

5th international interdisciplinary
conference

Gender, Work and Organization

Generating an Ethic of Care in Organisations and
Beyond Stream

27th-29th June 2007

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Men and the Division of Unpaid Care

Gender-structural and gender-cultural dimensions in the welfare regimes of Sweden, France and Germany

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Paper to be presented at the *Generating an Ethic of Care in Organisations and Beyond Stream of the Gender, Work and Organization* conference, Keele University.

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Introduction

In cross-national research on welfare state policies in relation to gender and to the participation of women in the labour market, the importance of the organisation of care for gender equality has been shown. Welfare policies that provide access to care services or material help for informal care support the ability of women to participate in the public sphere, thus the formalisation of care was seen as important for the social inclusion for women. But, as Pfau-Effinger and Geissler pointed out, the character of care work itself “sets limits to its formalisation and monetarisation” (Geissler; Pfau-Effinger 2005: 5), it can only partially be made into formal employment.

The formalisation of care by transferring care work from the family – or particularly from women – to public or stately institutions supports the participation of mothers in the labour market, but still women are mainly responsible for the organisation of care. The formalisation of care is important for gender equality, but the fact that care can not (and should not) completely be formalised and that the limits of its formalisation leave the main burden of care with women raises questions about the gendered division of unpaid care in the family and about men’s attitudes towards care. Several national studies on men, e. g. in Sweden and Germany, demonstrated changes in men’s contribution and orientation towards unpaid care during the last decades. But on the political or institutional level most countries remain attached to the idea of female carer. The cultural norms and ideal of female carer have far reaching consequences for the structure of welfare policies because these policies are shaped by gendered cultural norms, values and beliefs concerning who is doing what kind of work and how this work should be done.

This paper considers the connexion between men’s contribution to unpaid care and welfare policies that constrain or facilitate an equal division of work between men and women, in a comparative context. It falls into four sections:

Firstly I will review the changing patterns of the division of unpaid work between men and women in Sweden, France and Germany by using data from time budget studies. Together with the results of quantitative and qualitative studies about the orientation, interests and attitudes of men in relation to care the differences between preferred and actual family models can be

demonstrated. Secondly I propose a model of care regimes as a basis for analysing unpaid care in the context of welfare policies and gender cultural ideal within politics and society. This model refers to Pocock's model of work/care regimes (Pocock 2005), makes use of Connell's notion of gender regimes (Connell 1987) and incorporates Pfau-Effinger's notion of gender culture (Pfau-Effinger 2000). I assume that assumptions about the division and organisation of care and about the desirable role of men and women within this organisation are institutionalized in welfare policy. Thirdly I will therefore report on developments and changes of two policies that affect the division of labour and men's take-up of unpaid care: parental leave policies and childcare provisions in Sweden, France and Germany are taken as examples for institutionalised gender policies. Finally I consider the development of a political ethic of care in these countries.

The gendered division of unpaid care and men's orientation towards unpaid care

Sweden

In all three countries changes concerning fatherhood and men's gender roles can be observed. But these changes differ a lot, particularly at the level of gender culture but also in relation to policy frameworks. The development of men's participation in unpaid care was the highest for Swedish men among the three countries. Over recent decades, the relationship between paid work and care has fundamentally altered in Sweden, with an increase of women's participation in paid work and a decline of women's participation in unpaid care. By contrast men, particularly fathers of young children aged under three years, have reduced their labour market participation and have increased their take-up of unpaid work. The change of father's interests in caring for their children can be demonstrated by the increasing use of parental leave days by fathers. In 1974 only 0,5 % of the whole amount of parental leave days were taken by fathers. Until 1977 this rate has been risen up to 2,2% and stagnated at 7% in 1987. As the fathers' share of total benefit days was only slowly rising, the Swedish government decided to promote opportunities for fathers. In 1995 a new parental leave act was introduced with a quotation of 30 days of paid parental leave for mothers and fathers. Indeed the fathers' use of parental leave days increased from 9,2% in 1995 to 15,5% in 2002. Only one year later, in 2003, fathers already took 18% of the available parental leave days. Also the percentage of fathers who used parental leave at all increased from 28,5% in 1995 to 41,6% in 2003.

But still men do less unpaid care than women. Women with younger children spend much more time in unpaid care than men. To consider the modifications of the gendered division of unpaid care it is necessary to compare men's take-up of care work with that of women. The time allocation survey of the Swedish National Social Insurance Board shows the time mothers and fathers spent on household work and childcare (Riksförsäkringsverket 2003: 47).

Table 1: Time use for household work and childcare, men and women with children, differentiated according to age of youngest child, in hours and minutes per day.

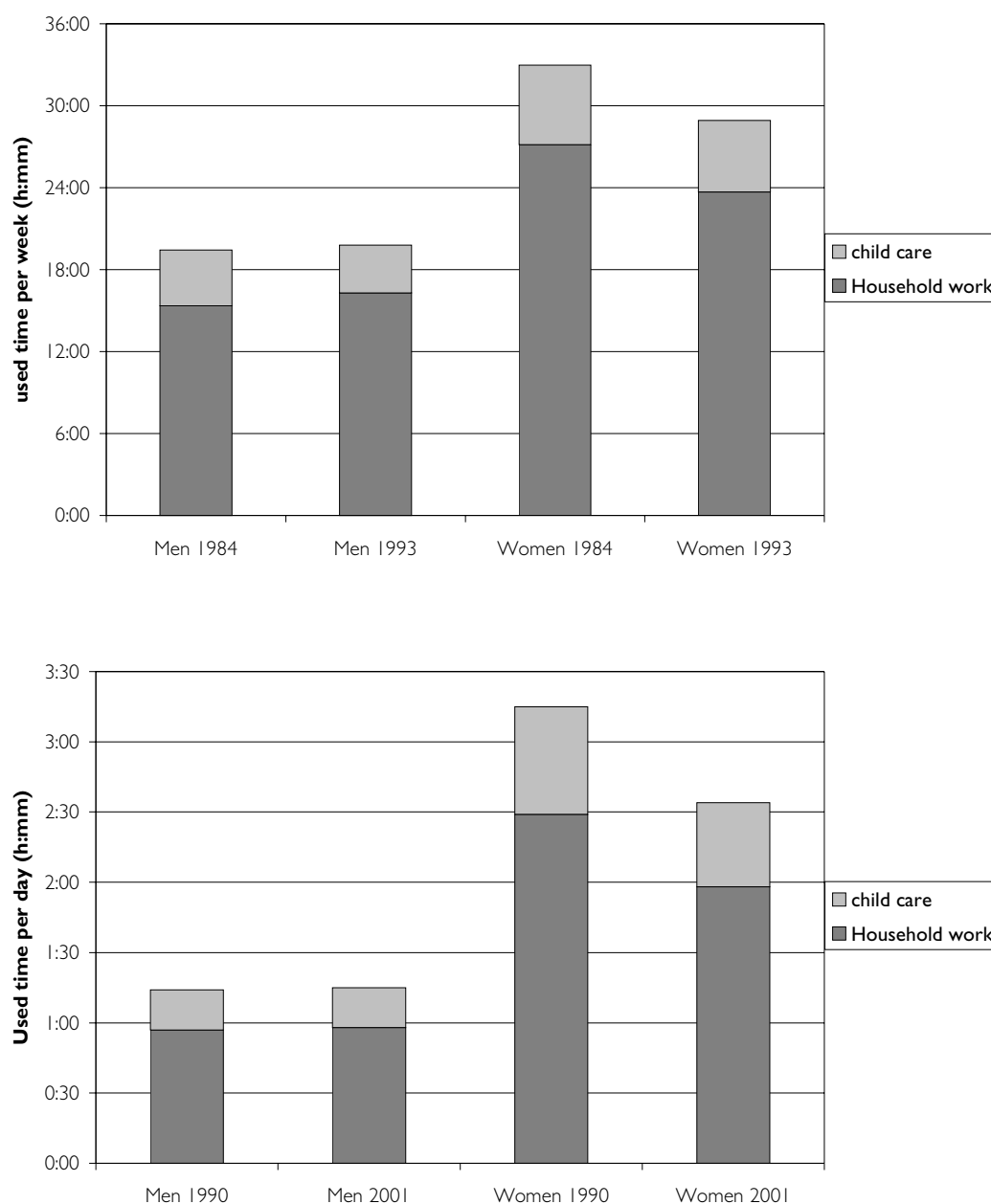
father	youngest child 0–2 years	youngest child 3–6 years	youngest child 7–17 years
household work	4:28	3:20	3:07
thereof time for childcare	1:20	0:56	0:24

mother	youngest child 0–2 years	youngest child 3–6 years	youngest child 7–17 years
household work	7:09	5:06	4:33
thereof time for childcare	2:57	1:27	0:39

The data show the situation of the gendered division of unpaid work in 2000. The age of the youngest child affects men's participation in unpaid work insofar as they do more unpaid work than men with elder children. But women spend much more time in household work and childcare than men do. This is important concerning the fact that the most common family model in Sweden is the dual breadwinner family with both partners work full-time. 51,1% of all parents with children younger than six years choose this model in 1998, in 13,3% of cases the man works full-time and the woman part-time and only 24,9% of all parents practice the male breadwinner model with an unemployed mother (OECD 2001: 136).

Though Swedish men still do less unpaid care than women, over recent decades a more equal distribution of paid and unpaid work can be observed. Time budget studies carried out between 1984 and 1993 and 1990 and 2001 noted the increasing distribution of men in unpaid work and the declining participation of women. The following figure shows the modifications during 20 years:

Figure 1: Time use for household work and childcare in Sweden 1984–2001



1984 and 1993: Anxo et al. (2001), 1990 and 2001: Statistiska Centralbyrån (2003)

Between 1984 and 2001 men increased their amount of unpaid care by 30 minutes per week while women's participation in unpaid work declined even more. The reduction of parents' time use for childcare is characteristically for this period. This is related to the increasing number of dual breadwinner families and the modified organisation of care. During this period childcare has been transferred more and more from the family to public institutions and parents used less time to care for their children at home. For very young children caring in the family is still considered best, so parents provide care for children in their first year mainly in the family. Over recent

decades fathers altered their contribution to unpaid care mainly by increasing their time of childcare and by reducing their working hours when the youngest child is less than one year old.

“If we consider time spend with young children, time budget studies show that men with small children are devoting more hours to fathering; in 1993 the average time spent was 9 hours and 5 minutes, an increase of 4,5 hours per week from the previous decade” (Bergman, Hobson 2002: 113).

These modifications are related to the remaking of fatherhood in Sweden. Qualitative and quantitative studies show the shifting attitudes of fathers towards their children and towards labour work.

„Empirical studies show that men today more than earlier generations of men are family oriented [...]. Modern men do not want to have a family, they want to be a family [...]“ (Bäck-Wiklund, Bergsten 1996: 61 f.).

Earlier generations of fathers are described as typical “Sunday fathers”, as industrial workers or employees, who worked six days per week and spent time with their family only on Sundays. The following generation of fathers were “leisure time fathers”: the changing working hours made it possible for fathers to spend more time with their children, but they themselves considered men as being the families breadwinner and responsible for the family wage and not for childcare and household work. The highest rate of active fathers can be found in the youngest generation of fathers. They want to be responsible for childcare and participate in their children’s daily life (Björnberg 1992: 175).

„In earlier generations children were expected to be part of their father’s everyday life, however today fathers are expected to be part of their children’s everyday life“ (Bäck-Wiklund, Bergsten 1996: 62).

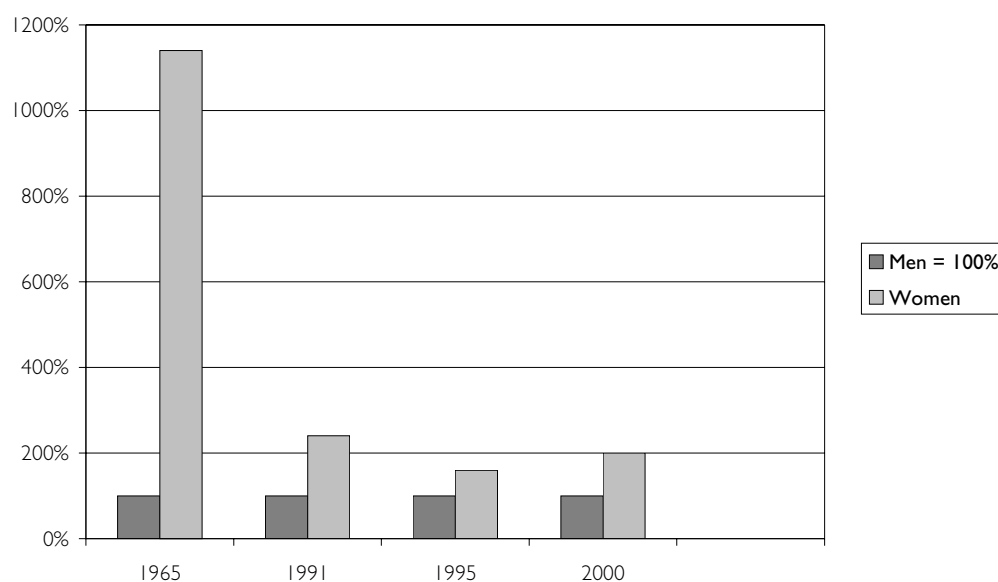
Nowadays young men are enthusiastic fathers who are much more engaged in childcare and care responsibility than earlier generations. In some ways active fatherhood is more important than career for the younger generation of fathers. But the main responsibility for providing care to children is still with the mothers. Men “switch-on and switch-off” their fatherhood accordingly to their desires and needs (Bäck-Wiklund, Bergsten 1996: 62).

Germany

The next chapter focuses the participation of men in unpaid labour in the former FRG and the FRG after the unification. The development in the GDR will not be considered as notably the disruption between gender structures in the federal German welfare policies and the gender culture in Germany are very interesting. The division of unpaid care between men and women has altered in Germany over recent decades. The actual time use of men and women for unpaid and paid labour has to be considered concerning the fact that German welfare policies have strongly supported the male breadwinner model in earlier decades and the modified breadwinner model later on. A lack of childcare services combined with parental leave measures and taxation had prompted mothers to interrupt employment and to stay at home. In 2000 couples with children under six years practiced mainly the male breadwinner model. In 52,3 % of cases the mothers were unemployed. Only 15,7% of cases both partner were full-time employed and 23,1% of cases the mothers were part-time employed (OECD 2001).

Despite the constraining policy frameworks a more equal division of labour between men and women has increased. In 1965 women had done 11,4 times as much household work than men, in 2000 the ratio had been 2,0 times as much as men (Künzler et al. 2001: 83). Figure 2 shows the development between 1965 and 2000.

Figure 2: *Ratio of unpaid labour between men and women in Germany 1965-2000*



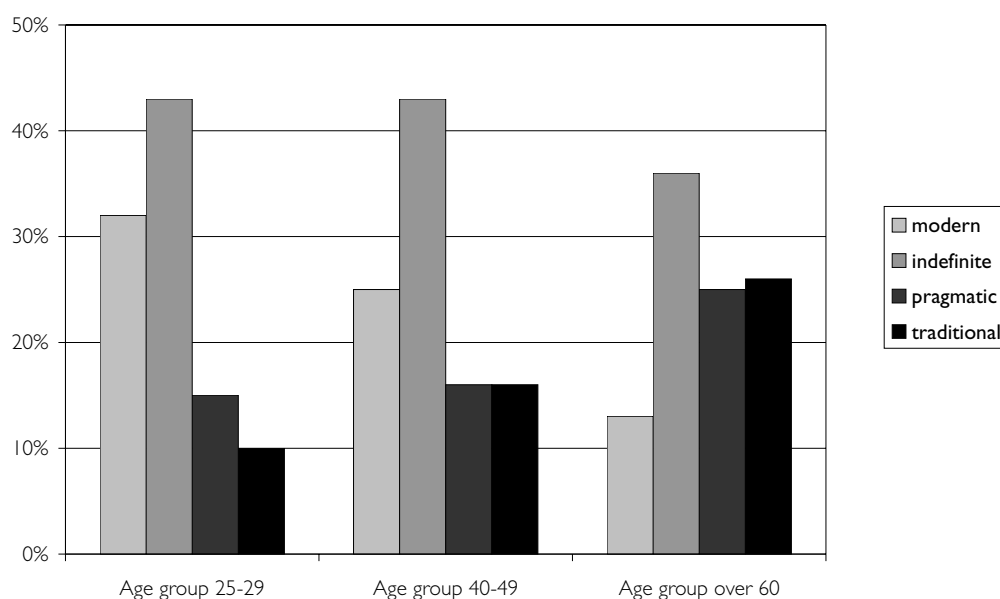
Even if the data show that the ratio of men's and women's time use for care has changed, most effects of the modernized patterns of time use have been created by the declining time use of women for care over recent decades. This can be demonstrated by data in 1991 and 2001.

Table 2: *Gendered division of unpaid labour in Germany 1991 and 2001, in hours and minutes per day*

	without children, both employed	with children, only men employed	with children, both employed
1991			
Men	2:49	2:55	2:55
Women	4:54	8:27	5:33
2001			
Men	2:33	3:03	2:43
Women	3:26	7:20	5:11

Primarily women have declined their participation in unpaid labour, but considering the behaviour of fathers with young children shows modifications in values and attitudes towards active fathering. The values and attitudes of men towards gender equality, active fathering and participation in care have much more altered than the actual participation of men in childcare and household work. This seems to be related to the policy frameworks in Germany that have sustained a gender ideology with a strong emphasis on women's duties as housewives and mothers and on men as male breadwinner earner.

Figure 3 shows the modification in values and norms of German men of different age groups. The study (Zulehner 2004) classified men in relation to their expressed opinions and values into modern, pragmatic, indefinite und traditional men.



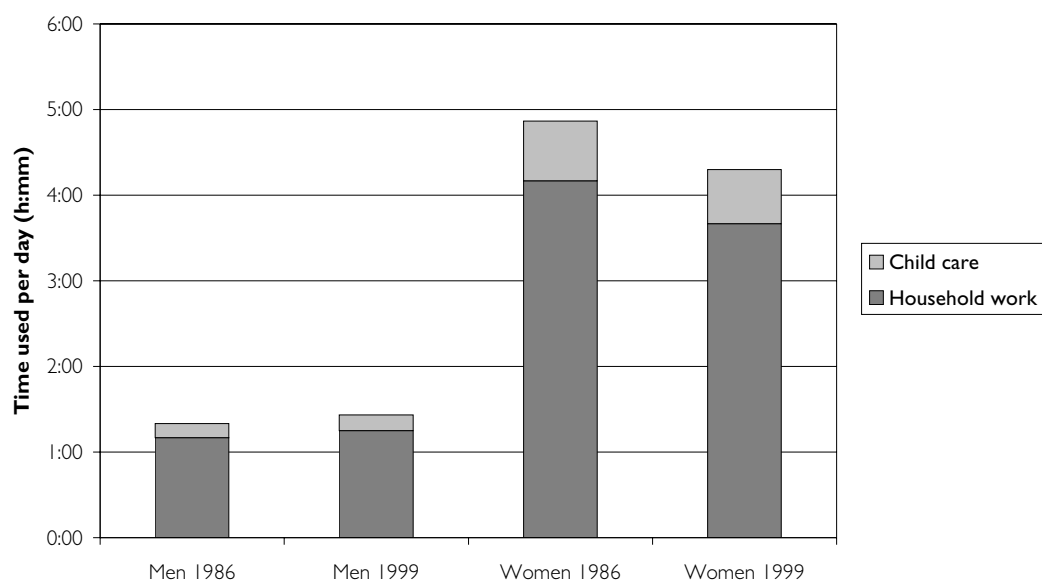
The proportion of men with modern attitudes concerning gender equality, childcare and participation in household work has been increasing over recent generations. Especially fathers have developed an increasing interest in active fathering, nowadays most fathers wish to be involved in childcare. They are interested in take-up of parental leave, but studies show that most parents decided against father's participation in parental leave because of the low flat-rate benefits (Vaskovics, Rost 1999). As fathers mostly have the higher income their take-up of parental leave would have affected the family income much more than the mother's employment interruption. Even if German fathers signalled interests in taking up parental leave, the proportion of fathers in parental leave has been remaining low until the end of the 1990s. In 1987 only 0,68 percent of those on leave were fathers and during the 1990s the proportion of fathers increased to nearly two percent (Ostner 2002: 159). After a reform of the parental leave law in 2001 the proportion of fathers increased to nearly five percent in 2004.

France

Over recent decades the division and organisation of care has altered in France as in most European countries. But though women increased their labour market participation, the changes of care have hardly taken place between men and women. Mainly women have changed their

behaviour by declining the time use for household work and childcare. This was possible by transferring care from the family to the public. Men have increased their participation in unpaid care only about seven minutes per day between 1986 and 1999 (INSEE 1999), as the following figure presents:

Figure 4: *Time use for household work and childcare, men and women in France 1986-1999, in hours and minutes per day*



INSEE 1999

Even between full-time employed men and women significant differences in the time use for household work and childcare can be shown.

Table 3: *Division of unpaid care between men and women in relation to labour work status in hours and minutes per week, in France*

	Childcare	Household work
Man full-time employed	12:40	11:30
Women full-time employed	21:10	29:58
Women part-time employed	21:44	38:06

Barrère-Maurisson et al. 2001

With the increasing number of children in the family, men as well as women increase their time use for household work. But in families with two full-time employed partner women still do more unpaid work in the family than men.

Table 4: Both partners full-time employed, time use for household work in relation to number of children in hours and minutes per day

	no child	one child	two children	three children
Men	1:12	1:38	1:29	1:46
Women	2:54	4:04	4:17	4:39

Degenne et al. 2002

The data reflect the cultural persistence of gender differentiation in the domestic division of unpaid labour and show that the idea of the egalitarian division of care in the family was not supported by a majority of the population. The idea of fatherhood has altered over recent decades nonetheless, but basically in respect of fathers attitudes towards their children. While fathers of former generations considered themselves as the head of the family and responsible for the financial support of the family, younger generation of fathers are less interested in authority but prefer more caring and soft attributes (Castelain-Meunier 1997: 66 f.). Men have developed a rising interest towards active fathering but besides this they consider themselves still as being the main family breadwinner (Ridder et al. 2004: 45 ff.). In 2002 only two percent of recipients of parental leave were fathers. French men have developed changing orientations and values towards care, but these modifications are low. There is only a marginal impact of these modifications on daily family life and on the gendered division of unpaid care within the family. These results are quite interesting concerning the fact that France shows one of the most egalitarian models of division of labour work between men and women in Europe. It shows that supporting the inclusion of women in the labour market does not necessarily mean supporting gender equality in general. The French case emphasises the relevance of care in gender culture and in gender politics.

A model of care regimes

The division of care in Sweden, Germany and France occurs within a complex social, cultural and institutional situation. To analyse these factors and to describe how they intersect and operate I use a model of care regimes that refers to Pocock's model of work/care regimes (Pocock 2005), makes use of Connell's notion of gender regimes (Connell 1987) and incorporates Pfau-Effinger's notion of gender culture (Pfau-Effinger 2000). Pocock proposes a multi-layered model to illustrate the relationship between the gender order and work/care regimes. She assumes that the gender order is embodied in a specific work/care regime with particular institutions, cultures and actions (Pocock 2005: 38). This means that work/care outcomes are determined by the interplay of culture, institutions, and actions, preferences and behaviour.

“Connell (1987, p. 116) uses the notion of ‘gender order’ to understand how men and women and society work, arguing that gender orders are historically constructed patterns of power relations that

are ‘always imperfect and under construction’ but that ‘an orderliness’ of gender relations exists at any point in time” (Pocock 2005: 38).

The gender order reproduces gender relations and gender related behaviour and is in turn shaped by changes in behaviour (and in gender relations) over time. Thus, the gender order is institutionalized in a gender regime, as in governmental policy, the labour market or in social behaviour. Pocock argues that in analysing work and care arrangements, this approach of a larger order within which a specific regime is located provides a useful model.

Incorporating Pfau-Effinger notion of gender culture emphasises a focus that goes beyond the traditional analysis of institutions to include considerations of culture and action (Pocock 2005: 38).

Using the three approaches to consider the development of care regimes requires focusing on welfare institutions that have impact on the gendered division of care, for example family policy and working hours policy. The dominant values, norms and ideas that underlie these policies (for example the ‘proper’ mother, the ‘proper’ father, the ‘proper’ organisation of care) have to be analysed. It also requires considering the care culture at the level of society, the preferences, norms and values concerning fathering, mothering and the division of paid and unpaid labour between men and women. The analyses will show how welfare policies constrain or facilitate these preferences and that the patterns in which care work is organised are based on gender specific roles and tasks at the cultural level as well as at the institutional level.

Parental leave policies and childcare policies

Sweden

The Swedish family policy tries to provide parents with good possibilities to arrange labour work and care. It is based on the ideal of gender equality and the ideal of working mothers and caring fathers. In 1974 the Swedish government had – within the programme of parental leave – already started to develop a concept of providing parents with the possibilities to share their time for children and labour.

The parental leave act founded in 1974 provided employed mothers as well as employed fathers with the right to stay at home after a child’s birth. The first act offered six months of parental leave which was compensated with 90% of their prior salaries. During the following decades the period of parental leave increased and the amount of parental benefit changed. In 2005 the period of parental leave is 18 months with 480 days payment of parental leave benefit. Parents could take up to 390 days and are compensated with 80% of their salaries and a further three months (90 days) with a flat benefit of 60 SEK a day. Parents, who were not employed before the child’s birth, are also entitled to receive the flat rate payment.

The father policy started already with the parental leave benefit. By compensating parental leave with 90% of the income prior to the child’s birth the state promoted fathering and the families’ opportunities to share parental leave even if the father’s income was higher than the mother’s earnings. But until 1994 the proportion of days fathers had used remained low. The introduction of the so called daddy-month had the purpose to support the equality between men and women

as both parents were regarded as responsible for the care of children and for domestic work. In 1995 30 days of paid parental leave had been reserved for the father (and another 30 days for the mother) and could not be shared. If the father does not take at least 30 days it will be lost. In 2002 the amount of reserved days has been increased up to 60 days. As fathers lose this 60 days of parental leave benefit if they do not take it, it was hardly possible for employers not to accept the decision of their male employees to take parental leave. The daddy-months have become statutory rights for the fathers. To inform men about their rights and duties as fathers and to discuss new gender roles of men, public father groups were established. And to support the social acceptance of fathers in parental leave the government started a publicity campaign for fathers in parental leave.

“New campaigns emerged after the passage of the daddy-month, and the government offered large sums of money to governmental and non-governmental agencies that developed educational programs. The main beneficiary was the National Board of Insurance, who produced packets of material for every worker [...]. A special packet was sent to employers” (Bergman, Hobson 2002: 110 f.).

Beside parental leave fathers are entitled to ten days paternity leave following a child's birth.

With the parental leave act since 1974 parents can demand part-time work until their child is eight years old. It is possible to take parental leave on part-time basis of 25%, 50 % 75% or full-time with the statutory right to go back to full-time work later on. The law also allows for flexibility since parents can share days. This makes it easier for parents to combine work and care for their children and for fathers to be involved in caring responsibilities.

Besides the parental leave to support families after a child's birth with financial and occupational security to build up a family life, the childcare policy has contributed to enable both partners to be employed. Sweden offers a wide range of public childcare even for younger children. Daily public childcare offers full-time services that give parents the opportunity to work full-time. Swedish schools are full-time schools as well¹. 48% of children below three years are in public childcare, and 80% of the children aged from three to six years. Childcare is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education as emphasis is placed on pedagogical goals of childcare to create conditions to integrate children with special needs and to aid children in their socialization (Björnberg 2002: 37 f.).

The Swedish welfare politics bases on ideals and values concerning gender roles, family models and the division and organisation of labour that are promoted by its welfare policies. Since the 1960s, the dual breadwinner family has become the norm in Sweden and the Swedish family policy has been seen as a significant support for this family model, especially in its promotion of gender equality in both family and work (Björnberg 2002: 33). Since then, the political discourse has stressed that equality between men and women is important and there has been a presumption behind the policies that responsibilities for care should be shared equally. The explicit objective of gender equality means that political measures target men as well as women. The aim of family policy has been therefore to support women's participation in the labour market and to make fathers visible and morally responsible in taking parental leave. Parental leave

¹ Full-time schools are quite exceptionally for Germans, where schools are usually open until noon, which makes it difficult for both parents to work, as long as their children are younger pupils.

policy should enable parents to flexibly arrange labour work and caring responsibilities and enable fathers to be involved in childcare. This was also to encourage men to change their ideals and to participate in care.

Through the parental leave parents were guaranteed rights to take care of their newborn child themselves, to return to their jobs after having taken care of their child at home and to work part-time. This implies the idea of providing the right of parents to give care to their young children. After the babies first year, public childcare implies that the costs of raising children should be shared between the state and the parents, and “[...] this is a social norm, not just a means-tested subsidy for those in need” (Björnberg 2002: 36). These ideals are closely connected to the idea of employment as a right and an obligation for all citizens.

The welfare policies of parental leave and of public childcare provide good possibilities to Swedish parents to share labour work and care equally. These policies supported the altered attitudes of men towards childcare and the modifications of gender culture and gender relations. A family policy as the Swedish, with the explicit aim of mainstreaming gender equality can encourage a change in fathers’ behaviour. It is possible to increase fathers’ take-up of parental leave, if the financial conditions of benefits are not too disadvantageous and if the legal rights are strong enough for fathers to be able to negotiate with their employers and their social environment. The Swedish case shows the connexion between altered attitudes and orientations of men towards care, changing care outcomes and promoting father policies. But these developments are strongly connected with a specific ethic of care in politics and gender culture with a highly observed necessity of care. This will be discussed in the last chapter.

Germany

Until recently German welfare policies have strongly supported a traditional division of labour by creating positive incentives to those with lower or no income to stay at home and to be dependent on their partners. A lack of public childcare services and taxation are two examples of policies that still prompt women (with usually lower salaries than their spouses) to interrupt employment after a child’s birth. But reforms of parental leave measures in 2007 have finally adopted a family model of dual breadwinner/dual carer as basis of family policy.

In 1986 the German government entitled both fathers and mothers to three years paid leave and means-tested flat-rate benefits of about €300 per month. These measures were quite inflexible, with the possibility for parents to share parental leave once during the whole period and offered the opportunity to combine parental leave with part-time employment up to 19 hours per week.

In 2001 a new Parental Leave Act was introduced. The act entitled employed parents to take a leave of three years after the child’s birth. The parents had the right to share the parental leave at the same time or by turns and to combine it with part-time work up to 30 hours per week. During the leave parents received a flat rate benefit for 24 month, which was also allotted to unemployed parents. Parents could utilize their leave in one year only and thereby had been entitled to a 30 percent higher benefit.

Only recently, in 2007, a reform of the parental leave benefits was passed by the new German government. It shows a strong orientation towards the Swedish model and aims at adapting the

existing rules to the needs of employed parents by giving them more options to reconcile labour work and childcare. The reform wants to increase fathers' take-up of parental leave by providing incentives more encouraging for men. The reform reduced the duration of parental leave benefits to 12 months with a bonus of another two month in case parents share their parental leave. This quotation targets men comparable to the two 'daddy-month' in Sweden. While benefits were flat-rated before, now parental leave benefit is income-based with 67% of the monthly income prior to the child's birth. Unemployed parents (e.g. students) receive a flat-rate benefit of €300 per month. This reform considers men as caring fathers and women as employed mothers, and creates the new family model with two breadwinner and two carers. It emphasises gender equality and the equal division of labour work and care between men and women.

To support this new family model an increasing number of childcare services and a new organisation of schools is necessary. After the Second World War family policy in West-Germany was guided by the priority of transfers over publicly provided childcare services as cash benefits, in contrast to care services, support but do not replace families self-help (Ostner 2002: 155). Childcare was meant to be a duty of families and not to be shared between state and families. There was a strong political (and partially social) reluctance against stately interventions in childcare. There was little provision of public childcare for children under three and even in kindergartens for those under six the short duration of daily provision made part-time employment difficult to organise. Since the introduction of the "right to a place in a public childcare service" in 1996, places for 90% of the children aged between three and six have been provided. But in West-Germany only 24% of these places are full-time places, whereas in East-Germany 98%. The covering rate for those under three was even worse, but a law introduced in 2005 decided to increase the number of available public childcare places for under threes by 230 000 in West-Germany until 2010.

The organisation of school attendance means that children come home around 13 o'clock and especially pupils of primary schools have irregular class schedules. School-based care, the so called *Hort*, is rare; places are available for only 5% of the pupils.

During the last two decades the traditional male breadwinner model has changed slowly to the model of the full-time working man and part-time working woman. The German welfare policies defined families with a gender specific division of labour – women doing care and men labour work. The responsibility for care was mainly allotted to the family, and not to the state. A long-standing ideology was that young children should stay mostly with their mothers, and that full-time childcare services are "not good" for the child's development. These political assumptions concerning care structured welfare policies and family policy frameworks constrained an equal division of care between men and women. Even if gender culture and men's orientation have altered towards modernized patterns in the organisation of care, policy frameworks have made it hardly possible to realize family concepts with an equal involvement of men and women into care.

France

Family policy in France is associated with strong support for the family as a fundamental social institution. In France, welfare policies are rooted in natalism and a particular aim of the policies has been to encourage parents to extend their family size. The first parental leave benefits,

founded in 1985, had been eligible only to families with three and more children. Families with less than three children could take up parental leave without any financial support – a policy that encouraged particularly mothers to stay employed after a child's birth. In 1994 eligibility for parental leave benefits was expanded to families with two children to better provide parents with the choice between caring in the family and public childcare. The parental leave could be taken in combination with part-time work and was provided until the child reached the age of three. As the amount of flat-rate benefit was quite low, women had been the main recipients of this allowance. In 2004 a reform of childcare allowances system was introduced to replace all former benefits by a single benefit called *Prestation d'accueil du jeune enfant* (PAJE). This benefit includes a parental leave benefit for parents with one child for six months after the child's birth. However this benefit is income-related and will only be provided to families with a lower income (Fagnani, Letablier 2005: 148). Still family policy is pro-natalist insofar as families with two or more children are provided with a parental leave benefits for three years after the child's birth and a less high income limit.

French family policy has been mostly related to natalist aims with the main idea of mothers being responsible for care. This idea on the one side and that aim on the other side have shaped a family policy that focused on women and did not recognise men. By offering childcare facilities one objective of the family policy was clearly to facilitate women's integration in the labour market (Fagnani, Letablier 2005: 146), but this was not mainly to support gender equality but to promote employed women with their decision to build up a family. In 2002 fathers were attended in family policy for the first time through the introduction of a fully paid paternity leave for eleven days after a child's birth. This is to support a sharing of parental obligations in order to improve gender equality within the family.

But in France the heart of the family policy to support parents to reconcile care and labour work is not parental leave but public childcare. Public childcare policy is associated with the ideal of two full-time employed partners even with young children. In Europe France is probably the one country with the most varieties of public childcare. Children aged under six years can be cared for in crèches, in kindergartens, nursery schools or by childminder. 29% of children aged under three years are in public childcare, and 99% of children in the age group from three to six years. The public childcare facilities are open all-day and parents working overtime can benefit from extra services. The public childcare in France is organized in a way that employed parents can always rely on the possibilities to find someone who cares for their children. This also applies for schools, which are full-time schools, again offering extra services if needed. To engage childminders parents are provided financial support.

The French system of public childcare that is already common for children younger than one year does not simply refer to parents' needs concerning childcare during their working hours but to the political aim of providing appropriate education to all children regardless their social or economical background.

“Childcare benefits and services form a complex system in which responsibilities are shared between state and families. [...] Children are a ‘common good’ and the wealth of the nation, which, in return, has some obligations towards them. Therefore, childcare came to be considered as a state responsibility and a public issue” (Fagnani, Letablier 2005: 137).

But this family policy was actually addressed to working mothers and still the main thought is that the public childcare helps *mothers* to combine labour work and family duties. Fathers actually do not occur in the French policy. Fathers are considered as gainful employees but in contrast to mothers this ideal does not involve responsibilities for childcare and household work.

The focus of the French social policy is the gainful working person and the dual breadwinner family. Everything is organized to provide the opportunity to full-time employment even while raising children. Most women make use of this opportunity and return to their work place soon after the child's birth (average of 12 weeks after birth). As it is a norm for women in the French society to work full-time with children on the one hand and on the other to be responsible for unpaid work unlike the fathers, this leads to particular consequences for the work/life balance of French women.

Men in France have hardly increased their involvement in childcare compared to the increasing number of dual breadwinner families and to the steadily increasing involvement of mothers in labour work. Thus, in the French case, the incongruence between modern attitudes towards female employment and the gendered division of care with women regarded as mainly responsible for care shows the cultural persistence of gender differentiation in the domestic division of labour. This gender cultural persistence exists as well within family policy. In France, policies are rooted in natalism, with its specific attention to mothers. Family policy has been linked to employment and fertility rates more than to gender equality. It does attempt to promote the employment of mothers by providing public childcare, but the equal division of care between men and women in the family has been no further aim.

Care became visible concerning arrangements of childcare during mothers working hours, but in contrast to Sweden, the division of care within the family has been a private issue. Even if policy frameworks facilitate the gendered division of labour work – mainly via public childcare services – and even if dual breadwinner families with full-time employed mothers are the norm, the care outcomes show France having a high score of gendered division of unpaid care. The care outcomes are related to traditional attitudes in gender culture concerning men's and women's responsibility for care and to gender politics that do not consider men and unpaid care. No other specific formal measure than paternity leave had been introduced to take into account men's domestic and parenting roles.

Conclusion: An ethic of care in family policies and gender culture

The last chapters have demonstrated three elements of care regimes in Sweden, France and Germany: The care outcomes concerning the gendered division of care, the cultural attitudes and preferences of men towards care and the policy frameworks provided by parental leave and public childcare. Differences in underlying values in terms of gender roles and the division and organisation of care contribute substantially to the explanation of care regimes development. The care regimes differ fundamentally according to the cultural situation in the different countries. Important cultural differences exist surrounding the value of childcare in the family by the mother or both parents and how fathers should be involved. There are also variations concerning the institution outside the family in which care is provided.

The analyses of care regimes has demonstrated as well the potential of welfare policies to facilitate or constrain a change process towards a more gender egalitarian society that is accepting an equal sharing of unpaid and paid labour between parents. There are several forces that might disrupt an egalitarian care regime. “The most powerful of these is the discomfort that is created by the misfit between institutions and cultures and preferences and behaviour” (Pocock 2005: 46). This misfit had been the strongest in Germany where women struggle to be both workers and carers, and fathers who want to spend more time caring. At the level of gender culture in Germany modern attitudes towards fathers’ involvement in childcare and mothers’ employment have been developed but welfare policies had maintained until recently the ideal of female carer in the family and male breadwinner. The care outcomes in Germany can be explained by these facts: a sharing of unpaid and paid labour between parents and a transfer of childcare from the family to the public had politically not been accepted. The political aim of a gender specific division of care with childcare provided mainly in the family has constrained concepts of egalitarian parenthood in the society.

Sweden in contrast to Germany has developed an idea of facilitating gender equality in sharing both unpaid and paid work responsibilities. The Swedish welfare policies contain a particular concept of reconciliation that is based on equal parenthood and on a particular recognition of care. Policies try to be concerned about parental time available for children which is an aspect that goes beyond a position that mainly wants to enable mothers to be employed while children are cared for in childcare services. The parents’ right to care for their child and the assumption that care can not completely be formalised underlie the Swedish welfare policy. The care outcomes in Sweden are related to these policy frameworks and to a gender culture with modern attitudes of fathers towards active fatherhood.

Just as Swedish welfare policy the French policy frameworks provide good possibilities for gender egalitarian sharing of paid and unpaid labour. But paid work is increasingly shared, while unpaid care remains more the responsibility of women with little sign that men are willing to share that burden. While continuation of mother’s employment has become a self-evident cultural pattern, responsibility for informal care work is unilaterally assigned to women. And the French state has not encouraged men to participate in care as the emphasis of French family policy was on promoting natality and motherhood rather than on the real achievement of equality in the family (Pfau-Effinger 2005: 37). Promoting an egalitarian sharing of unpaid care has not been a political aim of welfare policy in France. Requirements of care that go beyond public childcare during the parent’s working hours were no further concern of family policy. Together with the more traditional attitudes of men towards care, the outcomes of the care regime in France show an unequal division of care between men and women.

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