

Father-Friendly Policies and Time Use Data in a Cross-National
Context:
Potential and Prospects for Future Research

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Abstract:

In this paper we explore how data on the use of time might be used to investigate the multi-level connections between family-related policies and fathers' child care time in a cross-national context. We present a case study analysis of 'fathering strategies' in which empirical findings from time use data are compared with detailed policy information from Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. These analyses show that time use data can indeed shed light on the nuances of the effects of specific policies in different national contexts. However, they also point to the need to consider the complexity of multiple policies and their adoption in specific national contexts across time. To date, cross-time analysis has been stalled by lack of suitable data combining detailed policy information with good comparable measures of the time spent in family work from successive time use surveys. We describe the development of a cross-national, cross-time database which combines time use data with relevant social and family policy information, with the aim of providing a multi-level research tool to those interested in exploring further the relationships between policy and family work.

Father-Friendly Policies and Time Use Data in a Cross-National Context: Potential and Prospects for Future Research

Time may be viewed as a redistributive resource in welfare research (Hobson and Fahlen, this volume), reflecting not just social norms but also the direct impact of social policies. This article introduces an ongoing project designed to explore how data on the use of time might be employed to investigate the connections between family-related policies and fathers' time spent in paid work, child care and other forms of family work. While many researchers have investigated the social politics that brought a policy focus onto fathers, we ask the question what difference such policies might make in the everyday organization of men's family lives. For example: Is it possible to see changes in men's child care and housework time as resulting from "father-friendly" policies such as paternity leave and daddy-days? How are such changes influenced by other family policies and by the activities of their wives or partners? Should similar policies be expected to have similar influences on men's behaviors, especially when they are nested in different policy regimes?

In this article we describe how time use data has been utilized in the analysis of the relationship between various aspects of family work and family-related policies, focusing on the results of recent research in which national-level indicators of policy have been combined with time use information. We present a case study analysis in which empirical findings from time use data are compared with detailed policy information from Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. These analyses demonstrate that, using time use data, we can indeed throw some light on the nuances of the effects of specific policies in different national contexts. We then describe the development of a cross-national, cross-time database which combines time use data with relevant social and family policy information, with the aim of providing a multi-level

research tool to those interested in exploring further the relationships between policy and family work.

Assessing Work-Family Policies

Scholars have provided many theories and empirical studies to illuminate how changes in state policies and programs are related to the organization of paid labor and family life, with associated implications for gender equity (e.g., Hobson 1990, this volume; Lewis 1992; Skocpol 1992; Orloff 1993; Fraser 1994; O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999; Gornick and Meyers 2003; Heymann, Earle and Hayes 2007; Brandth and Kvande, this volume; O'Brien, this volume). Gornick and Meyers (2007) suggest that researchers and policy-makers have been engaged in at least three “overlapping but nonintersecting conversations” about work and family life focused on child well-being, work-family conflict, and gender equality. The Child Well-Being conversation focuses on the importance of parental care during the child’s first months and on the quality of attentive care throughout childhood and adolescence. A major concern in this conversation is the lack of availability of parents to their children and a secondary concern is the quality of both parental and substitute child care provision. Work-Family Conflict researchers and policy analysts focus on the problems of working parents (especially mothers) whose conflicting responsibilities leave them penalized at work and overburdened at home. This conversation was motivated by women’s rapid entry into the paid labor force and tends to focus on how to “balance” work and family obligations. The Gender Equality conversation uses feminist insights about women’s subjugation being linked to the institution of the nuclear family. This conversation focuses on continuing gender inequality in the labor market as both cause and consequence of women’s disproportionate assumption of unpaid work in the home.

Gornick and Meyers suggest that these conversations produce very different policy proposals. A Child Well-Being approach suggests the need for policies like child tax credits and

maternity leaves so that mothers can drop out of the labor market, at least temporarily. A Work-Family approach also tends to locate the major conflict in the lives of mothers, suggesting policies such as part-time work, job sharing, telecommuting and flextime that allow for individual women (and sometimes men) to balance their work and family commitments. A Gender Equality perspective views inequities as stemming from women's weak and intermittent connection to employment and the assumption that they should perform most of the unpaid family work. Policies suggested by this approach focus on reducing employment barriers and discrimination, raising women's wages, and providing alternatives to maternal care through the provision of child care centers or subsidies.

As Gornick and Meyers point out (2007, pg. 15), although they differ in naming the problem and in the solutions they propose, the conversations they identify have two things in common. They all focus on women and do little to question assumptions about the organization of men's employment and caregiving activities. These conversations also suggest that the interests of men, women and children are essentially in conflict. Children can have more time with their parents only if women reduce their employment commitments and career prospects; women and men can achieve greater equality in their employment only by reducing their time and commitment to caring for their children. In contrast to these approaches, Gornick and Meyers (2003, 2007) assume that the interests of women, men and children are only "apparently" competing. They suggest that the real culprit, and the cause of the putative competition between interests, is the failure of social, market and policy institutions to adequately address the care of children in high-employment societies. They propose (following others such as Fraser 1994; Knijn and Kremer 1997; Crompton 1999; Hobson and Morgan 2002) that the solution must involve men as well as women, and the state as well as the family. They envision a "dual-earner / dual-caregiver society," one that supports equal opportunities for men and women in employment, equal contributions from mothers and fathers at home, and high quality care for

children provided both by parents and by well-qualified and well-paid non-parental caregivers.

All nation states through their laws and policies provide incentives and disincentives for men and women to share child care and housework as well as paid employment, thereby both directly and indirectly shaping fathering practices and ideals. Just as the state facilitated and even encouraged women to become workers, it is reasonable to expect that states, through different political processes and social policies, can also facilitate and encourage fathers to become caregivers (Orloff 2006). However, as Hobson and Morgan (2002) demonstrate, there is no neat fit between the welfare regimes of industrialized countries and their fatherhood policy regimes (defined as fatherhood obligations and fatherhood rights). Because of wide variation in political, economic, social and cultural context, and because historical events and institutional forces have shaped many different, sometimes conflicting, policies related to fathers and families, it has often proved difficult to categorize countries using such typologies. For example, Hobson and Morgan show (2002 p. 14) that two cases with weak father obligations to pay child support, the Netherlands and Sweden, are placed at opposite ends of a gender policy typology of strong to weak male breadwinner regimes (Lewis 1992).

In this volume O'Brien presents a typology of national policy contexts which is specifically focused on what she terms "father-care sensitive" policies, in which the major classifying dimensions are 1) the length of paternal leave and men's access to parental leave and 2) the level of income replacement available during such leave. This kind of typology, explicitly designed to address infant's and children's access to men's parental resources, provides a framework more likely to be sensitive to differences in policies affecting men's caregiving. Nevertheless we show here, from empirical analyses of time use from two Nordic countries, that it is possible to identify different effects on the time that fathers spend with small children in different national contexts belonging to the same category of O'Brien's typology. This suggests that in analysis we should always consider the local complexity of multiple policies and their

adoption in specific national contexts. For example, different policies within the same country may be founded on different models of work and family life and may lead to contradictory effects. The 'fathers' quota' of parental leave, for instance, builds on the idea that the mother and father should be able to combine care for small children with a working career. It is a policy that supports the 'dual-earner family model'. The cash-for-care scheme, a home care allowance, is based on the 'family model', where the idea is to strengthen the family as a care producer by providing cash benefits irrespective of the parents' work activities (Brandth and Kvande, this volume). Or, due to differences in the structure of labor markets, similar policies in different countries may create different effects. We need to be able to disentangle the effects on the time that fathers invest in children of: child care policy provisions; father and mother leave policies; fiscal policy relating to children; and the structure of the labor market, for both men and women. As Hobson and Fahlen correctly note (this volume), there is a tension between expectations of men to be active fathers and their capabilities and agency to achieve a work family balance according to specific local, institutional and national contexts. Therefore in order to analyze the actualization of this tension in the behavior of fathers we need to develop multi-level models and analyses, capable of integrating individual behavior with both institutional and societal factors (Haas 2005; Hobson and Fahlen, this volume).

Time use data: uses and sources

Self-complete time use diaries offer a detailed description of the pattern of individuals' daily activities. Multi-national data of this kind provides the opportunity to compare the way in which time is divided between different people in different societies (Robinson and Godbey 1999; Gershuny 2000). For example, the way men and women differ in respect of how they divide their time between paid and unpaid work, the amount and use of leisure time and in their contributions to child care.

Time use data may be used in the study of the cross-national effects of policy provisions on fathering and domestic work in two ways. Firstly through the analysis of national-level patterns in family work and child care practices, which are then related to detailed information from secondary sources on the policies of the specific country or countries of the study. Several detailed country-specific studies have been carried out in this way – this is especially so in the Nordic countries where there is a strong national policy interest in the effects of the world's most developed paternal leave policies (e.g. Flood and Gråsjö 1997; Kitterod and Pettersen 2006). Secondly, there is the multi-level option: to directly combine and analyze information on child care and family work time with national-level variables reflecting family-related policies and take-up rates for those countries. This can be done either cross-sectionally or across time, which is considerably more demanding both methodologically and in terms of data. In the main, this possibility has been stalled by lack of suitable cross-time data combining detailed policy information with good comparable measures of the time spent in family work from successive time use surveys.

There are several potential sources of multi-national time use diary data suitable for researching the connections between family work practices and policy provision. The Multinational Time Use Survey (MTUS) is a collection of harmonized time use diary surveys based on nationally representative samples from over 20 countries from the early 1960s to 2000 and beyond ¹. The MTUS diary surveys of many European countries for around the year 2000 are part of the Harmonized European Time Use Study (HETUS) - a project coordinated by EUROSTAT with the aim of creating comparable and standardized time use statistics across European countries ². In addition, the American Heritage Time Use Study (AHTUS) puts together major national samples of time diary-based studies in the USA since the 1960s with the purpose of creating historical comparable time use statistics ³.

Combining time use with policy data: previous research

There is quite a large general body of research which addresses differences in family work in different national contexts, but often the level of policy detail is set rather broadly, comparing, for example, the division of domestic labor between countries belonging to different broadly-defined public policy regimes (Esping Andersen 1990, 1999). These broad policy regime-type typologies have in the main been based on socio-political analysis of the enactment of different policies in different national contexts, and research which has attempted to identify structured relationships between them and national patterns of time use has not found an easy match (e.g. Gershuny and Sullivan 2003). Other policy regime-type classifications have been more sensitive to gender and care policies likely to have a closer association with the time spent in family work ('care regimes': Lewis 1992, Sainsbury 1994; 'family policy regime': Haintrais 2004; 'gender regimes': Pfau-Effinger 2004; 'father-care sensitive parental leave regimes', Haas 2005; O'Brien this volume) and it is clear that there are indeed broad relationships identifiable between child care practices and these regime types (O'Brien, this volume).

Detailed empirical research using datasets that combine national and individual level data to examine the cross-national relationship between policies and time spent in family work is still rare. Recently, however, a few articles have appeared in the literature. Hook (2006) provides a multi-level analysis of men's hours of unpaid work time (including child care and housework together) across twenty-six countries from the MTUS. The percentage of married women employed was the only national-level variable with a direct effect on men's unpaid work time (with both married and single men spending more time on unpaid work in countries where a higher percentage of married women were employed), while none of the family policy variables included had direct effects. However, while increased length of parental leave decreased fathers' unpaid work time, gender equity of leave and the national level of married employed women's

work hours both had a positive moderating effect. Hook notes while her analysis indicated no direct effects of policy on men's unpaid work time, there were direct effects when additional analysis predicting subtypes of unpaid work (i.e. core housework, non-routine housework, and child care) were performed (these results were however not shown in the article).

Sayer et al (2004), also using MTUS data in a multilevel analysis, investigated differences in mother's and father's child care time according to education in four countries of Europe and North America. They found a general overall gradient in the time spent in child care according to educational level, however there were variations according to both country and gender. Fathers in countries that provide economic support to families (Germany and Norway) displayed less of a gradient by education than the other countries, whereas for mothers the educational gradient was more consistent across countries. Their conclusion was that, whereas some cross-national differences and similarities in child care behavior could be assumed to be the result of family policies (as in Germany and Norway), in others factors such as parental values and orientations need to be invoked to explain the consistent educational gradient of care in countries with very different family support policies.

Gornick and Meyers (2003), also using MTUS data, directly analyzed the relationship between gender equality in domestic child care and three social policy variables: Early childhood education and care (ECEC); Family leave and Working time regulations. Analysis of the association between an overall policy index and gender equality in daily hours spent in child care at home revealed no consistent relationship, although there were clusters of countries (Nordic and English-speaking clusters in particular) in which the strength of the combined policies was indeed associated with a higher or lower mean of fathers' relative contribution to family child care.

Smith and Williams' (2007) research using data from the European Community Household Panel for 1996 and 2001 included both an absolute measure of paternal care—the

proportion of fathers investing “substantial” time (more than 28 hours of child care per week)—and a relative measure—the percentage of substantial care carried out by fathers—both measured as a self-reported estimate. Only one national-level policy category was included: national paternal leave provisions, from which Smith and Williams created an index of “father-friendly” policy. The main result was the identification of three categories of father-friendliness that clustered according to Esping-Andersen’s welfare state typology. They also found that both absolute and relative levels of paternal time were correlated with their policy index; however, the relationships were non-linear and the strong effects of specific countries in the analysis contributed significantly to the positive correlation.

Fuwa and Cohen (2007) analyzed the direct effects of two equality of access policies and two work/family policies on the division of household labor (excluding child care) for thirty-three countries participating in the International Social Survey Program in 2002. The ratio of the division of household labor by husband and wife was again determined by self-report estimate. They found that long parental leave was associated with a more egalitarian division of housework; however, it weakened the equalizing effect of wives’ full-time employment. The availability of public child care for children aged 0 to compulsory school age had no direct or moderating effects on the division of housework.

Although the research described here has provided some indicative results, only rather weak connections have so far been identified between time use indicators of family work and policy indicators in large-scale national analyses. There may be several reasons for this, including inadequate specifications of the time use variables (for example in those analyses based on self-report rather than time diary measures, or in those analyses which combine very different kinds of family work such as routine domestic labor and child care), or an insufficiently comprehensive focus on potentially relevant policy variables, which, some have argued, should include not only family and family-related social policies but also fiscal policies determining

family taxation and allowances for child care (Folbre 2008). In the end a question remains about the usefulness of large-scale time use diary analysis in giving a handle on the consequences and effects of national-level (or regime level) family-related policies on family work behavior. The first question to be answered is whether we can indeed identify in nationally-representative time use diary data the kind of effects on family work practices which we might expect from a detailed knowledge of family-related policies in different countries. Below, we present a case-study analysis using nationally-representative time use diary information from two of the major harmonized time use diary studies which we described above (the MTUS and the HETUS) in order to investigate whether we can discern the effects of specific policies on fathering and parenting strategies in large-scale time use diary data. If we can, this should give us more confidence in pursuing the relationship between time use information on family work and national-level policy provisions.

A case study: fathering strategies in Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom

Studies based on small-scale surveys conducted in specific countries in which individuals and couples are asked about their take-up of leave and parenting behavior have consistently shown strong policy effects. Many of these surveys have been conducted in the Scandinavian countries where there is a strong national policy interest in the effects of the world's most developed parental leave policies (e.g. Brandth and Kvande, this volume; Bygren and Duvander 2006; Haas and Hwang 2008). For example Haas and Hwang (2008) report from a survey of 356 employed Swedish fathers that the number of paternal leave days taken had a significant impact on father's participation in childcare. For the purposes of our case study based on available time use data we selected two Scandinavian countries – Sweden and Norway –generally recognized as having some of the world's more advanced policies in relation to ECEC and parental leave, but which are nonetheless distinct in the detail of those policies and their take-up. As a comparison

we have selected another European country belonging to a very different policy regime – the UK. According to O'Brien's classification of 'father-care sensitive parental leave regimes' (O'Brien this volume) Norway and Sweden belong to Regime 1 ('Extended father-care leave with high income replacement'), while the UK belongs to Regime 3 ('Short/ Minimalist father-care leave with low/ no income replacement'). The selection of two Nordic countries allows a detailed national comparison of specific strategies and bundles of policies relating to parental leave, child care provision and employment. The comparison with the UK allows a contrast to be drawn with a European country from a very different policy regime.

Employed men and women who were co-resident with children under 5 were selected for the analyses, since among this group are those parents who have the right to take parental leave in order to care for their young children, and also those most likely to seek public child care services where available. Married (or cohabiting) individuals were selected since these represent both the largest population group with children under five, and also because it permits a comparison between men and women in the same family situation, who have to balance their parental leave and work hours with their partner in order to care for young children.

Table 1 shows the minutes full-time employed married fathers with co-resident children under 5 devoted to the care of children around 1990⁴ and in 2000 for Norway, Sweden and the UK. MTUS data was used to produce the information for 1990, and the HETUS for 2000⁵.

***** Table 1 about here *****

The first thing of note in Table 1 is the difference in overall child care time between the two Nordic countries and the UK. In both the period around 1990 and in 2000 full-time employed fathers with co-resident children under 5 in the Nordic countries spent more time per day caring for children than their British counterparts. The second feature of interest is the difference in the 10-year increase in child care time between the Nordic countries and the UK.

From a considerably lower base around 1990, full-time employed fathers with co-resident children under 5 in the UK increased the time they spent caring for children by 39% (18 minutes a day), compared to increases of 9% and 14% respectively for Swedish and Norwegian. This second point, the national differences in change, is perhaps less expected than the simple national-level differences, since it would be logical to expect to see regime type effects reflected not only in levels, but also in change. In other words, that there would be a positive correlation between policy regimes which emphasize paternal involvement and change over time. Clearly, however, when we analyze change as opposed to level, it seems that we cannot account for it in terms of broad policy types. Indeed if we refer to equivalent data from the USA, which belongs to the 4th category of O'Brien's father-care sensitive parental leave regimes ('No Statutory father-care sensitive parental leave'), we see an even greater absolute and proportional increase in the time full-time fathers⁶ spent caring for children than that for UK fathers. The closest available figures for the USA were 32 minutes per day in 1992-4 (lower even than for the UK at 46 minutes per day) but rising to 70 minutes by 2003, an increase of 119%! These sorts of increases in child care time in the USA are addressed in several sources (e.g. Bianchi et al 2006; Fisher et al 2007), but the problem for a macro-level policy related analysis is that the differentials in the increases that we see appear to be independent of, or even the inverse of, regime-type policy typologies, even when that typology is directly related to the question of father care.

Table 1 does clearly show, however, that full-time employed fathers co-resident with children under 5 in the Nordic countries spent more time caring for children than their British counterparts, both around 1990 and in 2000 (although by the later date the gap had narrowed). This is what we would expect to see from the policy literature, which emphasizes the strong focus on promoting fathering evident in the Nordic countries.

Additional confidence that the time use data is giving us a real handle on some of the policy effects on child care as described in the policy literature comes from some of the more

detailed information available in the HETUS 2000 data. The HETUS contains a range of additional variables, not found in the MTUS standardized format, which are of interest in the current study.

For example, analysis of the time spent in child care by full-time employed fathers co-resident with children under 5 according to whether they were employed in the private or public sectors shows that, whereas there is no overall difference in the time spent in child care according to public or private-sector employment for British fathers, for Norwegian fathers those employed in the public sector spend 25-50% longer in child care than those employed in the private sector⁷ (not shown). Research in the Scandinavian context has demonstrated that the organization of work and workplace culture has a strong effect on the take up of leave entitlements (Leira 1998; Lappegard 2008), with only a small percentage of private companies actively supporting paternal leave (Haas and Hwang 2000) and those working in the public sector far more likely to take up leave than those in the private sector (Bygren and Duvander 2006).

We have seen that we can discern in the time use data relationships between father care and policy which are also addressed in the policy literature. We now delve deeper into the HETUS data in order to make connections between different fathering and parenting strategies, national policy provisions and the structure of employment. The first step relates to the more detailed breakdown given by the HETUS of the time devoted to child care by co-resident fathers of children aged 0-1; 2-3 and 4-7 (also shown in Table 1). The pattern of father care over these ages is distinct for Norway, where father care appears to be the greatest among those full-time employed men with children aged 0-1 in the household. For Swedish and British fathers the weighting is more evenly spread between those with children aged 0-1 and 2-3. It is tempting to think that this feature of the Norwegian data reflects the fact that the four-week 'daddy-days' quota of parental leave is restricted in Norway to fathers of children aged less than one year old

(Valdimarsdottir 2006; Brandth and Kvande 2007). This policy measure, introduced in 1993, had an element of compulsion to it, since if fathers did not take it up the leave could not be transferred to the mother, and was lost. The measure proved extremely popular and by 2003 the father's quota was utilized by 89% of fathers of children of this age (O'Brien, Brandth and Kvande 2007). Further support for the hypothesis that we are seeing here a direct reflection of policy in the 'fathering strategies' of Norwegian fathers comes from Table 2, showing a distinction in the type of care undertaken. Here the physical care of children is distinguished from interactive care (playing with children, talking to children etc.) Norwegian full-time employed fathers do the most physical care of all, and this care it is concentrated among fathers with children aged 0-1 in the household (at 77 minutes per day – nearly twice the amount of time spent by equivalent Swedish and British fathers with children of the same age in the household). This suggests that among co-resident fathers of children of this age, Norwegian fathers in full-time employment are more involved than their Swedish and British counterparts in primary caring responsibilities involving looking after the direct physical needs of infants (a similar result was found by Sayer et al 2004 in a comparison with German, Italian and Canadian fathers).

***** Table 2 about here *****

Of course in order to understand how fathering strategies work within families it is necessary also to understand how these intertwine with mothering behavior in relation to parental leave and employment hours. It is here that some of the most interesting and indicative findings appear, enabling the hypothesizing of joint parental (as opposed to just fathering) strategies in relation to specific national ECEC and parental leave provisions based on the existing policy literature. For example, Table 3 splits the findings of Table 1 according to whether the full-time employed man is married to a woman employed full time (Table 3a) or part-time (Table 3b). From Table 3 it is evident that, of all the cells, the

greatest quantity of time spent in child care occurs for Norwegian full time employed fathers with co-resident infant children aged 0-1 who are married to part time mothers. This implies a parenting strategy for infants under age 2 in which the mother is working part time and the father is also providing extensive care, perhaps through taking his 'daddy quota', as evidenced also by the high proportion of physical care done by the father at these ages. For fathers married to full-time employed mothers we still see a 'front loading' effect of father care where there are children under age 2 in the household, but the effect is not so pronounced. These findings are consistent with those of Kitterod and Pettersen 2006, who find in multivariate analyses using the Norwegian 2000 time use data that full time employment for the mother does not in fact lead to increased contributions from the father. They note that a large proportion of couples (43%) have work schedule arrangements in which the mother works up to 19 hours a week while the father has time off, and they suggest that these couples have chosen this arrangement in order to limit the use of external childcare by counting on paternal care.

***** Tables 3a and 3b about here*****

The distribution of child care for Norwegian full-time employed women co-resident with children aged under 5 complements the results we have seen for men (see Table 4a & b). Here we can see that Norwegian full-time employed mothers co-resident with children aged under 2 spent the most time of all mothers in child care (233 minutes per day on average). It is reasonable to suppose from this that a higher percentage of full-time employed mothers with children of this age in Norway are taking maternal leave than in either of the other two countries (particularly than in the UK), and calculation of the percentage of these mothers who, at the time of the HETUS survey, were taking leave confirms this supposition. Two-thirds of Norwegian

full-time employed mothers with children aged under 2 were on leave, compared to just over half of their Swedish and only just over a third of their British counterparts (not shown).

***** Tables 4a and 4b about here*****

It appears then that we can postulate two main parenting strategies among Norwegian employed parents with children aged under the age of two. In the first, the mother is part time employed and the father is taking on primary care responsibilities for at least part of the time, perhaps through using his daddy-day entitlement. In the second, the mother is in full-time employment but taking leave in order to care for the infant. Men married to these women are perhaps themselves likely to be in higher-paying employment and therefore less likely to take parental leave (Brandth and Kvande 2001; Kitterod and Pettersen 2006; although see also Lappegard 2008). These postulated strategies make intuitive sense in respect to the policy literature which describes the bundle of ECEC policies and parental leave policies specific to Norway. The heavy loading of care onto the first year of life of the child which is evident in the results both for men and for women may be reflecting the fact that up to age 2, responsibility for child care falls primarily on the parents and quite generous paternal, maternal and parental leaves are available to help them (Brandth and Kvande, this volume; O'Brien, Brandth and Kvande 2007). The emphasis of Norwegian paternal leave policy has been on the early years of life, particularly in the case of fathers, whose daddy-day quota is restricted to the first year of their infant's life. In addition, for these ages the demand for child care places in Norway far outstrips supply, which may indicate an element of compulsion in the taking of paternal leave (Ellingsæter 2006). Beyond age one the evidence suggests that Norwegian father's take up of available parental leave was rather restricted, at least until the turn of the 21st century (Leira 1998; O'Brien, Brandth and Kvande 2007; O'Brien, this volume Table 2).

If we turn our attention to Sweden, a different picture emerges from the time use data.

Referring to Table 1 we can see that the contribution to child care of Swedish full-time employed fathers co-resident with children under 5 is somewhat lower than for their Norwegian counterparts, and is less 'front loaded' at the youngest ages of co-resident children, being more evenly distributed across ages 0-1 and 2-3. In particular, at ages 2-3 of the youngest co-resident child Swedish fathers in full-time employment do more child care than their Norwegian counterparts. This finding seems consistent with policy differences between the two countries. Firstly, early public child care provision (for ages up to 3) is somewhat more widely available and used in Sweden than in Norway. For example, Luxembourg Income Study data shows that 48% of children age 0-2 in Sweden were in subsidized child care in 2000, compared to 37% in Norway. In addition, unlike in Norway where cash assistance is available to parents who opt to care for their young children at home instead of using day-care, in Sweden parents exercising this option have not been eligible for any compensation beyond the parental leave package (Valdimarsdóttir 2006). Secondly, Swedish fathers were more likely to take their parental leave in the years following the child's first year of age, even before 2 months of parental leave were exclusively reserved for the father in 2002 (Leira 1998; Haas and Hwang 2008). This is perhaps consistent with the finding that Swedish fathers are inclined to use their very flexible parental leave as an add-on to family holidays rather than to take sole responsibility for the care of the child (Ahlberg, Roman and Duncan 2008).

Delving deeper into the HETUS data we can find additional support for the suggestion that Swedish fathers of young children are more likely to take leave in the 2nd and 3rd year of the child's life from the distribution of the type of care that fathers do at different ages of their youngest child. From Table 2 it can be seen that, while the peak for physical care of children occurs for Norwegian full-time employed fathers when there is a co-resident child aged 0-1 years old, the peak for equivalent Swedish fathers, although less pronounced, occurs where the

youngest co-resident child is aged 2-3 years. This implies that father's primary care for children extends for a longer period in Sweden than in Norway, where the peak at age 0-1 is followed by a decline at ages 2-3 to a level of physical care lower than that for Swedish fathers. Furthermore, calculating the proportion of Swedish full-time employed fathers who are taking leave from work when there are children of this age in the household shows that, unlike for equivalent Norwegian fathers, among Swedish full-time employed fathers there is a peak in leave-taking at ages 2-3 of the youngest child, with 12% of such fathers on leave when there are co-resident children of these ages compared to 7% of their Norwegian counterparts (not shown).

If we hypothesize that full-time employed Swedish fathers, perhaps because of their more extended leave entitlement (or greater flexibility in workplaces in order to benefit from leave policies), continue to take leave to care for their children at older ages (up to age 3) than their Norwegian counterparts, we also need to know how this intersects with the parenting contributions of Swedish mothers. If we examine Tables 3a and 3b it appears that the biggest contribution to early child care among Swedish full-time employed fathers married to full-time employed mothers occurs in households where the youngest child is aged 2-3. In this respect Swedish fathers married to full-time employed mothers show a quite different pattern to their Norwegian (or British) counterparts, where the weighting of father care comes in the first year and then falls off (as it also does for fathers from all countries married to part-time employed women). It appears then that it is possible to discern a different parenting strategy in the Swedish time-use data, whereby full-time employed men take parental leave when their children are aged 2-3 in order, presumably, that their full-time employed wives may return to employment. Full-time employment is the norm for Swedish women, who have a stronger attachment to the full-time primary labor market than Norwegian or, particularly, British women. Among employed Swedish women married to full-time employed men with co-resident children aged under 5 the ratio of full-time to part-time employment is 112%, compared to 103% for

equivalent Norwegian women and only 52% for equivalent British women. Indeed there is a reciprocal relationship in the Nordic countries between labor market attachment and the take-up of parental leave for, since the monthly payment during parental leave is based on income prior to birth, it has contributed to a strong incentive for both men and women to be well established in the labor market (Sundström and Duvander 2002; Bjornberg 2002; Nyberg 2006). Moreover, the mandating of parental leave for fathers in Sweden in 2002 was specifically promoted as enabling women to return to the labor market sooner (Haas and Hwang 2008).

An examination of Table 4a, showing the time spent in child care by full-time employed mothers married to full-time employed fathers, further supports a hypothesized parenting strategy in which Swedish fathers contribute by taking leave when the youngest child is aged 2-3 in order to permit full-time employed mothers to return to work after taking leave themselves in order to care for infants. We see that, as for Norwegian mothers, for full-time married Swedish mothers the greatest time spent in child care occurs during the first couple of years of life of the infant when she is likely to be taking some form of maternal or parental leave. Thereafter, we see a very significant drop-off in child care times for these mothers. In fact the patterns of child care for Norwegian and Swedish women in these family and employment statuses are more similar than those for equivalent Norwegian and Swedish men, for in Sweden the decline in child care times observed for women with a youngest child aged 2-3 occurs just at the time when we see the child care for full-time employed fathers peak (at ages 2-3), while the contribution of Norwegian fathers is greatest when the youngest child is aged 0-1.

Overall, despite the hypothesized differences in parenting strategies outlined above, and due to a rather similar and generally more enlightened Nordic policy attitude towards parenting, and in particular support for the combination of parenting with full-time employment for both men and women, the differences we observe between Norway and Sweden are relatively

nuanced, and represent a question of emphasis rather than a clear distinction. This cannot be said of the comparison with the UK data, however.

Referring to Table 1 it is evident that British full-time employed fathers co-resident with children aged under 5 are the least involved in child care of all, contributing 64 minutes a day in 2000 compared to 84 (Norway) and 74 (Sweden). Indeed, a focus on fathering strategies in the UK with reference to the HETUS data reveals more of an absence than a strategy. It is known from the literature that long working hours for men in the UK – among the longest in the European Union - limit men's availability for and involvement with their children (Ferri and Smith 1996; Fagnani and Letablier 2004), and until 2001 there was no specified paternity leave in the UK ⁸.

Further examination of the HETUS 2000 data shows that British full-time employed fathers with children under 5 did both the least primary child care (i.e. where no other activity is reported as being done simultaneously) and the most secondary child care (where a different activity is reported as the main activity, with childcare recorded only as a secondary activity) of equivalent fathers in all three countries (not shown). In addition, Table 2 shows that British full-time employed men spent less time in the physical care of young children than their Norwegian and Swedish counterparts (38 minutes a day compared to 44 and 58 respectively for equivalent Swedish and Norwegian fathers). The answer to who *is* looking after the children of course lies in a simultaneous examination of the child care contributions of employed British mothers, which is of course in turn intertwined with the structure of the local labor market. British women with children aged under 5 are, as we referred to above, far less likely to be employed on a full time basis and much more likely to be working part time than their Norwegian or Swedish counterparts. Parental leave in the UK is much less generous and until 2001 there was no exclusive provision for paternity leave, which we see reflected in the fact that a lower percentage of full-time employed British fathers of young children were taking leave in the HETUS data

than among their counterparts in Norway and Sweden (10% of those co-resident with children aged 0-3, compared to 15% in Norway and 19% in Sweden).

So for many British families with young children part time employment for the mother is the main parenting strategy, a feature which creates a specific form of ‘time squeeze’ for working mothers in which women compensate for men’s longer working hours by working around partners’ work commitments (Gregory and Milner 2008). However, Tables 3a and 3b, showing child care time for full-time employed British fathers of young children married to full time and part time employed mothers respectively, reveal something surprising: as for Norwegian fathers, British full-time fathers married to mothers who are also in full-time employment make less of a contribution to child care than full-time fathers married to mothers who are in part-time employment. This apparently counter-intuitive result (since we might have expected the fathers of young children married to full-time mothers to be helping out by contributing more to child care) suggests that, both in Norway and in the UK, different parenting strategies are in play according to the employment status of the mother (the numbers of part-time Swedish women are too small to provide a comparison). In Norway, the availability of extensive public child care provision can easily explain the difference. Norwegian parents of small children where both remain in full time employment have this option, and we know that take-up rates are high (O’Brien this volume). However, since there is also no formal public child care provision in the UK until the child is aged 3, it is reasonable to ask how child care of children up to this age is in fact being accomplished for those couples both in full time employment!

Tables 4a and 4b, showing respectively the time spent in child care by full and part-time employed mothers of young children, tell us that, as expected, British full-time mothers of young children spend much less time in child care than part-time mothers. However, among equivalent Norwegian and Swedish mothers, with many more options in terms of the provision of leave and ECEC, there is little difference in child care time according to whether the mother is employed

full or part time. What adds to the puzzle about who looks after the young children of British full-time employed parents is that summing the child care time of full-time employed fathers married to full-time employed mothers to that for equivalent full-time employed mothers married to full-time employed fathers shows a clear distinction between Nordic and British full-time employed 'couples'. While the total child care time summed in this way for full-time employed 'couples' with children under 5 in Norway and Sweden is quite similar (at 231 and 221 minutes per day respectively), for British full-time employed 'couples' it is only 172 minutes a day. It seems that long hours of child care are not easily compatible with full-time employment for dual-earner UK couples. This reflects a policy environment in which there has been a lack of official family policy and an individualist approach towards the provision of childcare which has tended to reinforce the male breadwinner/female carer model (Gregory and Milner 2008; O'Brien this volume).

So who is looking after the children? The answer lies of course in the necessity for full time employed British parents to seek privately-organized child care; either through employing a live-in or part-time child-carer or through private day-care. Table 5 shows that where private help with child care is employed, both British and Swedish mothers do less child care. But what is even more notable is the amount of child care being done by British full-time employed mothers who do not employ private help. In comparison to Swedish full-time employed mothers who did not employ paid help (134 minutes a day) and British mothers who did (126 minutes a day), the burden of child care on British full-time employed mothers who are not employing paid help is strikingly greater (at 172 minutes a day). This differential reflects the lack of other options available to British mothers who continue to work full-time in the labor market but cannot, or choose not to, employ paid help, and contributes, of course, to the relatively greater proportion of part-time employees among British mothers of young children.

***** Table 5 about here *****

A time use/policy research database

Having demonstrated that we can indeed relate time use information on child care to a range of national policies affecting child care practices, we present here the outlines of a new database which is aimed at providing a research tool to address the relative lack of suitable cross-time data combining detailed indicators of social and family policies with good comparable measures of the time spent in family work. The impetus for the development of this database comes from the recognition that in order to continue to develop the analysis of time as a redistributive resource, we need to be thinking in terms of multi-level types of analysis that build institutional level macro-level policy indicators into the same database as the time use information. This calls for both a comprehensive and a detailed approach, which takes into account the interrelationships between the employment structure for both men and women, fiscal policies relating to child care costs and taxation, and wider variables perhaps reflecting gender ideologies, and combines these with time use data and associated individual-level socio-economic/demographic variables.

The database being developed, which should eventually contain data on 10-20 countries over the period 1960-2000, will, for example, enable the examination of changes over forty years in paid labor, household labor, child care, and leisure among fathers and mothers in a wide range of nations in Europe and North America in relation to the enactment of various “family-friendly” policies (e.g., parental leave, sick leave, wage replacement, job security, child support, child care provision, joint custody statutes). In addition it will permit investigation of how changes in men’s child care and housework are related to changes in various social and economic indicators both at the national level (e.g., job growth or decline, women’s labor force participation rate, minimum wage levels) and at the level of the characteristics of families and individuals (e.g., family status, age of children, and individual employment, income, and education).

Appendix 1 shows an extract from the database, including various policy measures from 1990 to 2000 and focusing on our three test cases: Sweden, Norway and the United Kingdom. Policy and policy-related measures are collected on the basis of secondary sources (e.g. Leira 1992, Moss and Deven 1999; Moss and O'Brien 2006; OECD 2006) and other published databases (e.g. Gauthier 2003; Gornick and Meyers 2003)⁹. The time use element of the database is taken from the MTUS (incorporating the HETUS surveys for 2000). Over a dozen nations in the MTUS data set have multiple survey dates that would permit multi-level analysis of the relationship between policy change and men's domestic labor. In the example given in Appendix 1 we focus on just three countries but there is potential to include many more spanning a range of broadly different policy regimes with respect to family support and the promotion of gender equality¹⁰. Appendix 2 provides a list of individual level variables (including the time use measures) and policy measures/indices to be included in the final database.

Conclusions

We have shown how it might be possible in future research to isolate the influence of different policies on fathers' and mothers' caregiving. However, both the analyses reported on and the case studies presented in this article demonstrate the need to analyze not only direct effects of policies, but also the ways in which policies moderate the impact of individual- and couple-level characteristics. In addition, research suggests that we need to consider the ways in which various policies may interact. For example, while child care policies were not found in recent multi-level research to have strong direct or moderating effects, it is possible that the availability, cost, and quality of child care influences the ways in which parents utilize, or don't utilize, other policies, such as leave and work time policies. Gornick and Meyers (2003) correctly note that parents make decisions in a context influenced by a package of policies; thus,

they don't experience them individually. We need to consider carefully the theoretical and empirical reasons for including various individual policies and combinations of policies in the construction of indices. Previous research has included widely varying and somewhat ad hoc indices combining parental leave, affirmative action policy, tax incentives and working time policies. Some standardization in future research would allow for more systematic comparison of the differential impact of various policies.

Creating combined data sets such as the one we describe should enable researchers to begin to answer questions about how and why the enactment and utilization of work-family initiatives is related to the use of time within and across households. With such data, we should be able to assess more precisely the conditions under which policy innovations like paid paternity leave and daddy-days might be expected to achieve their intended objectives. In particular, such analyses might tell us more about how the complex interplay of rewards and incentives directed toward fathers, mothers and children might interact to influence couple-level decisions about the allocation of effort in paid and unpaid work. And ultimately, this type of research has the potential for producing a better understanding of the gender balance of power in families and throughout society.

Research on this topic will be limited, however, by the quality of the domestic labor data collected and its distribution over time periods marked by changing policy priorities. For example, countries like the US and the UK which have made meager financial contributions to promoting father involvement are marked by a greater proportionate *increase* in men's family labor across time than countries starting at higher levels with more elaborate social welfare and father-friendly policy regimes. Such findings are provocative for several reasons and raise questions about the relative contributions of mothers and fathers in different employment situations as we explored in our case study. They also raise questions about appropriate expectations for change in different social and policy contexts and call attention to the symbolic

uses of policy in affirming shared cultural values about father involvement and gender equity. In the end, such markers of cultural commitment may prove just as important as the incremental behavioral changes they are intended to promote.

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Table 1:¹¹ Mean number of minutes spent in child care per day: married/cohabiting men in full-time employment with co-resident children aged less than 5 (MTUS and HETUS) and in age groups 0-1, 2-3, and 4-7 (HETUS)

	MTUS	HETUS	Increase 1990-2000 (%)	HETUS		
	Around 1990* <5	2000 <5		2000		
				0-1	2-3	4-7
Norway	74	84	10 (14)	107	68	48
Sweden	68	74	6 (9)	77	80	54
UK	46	64	18 (39)	69	64	36

Source: MTUS & HETUS

*Norway 1990
 Sweden 1991
 GB 1987

Table 2: Mean number of minutes spent in different types of child care per day: married men in full-time employment with youngest co-resident child aged less than 5, and in age groups 0-1, 2-3, and 4-7

		HETUS 2000			
		Age of youngest child in household			
		< 5	0-1	2-3	4-7
Norway	Physical	58	77	46	33
	Interactive	25	31	22	15
	% Interactive	30	29	32	31
Sweden	Physical	44	45	51	34
	Interactive	30	33	29	20
	% Interactive	41	42	36	37
UK	Physical	38	41	38	19
	Interactive	26	28	26	17
	% Interactive	41	41	41	47

Source: HETUS

Table 3a: Mean number of minutes spent in child care per day: men in full-time employment married to women in full-time employment with co-resident children aged less than 5 (MTUS and HETUS) and in age groups 0-1, 2-3, and 4-7(HETUS)

	MTUS	HETUS	HETUS 2000			Increase (%)
	Around 1990*	2000	0-1	2-3	4-7	
	< 5	< 5				
Norway	77	73	88	58	48	-4
Sweden	67	80	79	98	54	13
UK	-	54	66	48	34	-

Source: MTUS & HETUS

Table 3b: Mean number of minutes spent in child care per day: men in full-time employment married to women in part-time employment with co-resident children aged less than 5 (MTUS and HETUS) and in age groups 0-1, 2-3, and 4-6 (HETUS)

	MTUS	HETUS	HETUS 2000			Increase (%)
	Around 1990*	2000	0-1	2-3	4-7	
	< 5	< 5				
Norway	76	88	126	78	55	12
Sweden	61	77	(115)	69	64	15
UK	-	72	79	77	39	-

Source: MTUS & HETUS

() estimate - cell size under 25

Table 4a: Mean number of minutes spent in child care per day: women in full-time employment married to men in full-time employment with co-resident children aged less than 5 (MTUS and HETUS) and in age groups 0-1, 2-3, and 4-7(HETUS)

	MTUS	HETUS	HETUS 2000			Increase (%)
	Around 1990*	2000	0-1	2-3	4-7	
	< 5	< 5				
Norway	122	158	233	98	71	36
Sweden	116	141	217	93	75	25
UK	-	118	160	92	61	-

Source: MTUS & HETUS

Table 4b: Mean number of minutes spent in child care per day: women in part-time employment married to men in full-time employment with co-resident children aged less than 5 (MTUS and HETUS) and in age groups 0-1, 2-3, and 4-6 (HETUS)

	MTUS	HETUS	HETUS 2000			Increase (%)
	Around 1990*	2000	0-1	2-3	4-7	
	< 5	< 5				
Norway	155	153	221	114	64	-2
Sweden	122	144	212	131	73	22
UK	-	138	182	116	77	-

Source: MTUS & HETUS

Table 5: Mean number of minutes spent in child care per day by paid help with child care*: married men and women in different employment statuses with single co-resident child aged less than 5

HETUS 2000				
	Sweden		UK	
	Received paid help	Did not receive paid help	Received paid help	Did not receive paid help
Married women, part-time or full-time employed	113	130	125	138
Married women, full time employed	114	134	126	172

Source: HETUS

* Information not available for Norway

Notes:

¹ The MTUS is available from the Centre for Time Use Research, University of Oxford. For more information access <http://www.timeuse.org/>

² More information on HETUS is available at <https://www.testh2.scb.se/tus/tus/>.

³ The AHTUS is available from the Centre for Time Use Research, University of Oxford. For more information access <http://www.timeuse.org/>

⁴ Not all countries conducted time use surveys in 1990. Therefore the dates of the surveys from around 1990 are slightly different. The HETUS was conducted on a cross-national comparative basis around the year 2000 (i.e. between 1999-2001).

⁵ The HETUS was used for the 2000 data because, unlike the MTUS, it provides a breakdown of the age of the youngest child in the household into 3 categories: 0-1; 2-3 and 4-7.

⁶ Results for the USA relate to full-time employed men with co-resident children aged under five.

⁷ A comparison with Sweden is not available since this distinction is not available in the Swedish HETUS data.

⁸ Changes in father care time over the 1990s may, however, indicate a material improvement because, from a considerably lower base around 1990, both the absolute and percentage increases in child care time over the 1990s were greatest for British fathers.

⁹ When possible, we use official government documents referring to relevant laws and regulations upon which existing policy provision are based.

¹⁰ For example Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, the Netherlands, Norway, Finland and Denmark.

¹¹ In this and subsequent tables sample weights were used to correct for seasonal and daily variations, as well as sampling and populations issues.