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Foreword

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Children and time use of European families

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1. Introduction

In this chapter we present an overview of the currently available data on parental time use and the well-being of children in Europe. This linking of both areas of interest, does not mean we want to present parental care time as an indispensable input for the well-being of children. However, we do want to recognise a tension European parents routinely mention at the beginning of the twenty-first century. On the one hand, every European adult is expected to be active in the labour market, while on the other social expectations of parenthood are on the rise. Not surprisingly, individuals tend to report ‘activity scheduling stress’: problems to cope with rising demands on their agenda. Moreover, this feeling of overload has not (yet?) diminished with the variety of policy measures that are in place to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life.

Nevertheless, relatively little is known about the link between parental time investments and the well-being of children. Before going into European research on children’s well-being and its determinants, we use the following sections to set the scene. How do European parents allocate their time and what do we know about the determinants of their care time, being a basic input for children’s well-being.

2. The starting point: data on employment and time use

In its ‘Statistics in Focus’ publications, Eurostat offers at regular intervals a general overview of employment in the European Union. Unfortunately, these publications are not focused on families and hence, do not offer the specific results we are looking for. However, there are two additional sources of information that allow a family viewpoint.

First, in 2005 Eurostat published the results of a specific analysis of the Labour Force Survey data of 2003 focussing on families with children and reconciliation issues (Aliaga, 2005).

The data show that across all member states fathers tend to differ from men without children

in a similar way: they do not. In fact, neither the employment rate, nor the number of weekly working hours differs between these two types of men in any of the 25 member states of the EU.¹ However, a very different story is to be told about women. In most countries women with children younger than 12 have sharply reduced employment rates compared with women without children. Table 1 shows that this is most clearly the case for families with three or more children. Moreover, in some countries (the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, the UK and Belgium), mothers tend to work in part-time jobs rather than the full-time jobs of childless women.

Table 1 Employment rates of women aged 20-49 by number of children aged under 12

	EU-25	BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	UK
0	75	75	86	77	80	84	57	62	77	60	75	78	80	75	78	37	82	83	70	77	83	81	78	83
1-2	62	70	56	81	62	64	54	52	69	50	72	67	80	62	54	28	71	73	61	77	86	62	75	65
3+	41	49	22	67	38		40	41	40	35	52				13		59	57	45	60		27	56	38

Data: Labour Force Survey, 2003 (Aliaga,2005:4)
Note: blank cells in this table refer to data not available (or unreliable results).
For Sweden and Ireland no data were available at all

Table 2 shows how the large, respectively small, effect of children on mothers' and fathers' employment translates in the parental organisation of paid labour. The table refers to all couples with partners aged 20-49 and confirms the previously mentioned cross-national variation in female employment patterns with some countries relying on female part-time work, others with both partners engaged in full-time jobs and a third category with many jobless women.

Table 2 Organisation of employment of couples aged 20-49

	EU-25	BE	CZ	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	UK
♂ / ♀																							
FT / FT	45	43	64	37	62	47	44	52	38	62	58	60	40	56	22	27	47	49	67	77	66	63	44

¹ Differences are hardly ever significant and all point at increased employment rates and more weekly working hours among fathers, rather than the opposite. The positive impact of children on men's employment rate is also a common results in labour supply analyses (for an overview, see Browning, 1992).

FT / -	29	25	29	26	25	44	43	25	45	27	25	16	35	33	67	21	22	29	21	13	24	21	21
FT / PT	19	24	3	28	4	6	9	16	13	8	5	10	21	2	8	44	27	8	7	2	2	7	30
Other	7	8	4	9	9	4	4	7	4	3	12	14	4	9		8	4	14	5	8	8	9	5

Combinations refer to (1) both partners working in a full-time job, (2) the male partner being employed only, (3) the male partner working full-time and the female partner with a part-time job and (4) other combinations (mostly the female partner being employed only).

Data: Labour Force Survey, 2003 (Aliaga,2005:5)

Note: blank cells in this table refer to unreliable results. For Denmark, Sweden and Ireland no data were available at all

Indirectly, Table 2 also gives an indication of the time parents have available for non-market activities, like providing care for their children. For more direct evidence of the distribution of activities, detailed data of the time use of individuals is needed. Unfortunately, this type of information is available only for a limited number of countries and periods. By mid 2006, the harmonised time use survey (HETUS) efforts of Eurostat resulted in comparable data for the beginning of the 21st century for 15 countries, of which 10 provide data for specific family types. In

Table 3 we show the number of minutes men and women spend on an average day of the year on childcare (physical care, teaching and playing and other childcare). The table differentiates between families with young children (youngest 0-6) and families with relatively grown-up children (youngest 7-17). Table 4 provides similar results on employment of parents. Both tables reveal considerable cross-national variation. Yet, a comparison between the tables shows that within gender variation is larger regarding job time than regarding care time. The range between the minimum and the maximum time declared by mothers with young children is 62 minutes (HU 176 – BE 114) for care time and 109 minutes (SL 181 – DE 72) for employment. Hence, the cross-national variation in employment patterns shown in the previous tables does not necessarily translate into similar variation in parental care time.

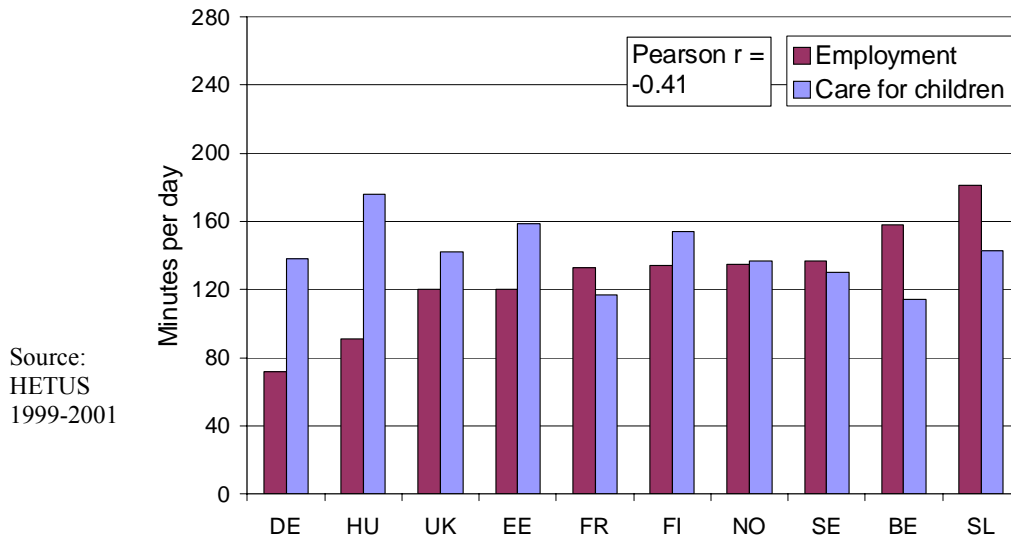
Table 3 Minutes spent on childcare by partnered parents

Type of couple	Sex of partner	BE	DE	EE	FI	FR	HU	NO	SL	SE	UK
with youngest child 0-6	Male	51	59	50	63	40	71	73	56	67	60
	Female	114	138	159	154	117	176	137	143	130	142
with youngest child 7-17	Male	16	13	10	9	9	21	11	7	24	12
	Female	32	32	28	19	30	40	28	19	39	26
Time-use on an average day of the year, All type of care activities (physical, teaching and play, other)											
Data: Harmonised European Time Use Survey (data collection periods vary between 1999 and 2001)											
Eurostat,2005											

Table 4 Minutes spent on employment by partnered individuals

Type of couple	Sex of partner	BE	DE	EE	FI	FR	HU	NO	SL	SE	UK
with youngest child 0-6	Male	287	272	272	315	295	286	287	338	293	333
	Female	158	72	120	134	133	91	135	181	137	120
with youngest child 7-17	Male	278	286	292	301	319	290	286	312	309	308
	Female	133	137	215	231	176	215	209	254	234	187
Time-use on an average day of the year, Employment and employment related activities											
Data: Harmonised European Time Use Survey (data collection periods vary between 1999 and 2001)											
Eurostat,2005											

Figure 2.1 Care and employment time for mothers with young children (0-6 years)



In Figure 2.1 we combine time use measures for employment and childcare time of mothers with young children. In general we would expect an inverse relationship at the macro level. In societies who involve mothers to a large extent in employment, mothers have less time available for childcare and vice versa. This inverse relationship is confirmed by the negative Pearson correlation coefficient. Yet, the data also show that the inverse relationship is not a universal fact. In Germany, Hungary, Belgium and Slovenia, childcare and employment time seem to be hard to reconcile, but this does not apply (or to a lesser extent) to the UK, Estonia, France, Finland, Norway and Sweden. More detailed micro-studies may clarify the picture further, as shown in the next section.

3. Determinants of care time: an overview of previous research

In the following paragraphs, we synthesize the most important findings of the relatively scarce literature on micro-determinants of childcare time. Anxo, Flood and Kocoglu (2002) compare the time allocation of parents in France and Sweden. Their ‘double hurdle’ analyses of time diary data indicate that parents tend to spend less time on childcare when their children grow older, that lowly skilled parents tend to spend less time on childcare and that women tend to be more sensitive to all kinds of explanatory factors. Their analysis suggests, moreover, that institutions matter. Swedish fathers spend more time with their children than

the French, but the French tend to compensate for the working time of the mothers while the Swedish do not. According to the authors this may be attributed to the Swedish combination of a wide offer of childcare services and extensive career flexibility regulations, which reinforces women's relative power in marriage and allows for a considerable externalisation of the care burden.

Hallberg and Klevmarcken (2003) focus on the childcare time of Swedish dual-earner couples. Their analysis of time diary data confirms the effect of the age of children. Furthermore, it shows that Swedish parents treat their partner's childcare time as a complement to their own time rather than as a substitute.

Neuwirth (2004) analyses primary childcare activities from the 1992 Austrian time use survey. He finds that parents' childcare time is mutually positively correlated, while being inversely related to the own job time. Moreover, Austrian women tend to compensate for their partner spending much time on his job, while men do not. This gender differential and the overall observation of the smaller responsiveness of men to observed variation in their household situation suggests that the male chauvinist model is still important in Austria. Furthermore, Neuwirth's 'two stage least squares' analyses show clear links between the various time allocation decisions, which indicates Austrian parents' need to accommodate privately for, say, an increase of their job time.

Deding and Lausten (2004) analyse time diary data of Danish couples, which they enriched with official register data. They compare market work with non-market work and differentiate between housework and childcare within the latter category. The results indicate that there exists a trade-off between market work and non-market work, but that childcare is relatively 'untouchable'. If the time for non-market work is squeezed it is other categories of activities that shrink, not childcare. Moreover, the authors confirm the previously found positive association between male and female childcare time.

Kalenkoski, Ribar and Stratton (2005) differentiate between market work, primary childcare time and secondary childcare time and analyse British time diary data. As in the French and Swedish case, highly skilled parents tend to spend more time with their children and childcare time levels off as the children grow older. Interestingly, primary childcare time is concentrated among the youngest and secondary childcare time tends to rise somewhat with

the age of the children before both categories disappear altogether. They also examine parents' child care time among three family types: married, cohabiting and single-parent families. They find no differences between married and cohabiting partners with regard to time devoted to childcare and to market work, but single parents appear to spend more time on child care and less time on market work than other parents.

Paley (2005) considers the timing of parental childcare and includes both 'active' childcare time and 'passive' childcare time, conditional on the other parent not being actively caring at the same moment. She uses data from the 1997 time diary supplement of the US Panel Study on Income Dynamics. Paley observes how the job schedules of parents can effectively 'force' men to enhance their childcare time relative to other fathers. However, she also finds that mothers do not treat their partner's increase as a substitute, but rather exhibit compensatory behaviour. In other words, when arriving home later than the father and the children, the mother will spend relatively more time with her children than other mothers. Among men, though, there is no such compensatory behaviour.

Ghysels (2004, 2005) analyses a 1997 ECHP-dataset of two-partner households in a simultaneous equations framework incorporating both childcare time and job time. His analyses show that childcare time is positively correlated among Danish, Belgian and Spanish parents. However, the simultaneous equations framework revealed no direct impact of a respondent's job time on the own childcare time, nor his or her partner's, except in Belgium. In Denmark and Spain the link between childcare and employment proved restricted to a one-way relationship with the amount of personal childcare determining one's job choice.

Besides studies about parental childcare time in general, some researchers investigate childcare time spent by one of the parents. Kimmel and Connelly (2006) focus on time *mothers* spend with children because women tend to experience conflicts between market work and family responsibilities more intensely than men do. They estimate a simultaneous four-equation system using data from the 2003 American Time Use Survey. The results of their analysis show that mothers' time with children does not respond to price or demographic changes as pure home production or leisure do. As a result, maternal childcare time should be considered a distinct time spending category, next to paid labour, leisure and pure household work production. Furthermore, Kimmel and Connelly (2006) notice important differences

between time allocation on weekdays and during weekends. Therefore, a separate analysis of time between these types of days seems appropriate.

Stancanelli (2003) elaborates several regression analyses on ECHP-data² to investigate *fathers'* care time. Her results show that time allocated by fathers to child care is responsive to their own hours of paid market work³ (-) and to their spouses' paid working hours (+). In addition, caring time by fathers is found to be positively related with employment in the public sector and with a high level of education of the spouse. Self-employed men appear to spend substantially less time caring for their children.

4. Parental Work and Children's Outcomes in European Welfare States

4.1. Review of the literature on Parental Work and Children's Outcomes

One of the most contested topics in social policy today is what support the government should provide to parents with young children, both in terms of paid leave entitlements and child care, in order to enhance labour market attachment and early return to work (especially for mothers). Furthermore, the implementation of these government policies have to be carefully evaluated in relation to the influence that they have on parents' decisions about the care of their young children and through that on children's health and development.

Although there is a fairly extensive literature in economics and related disciplines on the impact of maternity leave policies and child care choices on labour market outcomes for women (see for a review Del Boca and Wetzels 2007), fewer studies have examined the links between parental leave policies and child care choices, and parental employment on the one side and outcomes for children on the other.

This literature review addresses the question whether early parental employment is bad for children, i.e. it has a causal effect on children's development in pre-school age, and whether the effects on child cognitive or behavioural development persist or they fade out over time. In fact, research on attitudes from the World Values Survey shows a high variability in the

² Data from the European Community Household Panel

³ This is also shown by Gray (2004).

percentage of respondents who agree that a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works (from 18% in Denmark to 87% in Malta, see Billari 2006).

Economic theory does not predict clear effects of parental work on children's well being. In fact, there are two effects at work. From one side, there is a reduction in time devoted to the children if the mother works⁴; on the other hand, the mother can devote more resources and provide better educational and life opportunities to her children, given that she can rely on a higher family income (Ermisch and Francesconi 2005). Furthermore, from an empirical point of view, the observed relationship between maternal employment and child outcomes might reflect other factors that affect maternal labour supply and children's development (Ruhm 2004). For example, a woman with high ability is more likely to have a child with high cognitive ability and is also more likely to work. Hence, if the mother's ability is not properly taken into account, a statistical analysis would attribute the effect of this woman's higher skills to employment, and the estimated effects of maternal employment on her child's cognitive outcomes would be upwardly biased. Things are similar for low ability mothers and low ability children: mothers may choose to compensate by spending more time with children and the estimated effect of maternal employment on child's cognitive outcomes would also be upwardly biased. These considerations affect the way in which the relationship between parental employment and child outcomes can be seen as causal.

Researchers from different disciplines have been deeply interested in the link between parental work choice and children's well being. Some of the literature suggests that maternal employment has detrimental impacts on preschoolers cognitive and/or behavioural outcomes (Baum, 2003, Baydar & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Berger, Hill, & Waldfogel, 2005; Blau & Grossberg, 1992; Brooks-Gunn, Han, & Waldfogel, 2002; Datcher-Loury, 1988; Desai, Chase-Landale, & Michale, 1989; Ermisch & Francesconi, 2005; Fleisher, 1977; Gregg, Washbrook, Propper, & Burgess, 2005; Han, Waldfogel, & Brooks-Gunn, 2001; Harvey, 1999; Heyns & Catsambis, 1986; Hill & O'Neill, 1994; Lefebvre & Merrigan, 1998a; Lefebvre & Merrigan, 1998b; Milne, Myers, Rosenthal, & Ginsburg, 1986; Parcel & Menaghan, 1994; Ruhm, 2004). While some of the research finds enduring impacts of early maternal employment (Baydar & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Belsky & Eggebeen, 1991; Berger et

⁴ There is evidence that the active time that employed mothers spend with children is not reduced by employment as much as expected (see Bianchi 2000 and recent work by Sayer, Bianchi and Robinson 2004, Kimmel 2006 and Folbre, Yoon, Finnoff and Sidle Fuligni 2005, and older work by Nock and Kingston 1988)

al., 2005; Brooks-Gunn et al., 2002; Desai et al., 1989; Ermisch & Francesconi, 2005, Joshi and Verropoulou 2000; Liu, Mroz and Van der Klaauw 2003; Gregg et al., 2005; Han et al., 2001; Harvey, 1999; Parcel & Menaghan, 1994; Ruhm, 2004), other researchers find that negative impacts of maternal employment in the first year after a child's birth are offset by positive effects in the second and subsequent years (Blau & Grossberg, 1992).

Other researchers find no negative impacts on child outcomes, or qualify the negative impacts as small (Baum, 2004; Greenstein, 1993; Gregg et al., 2005; Harvey, 1999; Lefebvre & Merrigan, 1998; Leibowitz, 1977; Murnane, Maynard, & Ohls, 1981; Parcel & Menaghan, 1994). Vandell & Ramanan, (1992) find that in low income families, early maternal employment positively predicts children's math achievement, and that recent maternal employment positively predicts children's reading achievement. Other researchers (Haveman, Wolfe, & Spaulding, 1991) find that mother's work is a significant determinant of high school completion. In their review, Parcel & Menaghan (1994) suggest that the dangers of maternal employment to children when they are young have been over generalized.

Some studies examine whether the impact of maternal work is related to mother's skill level or her socio-economic status (Datcher-Loury, 1988; Fleisher, 1977; Gagné, 2002). Datcher-Loury, Fleisher, and Gagné find that mother's home time is associated with better child outcomes when mothers are relatively well educated. Fleisher finds that this exists for boys. However, (Greenstein, 1995) does not find this relationship.

Parental work schedules

There is currently very little research that specifically looks at the impact of parental work schedules on child outcomes (Presser, 2003). Presser reviews these few studies, most of which find negative impacts of non-standard hours, although some of the studies suggested positive impacts. It is unclear whether the studies included comprehensive controls. Lefebvre & Merrigan 1998 and Strazdins Korda, Lim, Broom, & D'Souza, (2004) analysed the impact of non-standard work schedules on children by using the NLSCY. The NLSCY data had not matured enough for most studies to look at longer periods than two to five years. Both studies found negative impacts of non-standard schedules. Both studies relied on cross-sectional analysis and summarized shift work into one measure (non-standard) schedule. While Lefebvre and Merrigan looked at effects of non-standard schedules on cognitive and behavioural outcomes separately, Strazdins et al. combined behavioural scores into one

measure defined as any behavioural problem. Gagne (2005) uses up to four sets of observations on each particular child to estimate the effect of work hours and shift work on behavioural outcomes in a longitudinal framework. Control variables include seven separate categories of shift work for both mothers and fathers in families where both parents or the single parent work and four separate categories of hours of work, including none, for both mother and fathers. Separate fixed effect equations are estimated for each behavioural outcome (hyperactivity, conduct disorder, indirect aggression, and emotional disorder) and for three measures of parenting or family emotional health (PMK depression, ineffective parenting, and family dysfunction). She finds that long hours of work do not have consistent direct impacts on child outcomes in two parent families..

Timing of return to work after child birth and social policies

There are still few studies that analyze the question of timing, that is whether and how parental employment early on in the first year of the child's life affects the child's outcomes (Berger, Hill, and Waldfogel, 2005). In fact, it is important to know not just whether maternal employment in the first year affects child outcomes, but also, more specifically, whether returning to work after a certain amount of weeks affects child outcomes. This issue is closely related to the one of maternity rights legislation and child care availability.

Several European countries have very different family and social policies, which are in turn very different with respect to the US. While in many European countries, government provides at least a part time place in a nursery school for children over the age of three, the situation changes substantially when we consider children under the age of three and especially under the age of one. Some countries (such as Germany) provide an extended period of paid maternity leave but little support for non parental care, which leads women to withdraw from the labour market to personally take care of their children, at least during the first years. In contrast, the US provides little support for maternity leave and more support for child care. The Nordic countries provide both generous parental leave and support for non-parental child care. In the last 5 years some countries started to move in this direction: the UK has extended the maternity leave to 12 months and has increased the availability of child care subsidies. In Ireland, parental leave was introduced in 1998 and in the UK in 1999 (14 and 13 weeks respectively); in Italy it was extended from 6 months to 10 months in 1998 and in Portugal to 24 months, in Greece from 3 to 6 months and there the weeks of maternity leave were extended to 17 weeks in 2000. At the same time paid maternal leave was reduced in

Poland from 26 to 16 weeks in 2002. Furthermore, most OECD countries set a certain percentage of wage replacement, ranging from 50% to 100% of wages, except for the US, where maternity leave is unpaid.

Estimating the effect of maternal leave on child outcomes is challenging, because women who return to work early are likely to be a select group and standard econometric methods may not adequately account for that selection (Berger, Hill, and Waldfogel, 2005).

When we look at children's outcomes during the first years of life, the type of child care a family uses is clearly a crucial determinant of whether the child benefits or is harmed by the mother's absence due to paid work. If the quality of care provided while the mother is working is lower than that which she herself would provide, then we might expect the child to suffer from her absence. Conversely, if the relative quality of non-maternal care is higher, the child may be better off if she is at work.

It is a difficult question to answer with non-experimental data because parents decide on the child care arrangements for their children, and parents do not make these decisions randomly. As a result, observed associations between child care quality and cognitive development could be the result of family selection bias rather than child care quality (Harvey 1999; Bernal 2004; Del Boca and Vuri 2004). In other words, parents who choose better quality care may also provide children with other advantages (e.g., other educational opportunities) and those other advantages may account for the links between the quality of child care and cognitive outcomes.

Since, women remain children's primary caregivers and because recent studies have shown that the first five years of life are crucial to brain development as well as children's cognitive and socio-emotional development (Shore, 1997; Danziger and Waldfogel, 2000) it is important to examine the first five years of child's development in relation to women's time-use including her labour supply and earnings. In the next section we will review the data sources and indicators available to analyse this question in a cross country comparative perspective.

4.2. Data sources: US and Canada

The considerable amount of research on the impact of parental (usually maternal) work on family outcomes has been conducted mainly in the US and Canada over the years, and the results are still mixed. Gagne (2005) reviews 34 published articles on the Effect of Maternal Employment on Child Outcomes. From her review follows that 17 out of these studies used the NLSY and two used the PSID, whereas 4 used the NLSCY for Canada. Much of the earlier research in the US and Canada was conducted using small unrepresentative field samples. More recently, as the U.S. based NLSY79 Children and Young Adults matured, a greater focus was placed on exploiting this resource to examine questions related to child outcomes. The NLSY79 is a nationally representative sample of 12,686 young men and women who were 14-22 years old in 1979. In 1986, a survey of all children born to NLSY79 female respondents began. The NLSY79 Children and Young Adults (subsequently referred to as NLSY) includes a variety of measures for these children, including cognitive, socio-emotional, and physiological assessments. ("National longitudinal surveys") While the survey contains a large number of children from all over the U.S., because the survey is based on children of NLSY79 female respondents, it is not a nationally representative survey of U.S. children. Children in that survey tend to over-represent those with parents that have a greater propensity to have children at an earlier age, usually parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Statistics Canada began a nationally representative survey of children in 1994. The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) has been administered every two years since. This survey also collects a variety of measures for children, including cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and health assessments. Cycle 1 of the survey included children aged 0 to 11. New cohorts of children aged 0 to 1 were added at cycles 2 and 3. At cycle 4, the sample included three longitudinal cohorts each originating from one of the previous cycles. Cycle 5 of the survey has recently been made available. Both the NLSY and the NLSCY have been used to explore the determinants of child development and well-being, although research that uses the NLSCY to explore the impact of hours of work and/or shift work on children is still quite limited. Much of the research on parental work and child outcomes has focussed on trying to measure the impact of or associations between *maternal* work and child outcomes. Some of the research reviewed here focussed on particular demographic groups, while other research looked at all children. Some of the research looked at the impact of early maternal employment, while other research looked at current employment, or longer horizons of

maternal employment. Most of the research estimated OLS equations. A few coded the dependent variables as binary and used a probit or logistic regression. One study used hierarchical multiple regression, another used path analysis, and one used seemingly unrelated regression equations.

The US PSID data includes children's time diary data and the traditional survey data from the Child Development Supplement (PSID-CDS) of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), which is a longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of individuals and families in the United States, with over-samples of low-income and immigrant families. Starting in 1997, the PSID conducted the PSID-CDS, which collected data on children's time use, child development, home environment, and family characteristics for approximately 3,600 children between the ages of 0 and 12. In 2002, 2,907 of the original sample of children were re-contacted for the second round of data collection.

We summarize here a few examples of the indicators of child outcomes available in these non-European data sets. For examples in NLSY studies outcomes are tested by the: Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Revised (PPVT-R), Behavioral Problem Index (BPI), and Early maternal employment. The findings are that employment during the first year may be detrimental for children's vocabulary skills. However, this may be only for advantaged children, e.g., White children (Waldfogel et al., 2003), middle-class boys (Desai et al., 1989). The effects on BPI depend on children's age, mothers' marital status, family income (Harvey, 1999)

Previous studies (Canadian studies) have used the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) in which the outcomes are tested by the: PPVT-R, Hyperactivity, physical aggression, emotional disorder (unhappiness, anxiety), pro-social behavior, behavioural problem index, and current maternal employment. The findings from these studies are: maternal employment is not related to PPVT-R (Gagne, 2003; Lefebvre & Merrigan, 1998), the effects on behavioural outcomes vary by children's age (Lefebvre & Merrigan, 1998; Miller et al., 2002; Roberts, 2003).

Two recent papers use the NLSCY (Nomaguchi 2004) and the PSID (Hsin 2006). Nomaguchi (2006) focuses on pre-school children in Canada. Other than controlling for socioeconomic characteristics, mothers' characteristic, and family structure, she also controls for children's temperament and for parenting practices and childcare. She finds at bivariate

level that maternal employment appears to be related to better child outcomes because of other characteristics, e.g., socioeconomic statuses, mothers' marital status, and birth order. Controlling for other characteristics, mothers' current employment is related to: better vocabulary skills for all children, higher pro-social behaviour, especially for children in families below poverty line, and higher anxiety for children in families below poverty line, while it is related to lower anxiety for children in other families. Controlling for other characteristics, mothers' employment within three months from their child's birth is related to higher physical aggression for girls, lower hyperactivity for boys. Harsh parenting is related to all behavioural outcomes, but not to PPVT-R scores. Childcare types are not related to child outcomes, except: Non-relative care (not in day care) is related to less pro-social behaviour

Hsin (2006) uses children's time diary data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and its Child Development Supplement to obtain direct measures of both the quantity and intensity of time children spend with their mothers, as well as information on the quality of parenting behaviour and maternal employment. The study attempts to examine three key questions: (1) Do children who receive more maternal care and/or more intense maternal care during early childhood have higher cognitive outcomes than children who received less quantity/intensity of maternal care? (2) Is early maternal employment associated with negative child cognitive outcomes, controlling for the quantity and intensity of maternal time investments in childcare? (3) To what extent does the quality of early parenting influence children's later cognitive outcomes? The preliminary results suggest that it is not the amount of time children spend with mothers nor maternal employment but the quality of early parental care that matters for children's later development. Family home environment and positive parenting (e.g. positive mother-child relationships measured by maternal warmth, emotional encouragement, and cognitive stimulation) have the strongest and most consistent relationship with children's cognitive test scores.

4.3. Indicators of Child Outcomes: the European Data sources

Recently, the European research community has recognized the need to conduct research on children's outcomes in connection with parents' employment and with parents' time use. The first step has been to find comparable data on children in European countries that are related to their parents' socio economic status. Across countries quite good and quite similar data on children' health are available, but data on social and psychological behaviour are not collected in a standardized format. Indeed, child outcome indicators are dependent on age and the

indicators would seem standardized across countries, however practice reveals that the checklists used, the questions asked differ across countries.⁵

To analyze children's outcomes in a welfare comparative European perspective there is a need for comparable data on the outcomes of children, and on the household situation, the parental inputs, and non-parental inputs in children. Looking into available data sources reveals two potential sources of data: a) cross country comparative data with some info on children and parents, and b) detailed rich national or regional data sources.

a) There are three recent initiatives which deal with European comparable data collection on children other than children's health. The first is the COST Action 19 that had run from September 2001 till June 2005. It was coordinated by Jonathan Bradshaw (see for an elaborate description of the project www.york.ac.uk). This project searched for data on children outcomes from a child well-being perspective without the purpose of analysing the link between parental employment and children outcomes that we would like to examine. However, since this project clearly has searched all possible cross country comparative data sources and summarized these, and, in addition makes clear the need for children mainstreaming of research we will describe a few contributions of this project. The project gives a brief history of the search for data on children in the European Union. Children in poverty have been named by the European Union as target groups in the Common Outlines and Common Objectives of the National Action Plans for Social Inclusion and also in the March 2005 EU Presidency Conclusions. However, among the so called Laeken Primary and Secondary indicators of social inclusion only one indicator with a child breakdown had been included (the proportion of children under 16 living in households with equivalent income before housing costs less than 60 per cent of the median and using the modified OECD equivalence scale). Although in the report by Professor Tony Atkinson and colleagues prepared for the Luxembourg Presidency (Atkinson et al 2005) there was a proposal that children should be 'mainstreamed', it was suggested (by the Head of Eurostat)

⁵ The following indicators are considered:

During pregnancy, birth, 14 months: health and medical data on premature birth such as: birth weight, (breast)feeding, health problems, handicaps, excessive crying, sleeping behaviour, learning to speak etc
2-3 year olds: social development (play), sleeping, language; 3 years also aggressive behaviour (ITSEA infant toddler social and emotional assessment test (12-36 months)
4-6, 5-6 year olds: cognitive development, hyper activity; 6-12: indicators of anxiety;
0-12 year olds: psycho-social and physical health (ITSEA, CBCL) e.g 4-8% of children have psychosocial problems (according to parents-Netherlands, report by SCP 2005) 15% of parents indicate problems with parenting.

that only one other child related indicator should be added to the Laeken Indicators – on educational attainment.

The index of child well-being developed in Bradshaw et al (2006) is based on a multidimensional understanding of wellbeing, where possible to the unit of analysis is the child and the data is about children if not provided by children. There are eight clusters:

- Material situation.
- Housing.
- Health.
- Subjective well-being.
- Education.
- Children's relationships.
- Civic participation.
- Risk and safety.

These clusters contain 23 domains and the domains are made up from 53 indicators.

Bradshaw(2006) shows in figure 1 that Cyprus, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark are at the top of the league table of child well-being. The Slovak Republic, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania are at the bottom of the league table of child well-being. For four of these countries Cyprus, Malta, Luxembourg and the Slovak Republic more than 25 per cent of the indicators making up the index are missing so it is probably safer to ignore them.

What factors are related to overall wellbeing? Table 1 shows those indicators from the set of 53 on Bradshaw (2006) which correlate most highly with the index of overall well-being. The selection is restricted to those with coefficients in excess of $r=0.6$ and which are statistically significant at least the 95 per cent level. They are presented in rank order. All of these variables are better indicators of child well-being than relative child poverty rates and educational attainment.

Table 5 Indicators with high correlates with child well-being

Indicator	Correlation coefficient r
Teenage fertility rate	0.88***
Feeling unsafe in neighbourhood	0.82***
Life satisfaction score	0.81***
Low family affluence (deprivation)	0.78***
Infant mortality rate	0.74***
Under 19 mortality rate	0.67***
Bullied last month	0.67**
Self rated health	0.64**
At least two household problems	0.63**
Low educational possessions	0.60**
Peers kind and helpful	0.61**

Bradshaw (2006) concludes that the relative child poverty rate which has been adopted by the EU as the only child related primary or secondary indicator of social inclusion is not adequate to represent variations in child well-being across the EU25. Educational attainment, which might be adopted, is even worse. There are some single indicators that are highly correlated with child well-being and for which there is data across the EU25. However Bradshaw pleads for adoption of the kind of multi-dimensional index of child well-being of the kind explored in his 2006 paper.

From our perspective all these indicators are not very helpful for our analyses of child outcomes and the effects of parental labour supply on the child outcomes. We wish to understand using micro data on parents and children how the relationships affect children's outcomes. However, it also shows that children outcomes are on the political agenda, but that data collection needs a collective effort beyond one or two indicators.

The second project on a European level is the Coordinated Action WELLCHI which is the acronym for "The well-being of children: The impact of changing family forms, working conditions of parents, social policy and legislative measures - WELLCHI NETWORK" is a coordination action under the 6th Framework Programme of the European Commission

(2004-2007). The purpose of this project is to set up and operate a network to improve our knowledge of the impact of changing family forms, the working conditions of parents, and social policy and legislative measures on the well-being of children and their families. Its goal is to bring into focus, co-ordinate, channel and publicise the results of research that has already been carried out through the organisation of international workshops and conferences. Debates hinge on the extent to which marital instability and other processes of family transformation, in contemporary Europe and in the context of different institutional and policy arrangements, can affect the welfare of children and lead to divergences in outcomes. Another goal is statistical harmonisation but this goal has not yet been realized.

The third initiative is by Eurostat and Statistics Finland to organise a meeting in November 2006 where a special session will discuss the child data that is and will be collected by Eurostat. Miles Corak from Statistics Canada will lead this session.

The second option, to use national or regional data with detailed information and start the cross country comparison from this perspective seems most fruitful for our research purposes. However, a review of available data reveals that not only indicators differ in the European countries. In addition, data collected on children differ also by whom provides the info: parent, health care worker, child care centre, school, children (e.g. similar model estimates of the effects of socio demographic characteristics of the child, and parents on psycho social problems differ a lot by whether info from healthcare workers, and parents info (SCP 2005). Moreover, the different child care and school systems in Europe lead to different parental time inputs during the day, during the week and during life. Finally, the different cultures and ethics of measuring e.g. school performance on the one hand and using administrative data for research purposes on the other in Europe leave researchers in this area with different data on child outcomes.

Indeed, a European comparison of child outcomes in relation to mothers' and fathers' labour supply and caring would mean that data are collected on quantity and quality of care and child outcomes by age of the child and on the labour market and time use behaviour of parents. Because of data limitation, cross country comparative research on the relationship between parental labour supply and child outcomes is extremely rare. Two examples are: 1) Ermisch and Franchesconi (2005) who consider the impact of mother's employment during childhood on the child's well being, focussing on the trade-offs between her time spent in nurturing the child and household income. They find some empirical evidence that while the loss of

mother's child care time has a negative effect on the child's well being, it is also the case that the additional income has positive implications for expenditures on goods consumed for the child. These effects vary across countries and across family types so the net impact of mother's employment on child's welfare can be expected to vary across national environments as well. 2) Aughinbaugh and Gittleman (2003) examine the effect of income on child development in the United States and the United Kingdom, as measured by scores on cognitive, behavioural, and social assessments. In line with previous results for the United States, they find that for both countries income generally has an effect on child development that is positive and significant, but whose size is small relative to other family background variables.

The FAMNET –group (joint work by Hsin and Wetzels) on child-outcomes has started their cross-country comparative research on child outcomes and labour supply and working hours of parents by a comparison of the US and the Netherlands that will be extended with Danish and German data. In this Project we extend the research in three ways. First we include the information on mother's partner's labour supply, secondly we specifically analyse the potential effects of parents who work part-time as opposed to parents working full-time, and thirdly, this is the first study that analyses the effects of parental working in two countries with similar short maternity leave but different child care provision. We are specifically interested in the research question: whether and in what way a child that needs “extra” time will affect the return to work decision of the mother, taking into account all standard variables, but also mother's partner's labour supply and hours, and the social policy environment. The parental part-time work is especially interesting in a comparison with the Netherlands where the quantity of working hours around the birth of the first child changes considerably (8% of the fathers in Amsterdam reduces their work hours to 25-32 , and 4% of the fathers work already 25-32 at the time the woman is 16 weeks pregnant of the first child) Wetzels (2006). This is also important since most of the research in the US focuses on the effect of working full time on child's cognitive development

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Intergenerational relations.

Between public and private patterns of solidarity and exchange

Agnes Blome, Wolfgang Keck and Chiara Saraceno

Intergenerational relationships are at the center of a growing, albeit heterogeneous, body of literature and research, as well as of many policy debates. However, what is conceived of when speaking of generations and of intergenerational relationships (be it of solidarity, conflict, or mutual estrangement), differs substantially depending on the field of study as well as the discipline. It is not only a nominalistic issue, of course. When one speaks of parents and children, or of grandparents and grandchildren, one is not speaking of age groups or cohorts, as when speaking of the young, the middle aged and the elderly. Thus, it is incorrect transferring research results on age groups, or cohorts, to individuals who stand in specific, familial relationships with each other, and vice versa. Before describing trends, approaches and findings in studies on intergenerational relations it is, therefore, necessary to first clarify the different underlying concepts and then to indicate which studies and concepts we are dealing with in this report.

1. Generational relations – concepts and definitions

1.1 Generation – the concepts

A first task is to separate the term *generation* from the terms *age group* and *cohort*. Neither popular nor academic language is particularly precise in this respect (for a discussion see Vincent 2005). There are at least three notions in social sciences that are relevant with respect to generations, namely socio-historical generations, familial generations, and social generations.

(1) *socio-historical generation*: this term stresses the chronological order of birth cohorts who are socialised in the same cultural and social context. Historical events such as wars, revolutions, sharp political change, economic depression or rapid economic development – create dividing lines - watersheds - among people who encounter these events at different chronological ages and life course phases (see e.g. the seminal study by Elder (1974) on

children of the Great Depression). Distinctions between age groups or cohorts may also be created by more gradual social and cultural changes. Following the Marxian distinction concerning class, Mannheim (for example Mannheim (1928 (1964)) distinguished between generations *per se* and generations *in se*. The latter are “simple“ birth cohorts; the former develop only when particular socio-historical circumstances mark and shape the outlook of those who experience them in such a way that they “recognise” themselves and each other. Following Mannheim, Eisenstadt (1956 (2003); 1996) speaks in this respect of a *generational consciousness* as a constituting element of a generation. On this note, *generations* are referred to as groups whose mentalities are formed by a common historical background. Mannheim’s definition and distinction has been widely popular. Edmunds and Turner (2002), for example, advocate the differentiation between *chronological generations* (birth cohorts) from *social or political generations* (participants in historical conflict and change). There are studies that provide empirical descriptions of some of the social characteristics of the different cohorts (Evandrou and Falkingham 2000; Rogler 2002). There are also efforts to analyse the cultures of different generations (e.g. Gilleard and Higgs 2000) and approaches to explain structural inequalities between age groups, cohorts and generations (Chauvel 1999; Warren and Hauser 1997). More generally, Mannheim’s attention to the social and cultural distinctiveness of age groups has influenced the sociology of age and the life course, and on the other hand brought forward attention to the demographic components of social change (size and composition of birth cohorts) (Riley and McCarthy 2003). Little, however, is known yet about how watersheds such as the regime change in the Central and Eastern European countries affects contact, learning, as well as conflicts across generational lines in these countries

(2) The concept of *familial generations* is the most precise, at least from an anthropological point of view. Generational positions and generational relationships are – literally - generated only within the vertical network of families (Hareven 1994a; Kertzer and Keith 1984; Lamb 2001). The generational status is not identified by age, but by lineage position with regard to persons in other generational statuses. A “generation of parents”, even of parents of children of the same age, may include more than just one birth cohort. And individuals may lose or add generational statuses over the life course, as well as hold simultaneously more than one generational status. As Hagestad (2001) observes, families create their own constellation of life phases, ages and cohorts, their own population pyramids. Moreover, in family lineages members often serve as “cohort bridges” for each other through communication and mutual learning, thus mediating social change.

(3) *The concept of social generations* extends the concept of familial generations to the societal level (Schütze 2001), identifying the four positions of children, youth, parents, the elderly. Although often used interchangeably with that of familial generations, the concept of social generations is radically different. Firstly, it is not dynamic. One is either a child or a parent. Secondly, the relationships between “generations” are abstract, or statistical, or at best mediated by social institutions, and they are not of a personal nature. Actually, the concept is very similar to, but less precise than that of age groups, since it mixes age criteria with (abstract) family characteristics (see also observations by Kertzer (1983). A useful conceptual distinction to separate generational relations within the family from those within society has been introduced by Leisering (1992). He distinguishes social interactions between members of different familial generations (*Generationenbeziehungen*) and the correlation between the living conditions and the collective destinies of different age groups or cohorts mediated through welfare state institutions (*Generationenverhältnis*). One aspect of the latter addresses institutional demarcations between different cohorts, such as compulsory school age or legal retirement age. This aspect constitutes *institutional generations* (Kohli 1985). With his distinction, Leisering points to one important aspect when analysing generational relations in the family vs. in society: the necessity to differentiate between micro-sociological and macro-sociological approaches and between longitudinal and cross-sectional analyses. In the same direction argues Pilcher (1994), who advocates the use of *generation* when reference is made to kinship relationships and *social generation* when reference is made to any cohort related phenomena (Pilcher 1994: 490).

This state-of-the-art report focuses on studies using the second and third concept and particularly on those that address the issue of relations within family and social generations.

1.2 Dimensions of Intergenerational relations

Generations – in the family and in society – stand in relationship with each other and constitute the context for each other, both relationally and with regard to the distribution of resources (Riley and McCarthy 2003). Institutions, patterns of allocation of resources, division of labour, and demography itself, are the outcomes of decisions taken by previous generations and shape the context in which, and with regard to which, new generations define their interests and their options in relation to others.

Each generation, therefore, cannot be studied in isolation from the others. And the study of *generational relations* is an important feature of the analysis of generations. Broadly speaking, generational relations are formed and experienced where members of different generations live together, act collectively and sometimes come into conflict with each other, within families and within society at large.

Generational relations are discussed both in terms of *solidarity* and of *conflict*. Solidarity is mainly the focus of research on family intergenerational relationship. Conflict is instead mainly the focus of relationships between social generations (or cohorts).

Solidarity

The term *solidarity* refers to social cohesion, thus pointing to mutual feelings and behaviours of responsibility that are perceived as being essential for the continuity of societies, states, or families. Human beings act not only according to their interests, but their behaviour follows as well altruistic motives; that is, people cooperate in situations where common (social) interests are perceived as more important than individual interests (Andreoni 1989; Kaufmann 1984).

The increased life expectancy has inspired not only the establishment of a new discipline, social gerontology, but it has also prompted a great deal of scholars from different fields and disciplines to examine the consequences on generational relations by enlarged family ties between (great-)grandparents, parents, and children (Bengtson 2001b; Bengtson and Dowd 1980). Also, changes in patterns of family formation and dissolution have initiated research questions concerning their impact on intergenerational relations. (Bengtson 2001b; Ikkink et al. 1999).

Bengtson and Roberts (1991) have developed a framework to analyse intergenerational solidarity that allows us to examine multiple kinds of solidarity that also may be complementary. They distinguish six components that characterise intergenerational exchange relations: structural solidarity (*opportunity*), associational solidarity (*interacting*), affectual solidarity (*emotional closeness*), consensual solidarity (*agreement of opinions*), functional solidarity (*help and support*), and normative solidarity (*obligation*). This rather wide

conceptualisation has been condensed in the sense that solidarity only refers to concrete exchange patterns, whereas opportunity structures and exchange motives are dealt with as preconditions (Szydlik 2000).

Conflict

Conflicts between generations are in general discussed in terms of diverging interests. At the societal level, this theme is focused on particularly with regard to the social insurance systems in a context of demographic change. One assumption is that the elderly today “exploit” the welfare state and younger generations have to pay the price without daring to expect similar benefits in old age (Esping-Andersen and Sarasa 2002; Thomson 1989). A similar point is made by referring to the unequal representation of age groups in national parliaments, that is, the over-representation of elderly persons in politics and the possible effects for democracy and the welfare state (*gerontocracy*) (Dychtwald 1999; Sinn and Uebelmesser 2002).

Thus, the familial and the societal perspective seem to offer contrasting views of intergenerational relationships: one based on solidarity and common interests, the other based on conflict and divergent interests. Both views are probably over simplistic – as some recent research suggests (see below). But they also point to possible divergent outlooks and behaviours by individuals when they act as members of family generations rather than of social generations. The links between the two generational positions and relationships – in the family and in society – and the ways individuals negotiate them, in fact, still needs to be explored. Only such a kind of research might actually offer some empirical ground to the question of whether generational conflicts are just a myth, as some argue (Arber and Attias-Donfut 2000).

While the concepts of solidarity and conflict aim at defining the character – the moral framework – of intergenerational exchanges, other concepts provide insight into the differing motives that underlie intergenerational relations: *obligations* and *reciprocity*. These shall be looked at in more detail.

Obligations

Exchange patterns between familial generations rely on expectations and norms concerning family obligations. In the study of generational relations the term *obligations* is used to

explain binding commitments within kinship. The central question is: who does what, for whom, why and under which circumstances? Finch (1989; with Mason 1993) explores for these purposes the provision of services and income transfers within families. She is interested in detecting the extent to which this provision is determined by laws, social norms, moral beliefs, or affection.

Finch's and other studies have offered evidence that kin relationships include some kind of normative obligation, irrespective of formal (legal) norms as well as of feelings of love and affection (see also Land and Rose 1985). Family obligations might be compulsory and even contradictory to personal interests. In addition, there may be rivalries between family members on who has to be responsible for care. Affection and solidarity between generations is not a prerequisite for support (Aldous 1987; Walker and Thompson 1983). According to some authors, in many cases, a love-hate relationship might be a better description of intergenerational relations than mutual solidarity (Lüscher and Pillemer 1998; Marshall et al. 1993).

Reciprocity

Generational relations are often taken as the epitome of generalised *reciprocity*. Although, in fact, the notion of rational exchange between generations, based on rational decisions and assessment of costs and benefits, has been influential (Cook and Whitmeyer 1992; Homans 1958), studies of generational relations within the family show that exchanges and trade-offs are often not on an equal, precisely symmetrical basis. Rather, they seem driven both by need and social norms concerning expectations about what each generation should receive and give. In contemporary welfare states, financial transfers, for example, are given mostly downward, from older to younger generations (Fritzell and Lennartson (2005). However, this depends on the society and period. In some societies (e.g. where pensions are meagre) financial help goes more to the elderly. Other kinds of support, such as care or emotional support follow less clear lineage directions. Although unbalanced at any given point in time, *reciprocity* implies some kind of balance over time and even over generations. As Leitner and Lessenich (2003) put it, "reciprocity is characterised by an inability to tolerate a structurally unbalanced exchange".

Expectations of middle or long term balances between generations underlie not only intergenerational exchanges within families and kinship networks, they also underlie, even

more explicitly, intergenerational relations in society as they are constructed in the social security systems, in particular the pension systems. In the pay-as-you-go system, present contributors fund the pensions of present pensioners with the expectation that future contributors will fund theirs (*generational contract*) (Walker 1996). For this reason, any change in the pension system affects not only the expectations and life plans of a given generation, but the overall contract between generations.

2. Research on Intergenerational relations in the family

Research on parent-child relations has a long tradition (Attias-Donfut 1988; Bengtson and Cutler 1976; Feuer 1969; Finch 1989; Hagestad 1984); the study of kinship beyond the parent-child dyad has a shorter history. The first important studies in the 1970s, studying the elderly, “discovered” their extended family networks that defied all simplistic Parsonsian theories concerning the weakening of kinship ties in contemporary societies. In these studies, the focus was on the elderly. More recently, instead, kinship and particularly intergenerational ties have been studied from the perspective of all its components and generations.

The research strands oscillate between a perspective of intergenerational divergence, which result in conflict and social change, and a perspective of intergenerational solidarity, which emphasises support and reciprocity. A more recent approach tries to combine these perspectives describing intergenerational relations as ambivalent (Lüscher and Pillemer 1998).

Research on intergenerational relations in the family has becoming increasingly important in recent years for at least four reasons. First, the twofold processes of population aging alter the intergenerational structures. Fewer children are faced with a growing share of elderly people. Increasing life expectancy and low fertility rates have changed and will change not only the population structure in Europe’s countries (Grundy 1996; United Nations 1956), but also the age and generational composition of kinships (Harper 2004). The lineage becomes taller and thinner. Children might meet their great-grandparents but may have neither siblings nor cousins. Are there new exchange patterns between the generations? How do generational positions change over the life course, since some of them – particularly those of child and parent – last longer and each individual may occupy more than just one or two generational

positions (i.e. one may be at the same time a child, a parent, and a grandparent) at any given point in time? Who will care for whom in the future?

Second, demographic change is also one factor that questions the sustainability of social welfare institutions that were developed in a period when the age structure of the population was widely different from the present one. Thus, both the generational and the gender contracts that underlie those institutions are being re-negotiated and the family-market-state balances that underpin the specific welfare mixes redefined (Esping-Andersen 1999; Evers and Wintersberger 1990; Knijn and Komter 2004). Intergenerational (as well as gender) relations are being reshaped both in families and in society, sometimes in a coherent way, sometimes contradictorily. For instance, the shifting back to individual and family responsibilities of part of the financial and caring needs of the frail elderly may be in contradiction with the encouragement for women to be in the labour market.

Third, family structures have been changing in the last decades. Forms of cohabitation have become more pluralised and fragile over the life course (Saraceno 1997). There are two relevant issues here: first, whether divorce affects intergenerational ties and the direction of the effect. For instance, some studies have indicated that divorced mothers keep in contact with, and receive support from their children more often than divorced fathers; other studies found that lone mothers rely on support from their own parents more intensively than partnered mothers (see section

2.3 The impact of divorce). The second issue is whether intergenerational relationships are affected by the form taken by the couple: marriage or cohabitation without marriage, or “living apart together”.

Fourth, attention both for social cohesion and for mechanisms that reproduce social inequality—has created interest in family and kinship networks (thus in intergenerational relationships) outside the specific fields of family and age studies, such as in research on social capital and social cohesion and in social stratification and mobility research. Kinship networks and intergenerational relationships, on the one hand, are in fact considered an important dimension of social capital (van Oorshot and Arts 2005). On the other hand, studies on social stratification and mobility are increasingly interested in the transfer – of social capital, of wealth, of skills - mechanisms between generations.

The following paragraphs give a brief summary of the main findings on patterns of intergenerational solidarity in the family and make reference to differences between gender, countries, and to changes over time.

2.1 Intergenerational exchange patterns

Defining intergenerational solidarity in a narrower sense, as exchanges between generations, and assuming opportunity structures and motives as contextual aspects, one could distinguish at least three different dimensions of support: First, staying in contact, providing emotional and social support to yield understanding and prevent social isolation; second, rendering instrumental assistance in terms of caring, doing household chores, paperwork and so on; and third, giving financial and other economic support to family members.

These exchange modes are developed differently by the younger and older family members according to their resources and needs, but also the social, and sometime legal, norms that regulate intergenerational relationships. In most developed countries, adult children tend to contribute more time than money to support their parents, whereas elderly parents give material support by providing free accommodation and board or financial assistance (Aldous 1987; Kohli et al. 1999). There are also gender differences, in so far as, irrespective of age and generational position, women mainly tend to provide time, in particular for care activities,

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