions and the employer's organisations traditionally have a strong position on the labour market. Many issues regulated through legislation in other countries are decided upon through collective bargains between the social parties in the labour market.

Since unions have a primary right to take legal action on behalf of their members, when it comes to disputes in working life we always have to ask a complainant if she or he is a member of a union. If the answer is yes, we have to ask the union if they plan to represent their member in this specific case. Only if the complainant is not a union member or if the complainant is not content with the assistance provided by the union, or if the union for some reason declines to represent their member, we can initiate an investigation.

During the investigation the Ombudsman stays impartial. Only if we find that the complainant has been subjected to sex discrimination, we step in to represent her or him in a legal dispute with the employer. Please note that in a case of discrimination, it is enough for us to present circumstances that give reason to suppose that discrimination has occurred. The burden of proof is then transferred to the other side, the employer, who now must explain why these circumstances don't constitute a case of sex discrimination.

We call the employer to a negotiation for a settlement, aiming at a redress for the complainant. If we fail to reach a settlement, we can sue the employer in court. All disputes in working life are to be solved in the special Labour court. There are no superior court were to make appeals against the rulings of the Labour court.

Let me give you a real example to illustrate how it works: A county council, administrating all health care in the county, advertised for a midwife to be stationed at a health clinic. Five persons applied for the job. One of the applicants, a highly merited midwife, happened to be pregnant at the time. The job was given to one of the other applicants. Since this was a public employer, all the applications were public for anyone to see. The pregnant woman compared her merits to the one who had got the job, and found that

she had much better merits than her competitors for the job.

She filed a complaint to the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, and we found that by turning her down, the employer had treated her less favourably because she was pregnant, which constitutes a case of sex discrimination.

We failed to reach a settlement out of court and sued the county council in the Labour court. The court ruled in our favour of us, and granted the midwife a 50,000 SEK damage (10,000 USD).

Anti-discrimination law is of great importance to protect individuals from suffering unfavourable and unfair treatment. However it is a legal instrument that does not directly target structural obstacles to gender equality. For that reason, the legislator demands that employers and others also take active measures to promote equal opportunities for women and men. It is one of the Ombudsman's most important duties to monitor compliance with these provisions.

*The Equal Opportunities Act* demands that all employers work actively and goal-oriented to promote gender equality in the work place. The law states explicitly that the employer shall cooperate with the employee's to promote equal opportunities for women and men, thus giving the unions a key role as watchdogs for gender equality improvements in working life.

The act also states a method for the work, demanding the setting up of an annual gender equality plan. This plan shall contain a description of the present situation regarding women's and men's conditions in the work place. It shall contain clear goals that can be evaluated; concrete measures for how to reach the goals, with a time schedule; and, finally, it shall contain an evaluation of the previous year's plan.

These are peremptory legal rules for all employers with a minimum of 10 employees must do. However, there are 35 000 employers in Sweden with 10 or more employees, and we only have a dozen investigators at our office to monitor their compliance with these provisions, so the risk of “getting caught” is miniscule.

If we find that an employer has a gender equality plan that doesn’t comply with the provisions, she or he must present corrections and improvements of the plan to us on our request. If the employer fails to comply with our demands, she or he may face a threat of a default fine.

Please note that these requests for active measures to promote gender equality can not be used by an individual to take legal action against an employer. The provisions are not about protecting the rights of the individual, but to force the employer to promote equal opportunities for women and men and, by doing so, prevent sex discrimination.

One of the employer’s duties is to make it easier for the employees to combine work and family life.

How to do this is not explicitly laid down in the act, but follows from the legislative history and from actual practice in working life.

All measures adding flexibility to a persons working conditions makes it easier to get work and private life go together, such as allowing flexible working hours; allowing occasional working from home; keeping the workload on a reasonable level and not scheduling meetings early or late in the day, so as not to collide with leaving and picking up kids from child care.

There are also a number of measures to be taken in order to facilitate the

parental leave. For one thing, a positive or even encouraging attitude towards parental leave may be of great significance especially to fathers. It is also important that the employer keeps in touch with the employee during hers or his leave. Many employers pay a supplementary benefit during parental leave to reduce the employee's loss of income. For employees who have been on leave for a long time it is important to have a follow-up meeting on their wage development once they return from their parental leave.

However, in the course of years we could see that a ban on sex discrimination and demands for active measures were not enough to protect employees from disadvantages in working life following from their parenthood. For instance, fathers would have no legal protection at all when discriminated against in their capacity as parents. Pregnant women were protected from sex discrimination, but they had no protection once the kids grew a little older.

Two years ago, the parliament made an addition to *the Parental leave act* that makes it prohibited to treat any jobseeker or employee unfavourable due to their parental leave. I'm happy to say that the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman had some part in this new legislations coming in to existence.

The ban covers the same situations as the ban on sex discrimination in working life: recruitment; promotion; salary terms and other terms of employment; leading the work; giving notice, dismissing or laying off an employee.

Procedures of investigation and negotiations are the same as for cases of sex discrimination, and since it is a matter of working life, legal action is taken in the Labour court.

Since the new provision took effect 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2006 we have received 116

complaints regarding unfair treatment in connection with parental leave, with roughly 80 per cent of the complaints from women.

One distinct difference between complaints from women and men is that so far no man has complained about unfair treatment when it comes to salary or other terms of employment, while this is the most common complaint from women. A plausible explanation is of course the difference in the length of leave: men simply don't stay home long enough to be discriminated against salary-wise. Instead, men often complain about discriminating recruitment and promotions.

The new ban on discriminating against job seekers or employees in connection with their parental leave has given a large number of women and men a possibility to protect their rights, as can be seen from this diagram showing incoming complaints of sex discrimination in connection with pregnancy and unfavourable treatment in connection with parental leave.

One purpose with the addition to *the Parental leave act* was to reduce the occurrence of unfavourable treatment against men going on parental leave, with the assumption that the risk of facing discrimination is an important factor to explain the fact that most men stay at home only for short periods (men's average length of leave with parental benefit is 60 days).

Another purpose was to reduce the discrimination against women in connection with parental leave, such as getting no pay rise during parental leave or being sidestepped in recruitment.

Since it's only been two years since the new provision took effect, it is too soon to say whether it might contribute to a more even distribution of parental leave between women and men, or if it will reduce the occurrence of discrimination against mothers and fathers.

However it has already helped a number of people to get a redress after suffering discrimination, and this autumn we will bring our first cases to court. Since this is new legislation it is important for us to get court rulings that build up legal practice, in order to clarify the limits of the ban.

I'd like to conclude my presentation by briefly telling you about two of our court cases.

Our opponent in the first case is a local newspaper in western Sweden. After a very good financial year in 2006, with a big increase in the selling of advertisements, the employer decided to give each and every one of the employees a bonus of 11,000 SEK(roughly 40 percent of an average monthly salary in Sweden). However, those in the company who had been away for some reason - long time sick leave, parental leave or some other kind of leave from work - had their bonuses reduced in proportion to their absence.

Three women who had been on parental leave had their bonuses cut down proportionately. Two of the women had been on parental leave for seven months; the third woman had been on leave for eight months. For this reason the women's bonuses were reduced to between 3,000 and 4,000SEK.

According to *the Parental leave act*, an employer must not treat an employee unfavourably for reasons that have to do with her or his parental leave. This applies, as we have seen, also to terms of salary and other terms of employment. This has clearly been the case here, since the employer's instructions for the bonus states that it shall be reduced for employees who have been on parental leave.

The purpose of this provision is that terms of salary or other terms of employment not shall be affected negatively by the parental leave. An employee on parental leave shall have the same wage development as she or

he would have had if they would not have been on leave. This applies also to such terms or benefits that the employer decides upon one-sidedly, without negotiating with the unions, which was the case with this bonus.

Since we have failed to reach a voluntary settlement for a redress, we have sued the employer in the Labour court, calling for a damage of 25,000 SEK for the violation that this discrimination has meant for the three women, as well as the remaining sums to reach the full bonuses.

Some times it is hard to distinguish whether the discrimination at hand has to do with a woman's pregnancy or the upcoming parental leave. In such cases we have the possibility to sue on both grounds.

One such case concerns a physiotherapist working for the County council of Stockholm. She applied for a one week training course in rehabilitating sports-related injuries, but the employer refused her application with regard to the fact that the course would be held just a week before the woman's planned delivery.

The employer's main objection was that in order to fully gain from the course, the woman would have to make use of her new skills directly after the course. In short: she would not remember any of it once she came back from her parental leave.

In the first place we sue the County council for violating the ban on sex discrimination, since the unfavourable treatment of the complainant had to do with her pregnancy. According to EC law, any unfavourable treatment that has to do with a woman's pregnancy or motherhood constitutes direct sex discrimination.

In case the court doesn't agree that the employer has violated the ban on

sex discrimination, we claim that the County council by rejecting the complainant's application with reference to her upcoming parental leave has violated the ban on unfavourable treatment for reasons that has to do with parental leave.

In both cases we call for a damage of 40,000SEK.

With this example I finish my presentation, hoping it has given you some insight into the Swedish system. Compared to most other countries we have come very far on our way towards gender equality. However, we still face a number of serious challenges and obstacles to overcome. I think that a main lesson to be drawn from our experiences so far is that gender equality will never just arrive by it self. It is a constant struggle, and we must never stop working and pushing to keep the processes moving forwards. Thank you.

2008 연구보고서-12-3

**Balancing Work and Family:  
Current Issues and Policy Directions**

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2008년 12월 29일 인쇄

2008년 12월 31일 발행

발행인 : 김 태 현

발행처 : 한국여성정책연구원

서울시 은평구 진흥로 276(불광동 1-363)

전화 / 02-3156-7000 (代)

인쇄처 : 도서출판 한 학 문 화

전화 / 02-313-7593 (代)

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ISBN 978-89-8491-237-3 94330 <정가 14,500 원>  
978-78-8491-233-5 94330 (세트)