

Creating Gender Egalitarian Societies: An Agenda for Reform*

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In this article, we describe the social and economic changes that have contributed to contemporary problems of work–family conflict, gender inequality, and risks to children’s healthy development. We draw on feminist welfare state scholarship to outline an institutional arrangement that would support an earner–carer society—a social arrangement in which women and men engage symmetrically in paid work and unpaid caregiving and where young children have ample time with their parents. We present a blueprint for work–family reconciliation policies in three areas—paid family-leave provisions, working-time regulations, and early childhood education and care—and we identify key policy design principles. We describe and assess these work–family reconciliation policies as they operate in six European countries widely considered to be policy exemplars: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, and France. We close with an analysis of potential objections to these policies.

Keywords: *employment; care giving; gender equality; divisions of labor*

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INTRODUCTION

In the rich countries of the world, women's labor-force participation is approaching that of men. The majority of children now grow up either in single-parent or two-parent families where all relevant adults are combining employment with their caregiving responsibilities. While these shifts have created new opportunities for many, they have also produced new problems of "time poverty" for parents, exacerbated long-standing gender inequalities, and exposed many children to unstable and poor quality child care arrangements.

These problems are often described in terms of tradeoffs among the interests of women, men, and children. Children can have more time with their parents, some observers suggest, only if women scale back their employment commitments and achievements. Or women can join men in the public spheres of employment and civic life, but only if the care and rearing of children is outsourced to nonfamily members.

We, the authors of this article, are interdisciplinary social scientists with a shared interest in social welfare policy. Our backgrounds, however, mirror these divided interests: one of us was steeped in feminism; the other has a longstanding focus on the care and well-being of children. One of us argued that women's emancipation depends on our reaching parity with men in the public spheres of employment and politics. The other worried about poor quality care for children and insisted that children need their parents' time, a need that might conflict with full-time maternal employment when children are young.

We have sought to reconcile these conflicts by suggesting a blueprint of institutional reforms that would support gender egalitarian caregiving. We have concluded that the alleged tradeoffs among gender equality, family time, and child well-being are not inevitable. The problem is that our shared social interests in raising healthy children while promoting women's full equality with men are at odds with contemporary workplace practices and social policies that have failed to respond to changing social and economic realities. Workplace structures and social policies in most of the industrialized world are still based on the outdated assumption that men will commit themselves to full-time employment while women provide unpaid domestic work and caregiving in the home.

This article envisions a different social arrangement for the future: a dual-earner/dual-caregiver society. This arrangement—the Real Utopia at the heart of this volume—is a society in which men and women engage symmetrically in employment and caregiving. A dual-earner/dual-caregiver society 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-compensated nonparental caregivers.

We elaborate this vision by outlining a package of *work–family reconciliation*¹ policies that would support dual-earner/dual-caregiver arrangements in industrialized countries. We concentrate our analyses and policy recommendations on the high-income market economies of western, northern, and southern Europe, as well as Canada and the United States.² These countries exemplify the contradictions between historic assumptions about female caregiving and the contemporary demands and opportunities of industrial and postindustrial economies. As pioneers in welfare-state protections, several of these countries provide the most fully developed models for policies that reconcile market and family demands. To be sure, none of these countries has achieved the ideal of full gender equality or resolved the competing demands on parental time and attention. But some have achieved high levels of economic productivity while providing substantial support to parents and children. Policy designs from these countries provide both general and specific lessons for policies that could support our Real Utopia, which rests on gender-egalitarian caregiving.

We concentrate on one central dimension of caregiving, which is parental care of dependent children.³ We do so because we think that the care and rearing of children is a special case because of the public benefits that result from this care and because of the deep impact of unequal parenting on the next generation. Most adults are involved in childrearing at some point in their lives and childbirth (or adoption) is the moment at which men's and women's working lives begin to diverge most radically. Moreover, the costs of raising children are private, but the benefits of healthy, well-nurtured children are broadly shared by society. Hence, the case for government intervention is particularly strong.

We do not think that work–family reconciliation policies are sufficient by themselves to achieve the goal of equalitarian gender relations. A range of other public policies that includes effective antidiscrimination laws, prohibitions on sexual harassment, and comparable worth policies are necessary to break down patterns of occupational segregation, both horizontal and vertical. A full agenda for a Real Utopia of gender equality requires all of these. Our argument is that facilitating a transformation of caregiving responsibilities in the family through work–family reconciliation policies is a critical element of this larger transformation.

The remainder of our article is organized as follows. In the second section, we describe the social and economic changes that are contributing to contemporary problems of work–family conflict, gender inequality, and risks to children's healthy development. In the third section, we draw on feminist welfare-state scholarship to outline our conceptual model and clarify the end vision of the dual-earner/dual-caregiver model of family and social arrangements. In the fourth

section, we present a blueprint for *work–family reconciliation* policies that draws on existing models in six European countries. We summarize principles for policy design in three areas—*paid family leave provisions*, *working time regulations*, and *early childhood education and care*. In the fifth section, we describe these work–family reconciliation policies in much more detail as they have been developed in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, and France. In the sixth section, we compare these countries to the United States on gender equality, time for parental caregiving, and parents’ experience of work–family conflict. In the final section, we discuss a series of potential objections to these policies.

THE PROBLEM

The language of “work–family conflict” is rooted in longstanding contradictions in economic, social, and gender arrangements in industrialized societies. In the late nineteenth century, industrialization and the rise of waged labor in Western Europe and North America sparked a massive economic and social reorganization. As most men—but few women—moved their labor from the agricultural to the industrial and commercial sectors, a male-breadwinner/female-homemaker family was defined as the ideal family. The work roles of men and women diverged as men engaged in paid work and women did unpaid work, especially caring for children.

This arrangement was roughly institutionalized in the first half of the twentieth century, but it started to unravel in the decades after World War II as women throughout the OECD countries entered waged work in large numbers. The increase was particularly dramatic for women with children. Across the thirty current OECD countries, 71 percent of mothers with one child and 62 percent of mothers with two or more children are now employed. Only one European country, Spain, has maternal employment rates lower than 50 percent. In the United States, maternal employment rates are nearly 70 percent and in high female-employment countries, such as Sweden and Denmark, they exceed 80 percent.

Patterns of family formation also changed in the industrialized countries during the closing decades of the twentieth century. In most high-income countries, cohabitation became more common, births outside of marriage increased substantially, and divorce rates rose. More children began to live in lone-parent families, and these families were overwhelmingly headed by mothers. In several countries, single parenthood is now a more common economic risk for working-age women than is either disability or unemployment. By the close of the twentieth century, the majority of children no longer lived in the mid-century “ideal” of a male-breadwinner/female-homemaker family.

Incomplete Transformations

Despite these changes, much has also remained the same. In economic terms, in most of the OECD countries, total gender specialization has been replaced by partial specialization. Women have joined men in the public spheres of commercial and civic activity, but they continue to have primary responsibility for the private sphere of the home. Men have failed to make a corresponding shift in the amount of time and attention that they devote to caregiving.

Moreover, labor market and social policy institutions continue to assume the traditional gender division of labor. Employers rely on the labor of women without reducing their dependence on—or contributing directly to the costs of replacing—women's uncompensated domestic and caregiving labor in the home. Unless prevented by labor laws or collective bargaining, employers have been demanding even more effort, hours of work, and workplace productivity from both men and women.

Social policy institutions have been slow and uneven in their response to the changing realities of work and family life. By the middle of the twentieth century, many rich countries had developed a core of welfare-state protections designed to reduce economic risks and equalize outcomes for their citizens, including old-age, disability, and survivor's pensions, as well as health, sickness, and unemployment benefits. But countries have been slower, and much more varied, in their adoption of policies that provide support for family caregiving and mitigate the gendered costs of providing this care, including maternity and paternity leaves, parenting leaves, public child care, services for the elderly, and family allowances.

Consequences for Gender Equality, Family Time, and Child Well-Being

Increasing rates of female employment have narrowed the gender gap in labor-force participation, but they have not dissolved other fundamental disparities between men and women. In all of the OECD countries, mothers' employment rates lag behind the 90 percent or higher rates reported among fathers. When mothers are employed, they average fewer hours in paid work than fathers and they are more likely to take leaves and/or career breaks to care for children or other family members. Due in large part to employment interruptions associated with bearing and caring for children, employed mothers are less likely than their male counterparts to work in upper-echelon occupations and they command lower earnings.

Mothers' career breaks, periods of part-time employment, parenting-related occupational and job choices, along with employer discrimination on the basis of parental status, exact a substantial "mommy tax." The extent of this "mommy tax" varies considerably across the OECD countries. In none, however, have women with children reached parity with their male partners. Using the share of

total family earnings contributed by mothers in dual-parent families, we find that mothers' share of total parental earnings is as low as 18 to 19 percent in Germany and the Netherlands, but only as high as 34 to 38 percent in the Nordic countries of Denmark and Sweden. The United States ranks about in the middle of the OECD countries by this measure, with mothers commanding about 28 percent of total parental earnings.

These inequalities are mirrored by continuing gender inequalities at home. Although men's engagement in domestic work and caregiving has increased in some countries, nowhere has this increase matched women's influx into paid employment. Comparative time-use studies suggest that employed fathers in most OECD countries devote fewer than one-quarter of the hours that their female partners commit to routine housework, and less than half as much time to caring for their children. Gender inequalities at home vary across the OECD countries, but even in relatively egalitarian Sweden, fathers spend just over half as much time as their female partners do caring for children.

The rise in maternal employment is also creating an increasingly acute "time crunch" for many families in the industrialized countries. Men's weekly hours of work remain very high in many industrialized countries. In a number of high-income countries, prime-age (twenty-five to fifty-four) men average well over forty hours per week in paid work; in several countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, Greece, and Spain, they log an average of forty-five hours per week. The persistence of long weekly hours among male workers is a formidable obstacle to greater involvement in the daily tasks of caring for children. Ironically, fathers typically work longer weekly hours than their childless counterparts.

But the gendered nature of contemporary partial specialization between fathers and mothers creates particularly acute demands on women. In most of the OECD countries, employed mothers still spend five to seven hours a day in housekeeping and primary child care activities, twice the number reported by men. Where do women get this time? Time-use studies in the United States suggest that mothers' increasing hours of employment have not come at the expense of hours devoted to direct care of their children.⁴ Instead, employed mothers do less of everything else; they spend seven fewer hours per week on housework, six fewer hours sleeping, five fewer hours on personal care, and twelve fewer hours on leisure activities than their nonemployed counterparts.

In surveys conducted in several OECD countries, one-half or more of mothers report that they would like to have more time with their children. Nearly all mothers (90 percent) in time-starved American families report that they would like "a little or a lot" more time with their families. More strikingly, perhaps, fathers in these countries are even more likely to report that they feel time poor with respect to family: 80 percent or more in most countries, and 95 percent in the United States, express a preference for more time with their families.

The time crunch for parents has an impact on the well-being of children. In an extensive recent review, a panel of researchers commissioned by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine concluded that the effects of parental employment vary with the characteristics of parents' working schedules and jobs, with the quality of substitute care, and with the developmental needs and temperaments of children.⁵ Employment arrangements that greatly reduce parents' time and attention for their children appear to pose the greatest risk for child well-being. For the youngest children, for example, employment arrangements that limit mothers' ability to breastfeed, or that place children in substitute care for long hours during the first year of life, have been linked to poorer health and developmental outcomes. For school-aged children, parental employment in nonstandard-hour jobs has been associated with poorer academic performance and more problem behaviors. For adolescents, parental employment that limits oversight and monitoring of children's time appears to place children at heightened risk for engaging in dangerous and illegal behaviors.

For children of all ages, the quality of substitute care is a critical intervening variable. The stability of the caregiver and quality of the adult-child interaction are particularly crucial for the healthy development of young children. For school-aged and adolescent children, the proximity of adult supervisors is important, along with the quality and diversity of supervised activities. The quality of nonparental care is particularly important for socially and economically disadvantaged children.

CONCEPTUALIZING AN INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

In recent years, several overlapping but surprisingly disconnected conversations about work and family life have been taking place in the industrialized countries. The first is the one that we have just described that has evolved out of growing concerns about the well-being of children. Child development research, including important new findings about early brain development, has focused on the importance of parental availability and care during the earliest months and years of children's lives.

A second conversation has been animated by rapid changes in women's engagement in the labor market. Following the sharp rise in mothers' employment during the 1960s and 1970s, a somewhat different group of social scientists, policy analysts, and advocates began a conversation about "work-family conflict." This conversation has focused on the problems of working parents whose conflicting responsibilities in the workplace and at home leave them penalized at work and overburdened and exhausted at home. Some strands of this conversation, advancing a "women's caregiver" perspective, are explicitly feminist in their call for radical new conceptions of care, paid work, social citizenship rights, and welfare-state obligations.⁶ More commonly, however, this conversation is

situated within a “work and family life” perspective that calls for helping women to balance competing demands within existing social and gender arrangements.

Still another conversation began with the second wave of the women’s movement. Since the 1960s, feminists concerned with the family have concluded that persistent gender inequality in the labor market is both cause and consequence of women’s disproportionate assumption of unpaid work in the home. This conversation revolves around the ways in which men’s stronger ties to the labor market carry social, political, and economic advantages that are denied to many women, especially those who spend substantial amounts of time caring for children.

There has been surprisingly little engagement among these separate but related conversations. These conversations seem most at odds when they propose solutions. Research on child well-being stresses the importance of parents’ availability and many interpret this research to suggest the need for policies—such as child tax credits and maternity leaves—that would allow mothers of young children to opt out of labor-market attachments. Much of the work–family literature also locates work–family conflict in women’s lives and focuses on arrangements that allow women to balance time between the workplace and home, such as part-time work, job sharing, telecommuting, and flextime. In contrast, many feminists have identified the problem as women’s weak and intermittent connection to employment. Feminists argue that women will not and cannot achieve parity with men as long as they shoulder unequal responsibilities for unpaid care work. Along with policies that reduce employment barriers and discrimination, feminists typically advocate for alternatives to maternal child care, including more and better quality out-of-home child care.

Although they differ in naming the problem and in the solutions they propose, these conversations 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. And they 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 can achieve greater equality in employment only by reducing their time at home.

Reconciling Earning, Caring, and Gender Equality: The Dual-Earner/Dual-Caregiver Society

To reconcile these tradeoffs we argue that scholars and social activists need to move beyond existing conceptualizations of the problem and focus our attention on an end vision of what an earning, caring, egalitarian society that promotes the well-being of children might look like.

Fortunately, a number of feminist welfare-state scholars have already articulated this vision—a dual-earner/dual-caregiver model that honors the importance

Gendered Divisions of Labor				
traditional gender division of labor <=====> less traditional gender division of labor (continuum from Crompton, 1999)				
	male breadwinner / female caregiver	dual-earner / female part-time caregiver	dual-earner / state-caregiver -- or -- dual-earner / marketized-caregiver	dual-earner / dual-caregiver
ideological perspectives on employment, caregiving, and gender relations:	↓	↓	↓	↓
"parents' time with children"	emphasized	emphasized	--	emphasized
"work/family balance"	--	emphasized	emphasized	emphasized
"gender equality in the labor market"	--	--	emphasized	emphasized

Figure 1. Gender divisions of labor.

of earning and caring, and that prioritizes both gender equality and parental care for children. In the following sections we develop the framework for this model and outline a set of policies that would support and enable it.

British sociologist Rosemary Crompton locates the dual-earner/dual-caregiver model on a continuum of social arrangements. She emphasizes that “the point of this exercise is not to provide a matrix, or static taxonomy, within which nation states may be precisely located. Rather, the aim is to develop a flexible framework through which change may be conceptualized.”⁷ Figure 1 presents our extended version of Crompton’s continuum.

The first location on the continuum is the fully specialized traditional family which prevailed across the industrialized countries from the late nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century. It is now relatively rare in the OECD countries—except among mothers of young children, given that many mothers still exit the labor force during their children’s youngest years.

The second location on the continuum describes contemporary family political economies in most high-employment industrialized countries. The dual-earner/female part-time caregiver model is common in countries such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands where many mothers combine primary responsibility for family care with employment in part-time jobs with low weekly hours. Because mothers are free to spend time with their children, this model values parental caregiving. Given appropriate policy supports, such as caregiver stipends, it can be consistent with rewarding women as caregivers and

reducing the competing demands of the home and market. It does little, however, to reduce gender divisions of labor in caregiving and market work.

The third location on the continuum stresses gender equality in earning by moving more of the care of children outside the home and freeing mothers as well as fathers for employment that is continuous and full-time. The “state-caregiver” version, in which children are cared for in public child care settings, characterizes arrangements in countries with high rates of full-time maternal employment and extensive public child care systems. This arrangement was common in the state socialist countries during the 1980s; today it operates, to a degree, in Finland.

In the “market-caregiver” version, most fully developed in the United States, many mothers are employed full-time and make extensive use of private market care arrangements.⁸ By commodifying care and moving it out of the home, both options could be consonant with gender equality in the labor market. Yet both of these dual-earner/substitute-caregiver arrangements can also have gender-inegalitarian consequences. When full-time employed women retain primary responsibility for unpaid caregiving at home, they experience a double burden that can impoverish women’s time and erode the quality of both their caregiving and labor market attachments. These arrangements also do little to protect parents’ rights to care for their own children. Over time, the failure to support parents’ caregiving labor devalues and reinforces the gendered distribution of this labor, which is provided overwhelmingly by women in both publicly subsidized and market-based child care systems. This gender-inegalitarian outcome is compounded, in private systems, by the extremely low wages paid to women who work in child care settings.

The fourth location on the continuum illustrates a distinctly egalitarian social arrangement that honors both parental caregiving and market work: “the dual-earner/dual-caregiver model” (henceforth the earner–caregiver model). Unlike the first two arrangements, it envisions a social and economic outcome in which men and women engage *symmetrically* in both paid work and in unpaid caregiving; as such, it is fundamentally gender egalitarian. It also assumes that parents have the right to choose whether they will care for their own children or rely on substitute forms of care. Both mothers and fathers in an earner–caregiver society would have realistic opportunities to combine employment and caregiving and to adjust their hours of paid work to allow time to care for children. To these characteristics, suggested by Crompton, we add another element: the state would support both parental and nonparental care for children, socializing the costs of caring for children and equalizing access to quality care across families of different means.⁹ Thus amended, the earner–caregiver model resolves many of the apparent trade-offs: it is gender egalitarian, values both caregiving and market labor, and supports both parental and nonparental care arrangements that contribute to the well-being of children.¹⁰

*The Institutional Design of Policies
that Support an Earner–Caregiver Society*

The earner-caregiver society is clearly utopian. It has the qualities of a Real Utopia, however, because it is possible to imagine the social, institutional, and structural transformations through which it could be realized. Three essential transformations would be needed. First, the achievement of gender symmetry, together with high levels of parental care, could come about only if men, on average, shift substantial portions of time from the labor market to the home and only if all women find a place in the world of employment. Second, an earner-caregiver society would require major changes in the workplace as it imagines that fathers, along with mothers, would have the right to reduce their employment hours to care for children, particularly when their children are young. Third, the earner-caregiver society requires that the state take an active role in protecting parents' rights to have time for caregiving without undue economic sacrifice and in assuring that families have access to affordable, high-quality substitute child care.

Our focus here is on this third transformation. We outline policies in the areas of *family leave*, *working time regulation*, and *early childhood education and care* that are consonant with the earner–caregiver model and have been well tested in other rich industrialized countries. In the short term, these policies would provide men and women with greater options to equalize their allocation of time between the market and caregiving in the home while ensuring that their children are well cared for. In the longer term, these policies can contribute to a more fundamental transformation of the prevailing gendered divisions of labor and current devaluation of caregiving work.

In focusing on the importance of government in bringing about these transformations we build upon arguments advanced by many social and economic theorists. One of the most compelling is that, as Nancy Folbre and Paula England have argued, well-reared children are public goods because their capabilities benefit society as a whole.¹¹ Hence, expanding public supports for childrearing would help achieve economically efficient and socially optimal outcomes. Furthermore, to the extent that society relies on parents' private resources to raise children, those in low-income families will receive far less than their affluent counterparts. An expanded government role would reduce inequalities among children.

Some participants in the work–family debate argue that the institutional supports we recommend—including leave rights and benefits, formal options for work schedule flexibility, and subsidized child care—should be provided by employers. But employers cannot, and should not, be expected to individually and voluntarily provide the full range of work–family reconciliation supports for their own employees. In fact, the incentives for employers to do so are often weak or absent. As we have seen from the experience of employer-provided health care benefits (in the United States.), these rarely trickle down to low-wage workers, and employers withdraw them during economic downturns. Because it is crucial

that workplace benefits apply to a large swath of the labor force, the costs have to be spread widely. This can only be achieved by the state.

In the remainder of this section we outline a “blueprint” for a package of gender-equalizing work–family reconciliation policies. We summarize principles for public policy design that we derived from a detailed study of policy in six exemplar countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium and France. There is little that is controversial about our selection of countries; several empirical studies have established that these six form a relatively cohesive cluster of countries with the most well-developed policies for advancing the goals of an earner-caregiver society.

In laying out our blueprint, we focus on three areas of policy that can help parents to—as Francine Deutsch evocatively phrases it—“halve it all” by sharing equally in the costs and benefits of earning and caring: *paid family leave, regulation of working time, and early childhood education and care.*

Family-leave provisions would grant parents the right to take time off to care for children without losing their jobs and provide cash benefits to compensate for lost wages during periods of leave. Leave policies would include short-term maternity-leave rights and benefits, short-term paternity-leave rights and benefits, longer-term parental leave for both parents, and temporary periods of paid leave—often referred to as “leave for family reasons”—that allow parents to respond to routine and nonroutine caregiving demands. To reduce gender differentials in paid and unpaid work, gender-egalitarian leave policies would extend benefits to both men and women while creating incentives for men to take up the benefits to which they are entitled.¹² Gender-equalizing family leave policies would have several key features: First, all employed mothers and fathers, and other primary caregivers of children, would be granted the right to take six months of paid leave, with job protection, following childbirth or adoption. We would cap the per-person leave at six months because the accumulating evidence suggests that duration lies within the leave length that is advantageous, and not harmful, to women’s labor-force attachment and longer-term employment trajectories.^{13,14} Second, each employed parent would have his or her own *entirely* nontransferable leave entitlement. While nontransferability potentially restricts some individuals’ options—mothers may not take up “both shares”—it substantially increases incentives for fathers’ participation.¹⁵

Third, employees would receive 100 percent wage replacement up to an earnings cap during these leave periods. The earnings cap is needed to contain costs and incorporate progressivity.¹⁶ Wage replacement would be financed through a social insurance fund that was replenished by both employer and/or employee payroll contributions. To minimize discrimination against potential leave takers, social insurance premiums would not be experience-rated at the enterprise level; that is, they would not reflect the past record of employees receiving the benefit.

Fourth, parents would be allowed to take up their benefits either full-time or in combination with part-time employment, and to draw down their six-month

entitlements incrementally, over several years. In other words, each new parent would be granted a six-month allotment of leave time and permitted to flexibly choose how and when to “tick the clock down,” throughout a period that could be as long as eight years. To accommodate staffing needs, employers would have the right to require substantial notification periods before workers exit the workplace and prior to their return. Governments would provide additional help for employers—particularly small employers—by making referrals between potential workers seeking employment or training opportunities and employers seeking to hire temporary replacement workers.

Fifth, mothers and fathers would have the right to some time off, with pay, to attend to short-term and unpredictable needs that arise throughout their children’s lives. Parents need to be granted a reasonable number of days each year to attend to short-term needs such as a child’s routine illness, a disruption in child care, or a school-related emergency—without fear of job loss or lost pay. Publicly financed “leave for family reasons” would secure children’s access to their parents when unpredictable needs arise and extend benefits to low-wage workers, whose jobs and employers typically grant the fewest options for parents who need to make short-term changes in work scheduling.

Regulation of working time is often ignored in discussions of family policy. But labor–market policies that enable parents to reduce and reallocate employment hours for caregiving are an essential form of support for earner–caregiver families. Some feminist scholars argue that shortening full-time work hours may be the most promising tool for achieving a gender-egalitarian redistribution of domestic labor.¹⁷ Working-time policies can limit the standard work week and grant rights to minimum numbers of paid days off, for both men and women. Policies that raise the availability and quality of reduced-hour and part-time work are equally if not more important for earner–caregiver families. Without such public policies, workers are likely to pay high economic and career penalties if they elect to reduce their working hours even temporarily to care for children. Working time measures that increase parents’ options for high-quality reduced-hour work would include several provisions: First, working time measures would limit weekly employment hours by setting normal full-time weekly hours in the range of thirty-five to thirty-nine hours per week. This is now standard in several European countries today. Limiting men’s time in the labor market, in particular, would raise the likelihood of more gender-egalitarian time allocations between partners. Implementing reductions economy-wide would increase parents’ opportunities to seek employment that is “full-time” but at less than forty hours, across a broad range of firms, occupations, and industries. Overtime regulations would both offer compensation for those who work longer hours and protect workers against compulsory overtime. Some tailored measures would also have to be extended to many professional and managerial employees who are currently exempt from statutory limits on working time.

Second, policies for paid time off would assure workers a substantial number of paid days off each year. Public measures would grant workers at least one month of paid time off annually so that the normal work year would be defined as forty-eight weeks. This would alleviate some of the burden of arranging child care coverage during summer school breaks and would grant parents needed periods of uninterrupted family time.

Third, part-time workers would have the right to pay and benefit parity—in comparison to full-time workers performing similar work in the same enterprise. Improving the quality and compensation of part-time work would increase economic security for part-time workers and their families, and provide incentives for more men to participate in part-time employment.

Fourth, all workers would have the right to formally request a shift to reduced-hour or flexibly scheduled work, subject to employer agreement. Employers would have the right to refuse, but their refusals would be subject to review. These general rights to work-hour changes would be restricted to workers in enterprises with more than ten to fifteen workers, as is common in Europe.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) that is high quality and publicly subsidized¹⁸ is a third critical component of policies that support earner-caregiver arrangements. Parents cannot fully engage in employment unless they can secure alternative arrangements for their children while they are at the workplace. Public financing of all of these care arrangements is essential to both reduce the burden on parents and to equalize out-of-pocket expenditures across families at different income levels. High-quality care is critical to support both children's healthy development and gender equality. In the absence of high-quality options, parents—particularly mothers—face more difficult tradeoffs in their employment decisions. And in the absence of stringent standards for professional training and compensation, child care professionals who are overwhelmingly women will command little status and low pay. To avoid penalizing children, and discouraging parents from using care, this care must be available for all children regardless of their parents' income and employment status. Care can and should be provided in a variety of settings that are publicly subsidized.

First, government would establish child-based entitlements to early education and care at the national level. This puts the onus of assuring the availability of care on the government. Because many parents will choose to be the primary caregivers during the first months after childbirth or adoption, there is a need for limited amounts of care for infants under the age of one, modest amounts of toddler care for children until the age of two-and-a-half or three, and more extensive all-day care for three- and four-year-old preschool-aged children, and before- and after-school care after children enter school at age five or six.

Second, these programs would be financed at the national level to equalize access to care and to reduce out-of-pocket costs for families. To contain public costs, government could assume 80 percent of total costs (about the European

mean), paid with general revenues. The remaining 20 percent of costs would be covered through a uniform system of parental fees, adjusted to family income and exempting the poorest families entirely. Care could be financed directly, through public programs staffed by public caregivers and teachers, or through subsidies to private child care, preschool, and after-school programs.

Third, care would be provided through multiple venues to give parents a broad choice of arrangements and caregivers. Parents' preferences for care arrangements vary with the ages of their children and with their own family and cultural beliefs. A fully developed system of care would allow parents to choose among small family-like settings, center-based programs, and school-like educational programs. To maintain high standards of quality across diverse settings, government would set and actively monitor compliance with quality standards. The European models suggest that national standards can be combined with local, community- or program-level adaptations to provide consistent quality that is responsive to family preferences. The most crucial inputs into program quality are staff education, training, and commitment to caregiving work. These caregiver features are, in turn, dependent on wages, benefits, and working conditions that attract and retain high-quality workers. Along with protection of health, safety, and, where appropriate, program content, consistent and high standards for compensation and working conditions are essential.

Finally, child care, preschool, and school schedules would be matched to parents' working hours. Schools and early childhood education and care services meet the needs of children and parents only when they fit the working hours of employed parents. For parents working a standard-hour week, the continuity of the day and the hours of operation for child care centers and schools are crucial. For parents working nonstandard hours and shifts, alternative forms of service delivery would be an essential component of a diverse delivery system.

FROM CONCEPTION TO PRACTICE:
POLICY CONFIGURATIONS IN SIX EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

As we noted in the introduction to this article, we have studied and compared work–family reconciliation models in detail in a number of rich countries, and across the fifty U.S. states as well. We have assessed work–family policies in considerable detail in fourteen countries, including the United States, Canada, and several European countries. In other research projects, we have studied elements of work–family reconciliation policies in nearly twenty-five countries. For this article, we focus on six countries—Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, and France—that have policies that serve as models for our policy blueprint and illustrate important institutional details about their design.

Although our overarching aim here is to consider policy designs free of the constraints of existing practices, we consider the details of policy design in

these six countries for two reasons. One is simply to demonstrate that policy elements that support our Real Utopia are in the realm of possibility. While our proposed policy package is not fully operational anywhere, elements are in place in all of these countries. The second is to illuminate the importance of the details of policy design. If “god is in the details” anywhere, it is surely in work–family policy design. A generous family-leave policy could encourage or outright discourage gender equality in take-up, depending on the eligibility, benefit structure, and financing designs. A working-time policy that raises the quantity, but not the remuneration, of part-time work could inadvertently worsen working parents’ financial outcomes. A child care policy that makes child care widely available but neglects its quality could have harmful effects on children and child care workers alike. In this section, we synthesize the policies operating in these six countries, to sharpen our understanding of the realities of policy provision in these three crucial areas.

Before we turn to the details of policy designs, it is important to stress that the nature and generosity of work–family policies operating in these countries, and in all countries, may have been adopted for a variety of reasons. We focus on the potential for these policies to reconcile concerns about work, family, and gender equality, but many were adopted to address other goals—such as raising fertility, alleviating labor shortages, attaining full employment, or preventing poverty. In many countries, the factors that motivate family policy formation lack political cohesion and shift over time. We do not imply that observing these policy designs in practice, at one point in time, reveals the social and political forces that led to their enactment.¹⁹ We argue instead that these policies can have positive effects on gender equality and on work and family balance regardless of the political motivation for their initial adoption.

We also recognize that some of the countries that have adopted these work–family policies still have particularly high rates of occupational gender segregation and that some of this may be an unintended consequence of these very policies. These policies could have deleterious effects on women’s advancement in the workplace if employers believe that it is costly to them when workers take up leave and other options *and* if they believe that women are much more likely than men to take up the available rights and services. However, it does not follow that implementing similar policies in other settings would necessarily have the same consequences. Moreover, any gendered effects of these policies, including “statistical discrimination” practiced against women applicants and workers, will erode if and when men take up their rights in substantially larger numbers.

Paid Family Leave

All six of these countries have national laws governing paid family leave. While the systems vary in a number of ways, they share several common

features. First, in all of these countries, national maternity-leave policies grant nearly all employed mothers several weeks or months of job security and wage replacement around the time of childbirth or adoption. Second, maternity-leave benefits are supplemented by parental leaves that provide mothers *and* fathers periods of paid leave during children's preschool years. Third, leave policies promote gender equality by securing some rights and benefits for fathers and—arguably, with the exception of France—by incorporating policy elements that encourage fathers to use the benefits to which they are entitled. Finally, in each of these countries, these leave schemes are financed through social insurance mechanisms, to distribute the costs across society, to minimize the burden on individual employers and, in turn, to remove incentives for employers to discriminate against potential leave-takers.²⁰

The Nordic countries—Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and (to a lesser extent) Finland—provide generous paid-leave benefits for mothers. Figure 2 synthesizes the program rules into total weeks of full-time wage replacement available to mothers, assuming that mothers take all of the leave available to them through both maternity and parental leave. Family-leave policies in these countries offer mothers the equivalent of about thirty to forty-two weeks of leave with full pay, typically up to an earnings cap.^{21,22} These countries achieve high levels of provision through various mechanisms. In Norway and Sweden, maternity and parental leave are blended into a single program that grants couples an allocation of about a year to be shared between them; wage replacement is high for the whole period, at 80 to 100 percent. Finland and Denmark offer eighteen weeks of maternity pay (at about two-thirds pay, on average), followed by separate parental-leave options that couples may allocate to the mother if they choose. In Denmark, collective agreements compel many employers to “top up” public benefits so that, in practice, most workers receive their full pay.

To contain costs, benefits are limited or capped for the highest-earning mothers. Finland, for example, reduces the replacement rate stringently as earnings rise. Norway and Sweden place caps on covered earnings, but the caps are set high—respectively, at about 1.9 to 2.2 times average earnings among mothers of working age, including both part-time and full-time workers. Earnings caps result in a progressive benefit structure and restrain program expenditures; when caps are set high, most mothers and their families are protected from substantial losses in economic security during leave periods.

More modest but still substantial public-leave benefits are available to mothers in Belgium and France, which grant employed mothers in the range of twelve to sixteen weeks of full-time pay. In these countries, maternity benefits are generally paid at high rates, 80 to 100 percent of wages, and for about three to five months. These countries also set caps on maximum covered earnings; in France, for example, maternity pay in France is capped at about 1.2 times average mothers' earnings.

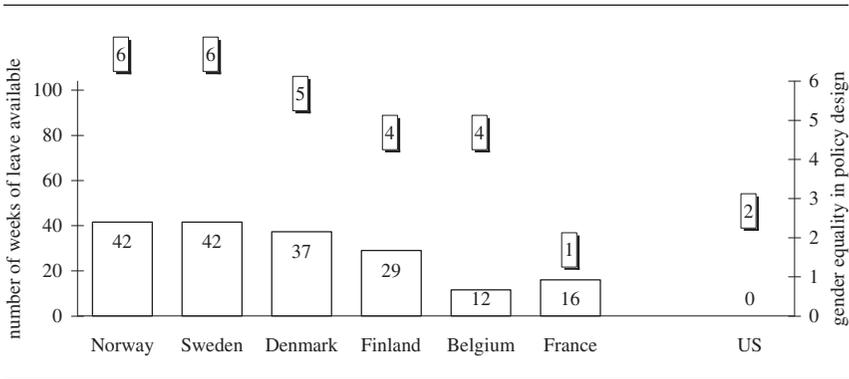


Figure 2. Family leave policy: Generosity of maternity leave and gender equality in policy design (approximately 2000).

Note: The values inside the boxes are the scores on the gender.

The Nordic countries provide especially generous rights and benefits. Most employed parents have the right to take relatively long periods of leave from one to three years, and they receive about two-thirds or more of their wages during most or all of their leave periods with caps for high earners. Denmark and Sweden allow parents to take their allotted paid leaves in increments until the child is eight years old. Norway and Sweden allow parents to combine pro-rated leaves with part-time employment, and Finland and Norway permit parents to use a portion of their leave benefits to purchase private child care instead. Although parental-leave periods are relatively long in Belgium and France as well—especially in France, which pays portions of a three-year leave—wage replacement rates are much lower than in the Nordic countries. In these countries, parents may claim relatively modest, flat-rate benefits.

The policy-making bodies of the European Union (EU) have played a role in standardizing and expanding parental-leave programs across these countries. In 1995, the EU enacted a Directive on Parental Leave and Leave for Family Reasons.²³ This Directive required that member countries enact measures that provide men and women workers with at least three months of paid or unpaid parental leave, as distinct from maternity leave, following the birth of a child until a given age of up to eight years. The Directive also required that workers be protected against dismissal for pursuing parental leave and it upheld the right to return to the same or a similar job.

Although none of the countries in our study have achieved gender equality in leave usage, several are taking steps to increase fathers' use of leave benefits. The most straightforward instrument is high wage-replacement rates. In the absence of full wage replacement, it often makes economic sense for couples to decide that the mother should withdraw from the labor market. Providing non-transferable leaves can keep men from simply allocating their leave time to their

female partners. “Use or lose” provisions can also increase the incentives for fathers to make use of leave because time that is not taken by the father is lost to the family.

Our six model countries vary considerably in the extent to which they have actively incorporated these gender egalitarian strategies. The strength of gender egalitarian policy design features are reported in Figure 2, in the small boxes, using a six-point scale. We assigned policy systems one point on our “gender equality scale” if they offer any paid paternity leave, two points if fathers have nontransferable leave rights (either “use or lose” portions of share-able leave or individual entitlements) and up to three additional points depending on wage replacement (three points if benefits are wage-related and at 80 percent or higher, two points if benefits are wage-related but at less than 80 percent, and one point if benefits are paid but only at a flat rate).

Three of the Nordic countries—Sweden, Norway, and Denmark—stand out on multiple fronts. Fathers are eligible for more benefits, and incentives were added during the 1990s to encourage them to take them up. In each of these countries, “share-able” family leaves are lengthened if fathers take some portion—two weeks in Denmark and four in Norway and Sweden. If these weeks are not taken by the father, they are lost to the family. Although modest in duration, these so-called “daddy quotas” send a signal that paternal leave-taking is valued and encouraged. After their introduction in Norway in 1993, fathers’ take-up rose sharply.²⁴ Incentives for Norwegian and Swedish fathers to take leave are further strengthened by the high replacement rates and, for Danish fathers, by the fully individualized entitlement for the “child care leave” that follows parental leave. Finland lags behind its Nordic counterparts with the absence of “daddy days” but grants fathers a comparatively generous eighteen days of paternity leave.²⁵ Belgium also incorporates elements that encourage men’s leave-taking; the leave program offers some paid paternity leave (although less than a week) and some nontransferable longer-term paid leave. However, the low parental-leave replacement rate is a counterbalancing disincentive to fathers’ take-up. France’s leave scheme (as of 2000) contained virtually no features designed to pull men into leave-taking.

Although financing mechanisms vary, all six of these countries finance these leave policies primarily through social insurance schemes. That means that benefits are funded by employee and employer contributions, often supplemented by general tax revenues. Typically, maternity leave is paid out of social-insurance funds designated for sickness and/or medical payments although, in some cases, such as Belgium, it is paid out from funds that include other major social-insurance programs. Parental leave, when paid, is usually financed out of the same funds as maternity benefits, although some countries finance parental leave entirely from general revenues.

These countries do not rely on individual families or employers to finance leaves. Where social insurance financing does depend heavily on firms’ contributions,

contributions are independent of employees' usage rates. Social-insurance financing distributes the burden across employees' working years, among parents and non-parents, between leave-takers and non-leave-takers, and across enterprises as well. These financing mechanisms, especially where supplemented by substantial contributions from general tax revenues, reduce the risk for individual families and individual employers. They reduce employers' resistance and lessen incentives to discriminate against potential leave-takers.

The Regulation of Working Time

All six of these European countries have implemented working time measures that limit work hours and raise the availability and quality of reduced-hour and part-time work. Again, the systems that shape working time vary across these countries, but they share at least three common features. First, working time measures limit *weekly* employment hours, setting normal working time in the range of thirty-five to thirty-nine hours. Second, policies that grant paid days off assure parents at least four weeks each year of unbroken time with their families. Third, labor market measures aim to improve the quality of part-time work and to raise its availability.

In all six countries, working hours are shaped primarily through setting standards for *normal* weekly hours (above which overtime pay is usually required) as well as limits on *maximum* allowable hours (above which workers cannot be compelled to work). As of approximately 2000, normal full-time weekly hours are set at levels below forty hours in all six countries—thirty-five hours in France, and between thirty-seven and thirty-nine hours in the other five.

The incidence of very long hours—more than, say, fifty hours a week—is also limited in these countries, as each has enacted measures capping maximum weekly hours at forty-eight hours per week. As with parental leave, a degree of homogeneity across these countries, and throughout Europe, stems from the 1993 EU Directive on Working Time, which requires member states to “take the measures necessary to ensure that, in keeping with the need to protect the safety and health of workers . . . working time for each seven-day period, including overtime, does not exceed 48 hours.” Countries are permitted to limit weekly hours “by means of laws, regulations or administrative provisions or by collective agreements or agreements between the two sides of industry.”²⁶ The Directive stipulates that employers may not compel workers to work longer hours, nor subject them “to any detriment” for refusing longer hours.

In addition, these six countries have all adopted policies that provide extended periods of paid time off for workers. As with part-time work, the EU has influenced policy developments across Europe. The 1993 EU Directive on Working Time stipulated that employees be granted not less than four weeks of paid days

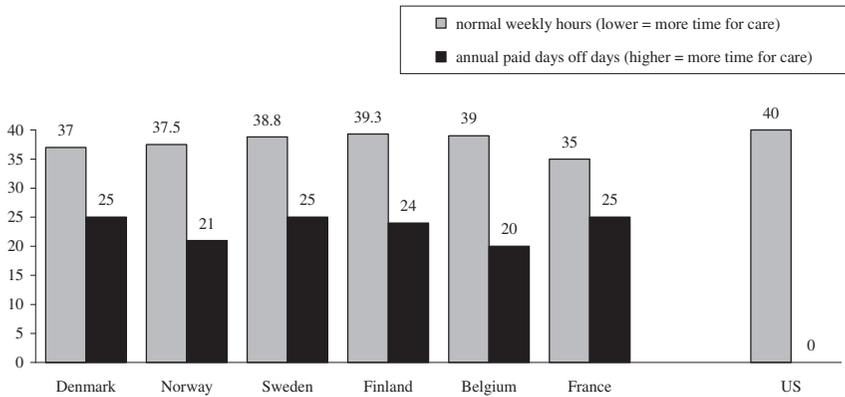


Figure 3. Working time regulations: Normal weekly hours (overtime threshold) and annual paid days off (minimum number of days) (approximately 2000).

off per year. All of the European countries, including these six, have codified at least that much paid time off in their laws, with about half requiring a fifth week; in some countries, collective agreements add even more time. Approximately five weeks of paid time off are now standard in Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and France, and about four weeks in Norway and Belgium. And changes continue to unfold; after 2000, collectively bargained rights to days off increased in three of these Nordic countries and in France (see Figure 3).

A third set of working-time measures complement those that influence work hours and days directly: policies that aim to raise the quality of part-time work and those that grant various rights to work part-time. The primary vehicle for raising the quality of part-time work is the implementation of pay and benefit parity laws that protect part-time workers. The main strategy for raising the availability of part-time work is the granting of some form of a right to work (or to request to work) part-time. These measures enable full-time workers who wish to reduce their hours the option to do so and, depending on the law, they create new opportunities for labor-market entrants who might otherwise refrain from employment.

Policies aimed at improving part-time work are now widespread throughout Europe. A crucial force behind these measures is the 1997 EU Directive on Part-Time Work, whose official purpose was “to eliminate discrimination against part-time workers and to improve the quality of part-time work.”²⁶ All six of these European countries have implemented the Directive via some mix of legislation and collective agreements. The Directive requires that member states enact measures prohibiting employers from treating part-time workers less favorably than “comparable full-time workers,” unless they demonstrate that this is objectively justifiable. The national measures address various combinations of pay equity,

social security and occupational benefits, training and promotion opportunities, and bargaining rights.

The EU Part-Time Directive also urged, but did not require, member states to eliminate obstacles that limit opportunities for part-time work and instructed employers to “give consideration” to workers who request transfers between part-time and full-time work as their personal and family needs change. Long before the Part-Time Directive, Sweden had already set the gold standard on the right to part-time work. Since 1978 Swedish parents have had the right to work six hours a day (at pro-rated pay) until their children turn age eight. In the aftermath of the Directive, several European countries added new rights for workers, in most cases instituting rights to part-time or flexible schedules. In most cases, employers have the right to refuse but refusals are subject to review.²⁷

Early Childhood Education and Care

Like their paid leave and working-time measures, early childhood education and care (ECEC) policies vary across these six countries, but provisions in all six of them share common features. First, publicly supported care serves a large proportion of infants and toddlers while parents are at the workplace; full-day preschool programs enroll nearly all children between about age three and the start of public school. Second, government measures assure that early childhood education and care is affordable. Third, government policies assure high-quality services. And, fourth, early childhood education and care workers are well trained and well compensated.

Across our six comparison countries, two overarching systems are in place—and each provides nearly universal access to publicly supported care. The Nordic countries operate integrated “EduCare” systems, and Belgium and France have dual systems of early child care and later preschool.

The integrated systems in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden provide the most extensive access to publicly supported care.²⁸ Public systems under the authority of national social-welfare or educational authorities serve children from the end of parental-leave periods until the start of primary school. Younger children are cared for in centers or supervised family child-minder arrangements; older children may spend all or part of their day in preschool programs. These systems are most notable for extending a nearly universal entitlement for care (with a modest parental co-payment) during the years before the start of primary school and for the integration of care with early educational services—hence the term “EduCare,” which captures the dual focus on care and education. Parents have a right to a place in a public child care setting and the regular use of fully private care is rare. In Sweden, for example, since 1995, all children have had an entitlement to public or private (but publicly subsidized) child care from age one to the age of twelve. Child care entitlements were initially linked to parents’

employment status; they have recently been extended to children whose parents are unemployed, home on family leave, or otherwise out of the labor force. In Finland and Denmark, all children have a right to care regardless of their parents' employment status.

The Nordic systems serve nearly all children in their countries. In these countries, with generous maternity- and parental-leave policies, children are generally cared for at home during the first months of life. Between one- and three-quarters of children in the one- to two-year age group are in publicly supported care. Among children in the three- to five-year-old age group, three-quarters or more are in public care. In the last year before primary school, nearly all children are in public care (see Figure 4).

Outside the Nordic region, the systems in Belgium and France stand out as well. Provision of early child care is moderate for the younger children, as neither country provides child care as an entitlement before the start of public preschool. Spaces are available for some young children in systems under the supervision of social welfare authorities—public child care centers or supervised child-minder arrangements—with income-adjusted parental fees. Space is limited, however, and may be targeted to families with special economic or social needs. Child-based entitlements for care commence with enrollment in preschool school—the *ecole maternelle* in France and French-speaking Belgium and *kleuterschool* in Flemish-speaking Belgium.

Overall, Belgium and France provide generous but less consistent support relative to the Nordic systems. Publicly supported care is available for only about 20 to 40 percent of the under-threes and is more highly targeted to needy families. As a result, families rely more heavily on private care arrangements for younger children. On the other hand, by the age of two-and-a-half or three, nearly every child in these countries is enrolled in a public preschool program.

Are these services affordable? These six countries have adopted various mechanisms for financing ECEC through the direct provision of public care, cost-sharing with parents through co-payments, and the use of alternative financing mechanisms such as demand-side subsidies and tax benefits.

In the countries providing the most affordable ECEC for families—the integrated systems of the Nordic countries—the primary mechanism is direct provision, funded by a combination of national and municipal taxes, and supplemented by parental co-payments. National tax revenues cover about one-quarter to one-third of the costs of ECEC and municipal governments contribute about one-half. Parent fees cover a capped share of the costs. The parental share varies across countries and with the type of care, averaging about 20 percent. Fees for individual families are calculated on a sliding fee scale and are often waived altogether for low-income families.

The high-provision, dual systems of care in France and Belgium also use direct provision as their primary financing mechanism. Care for younger children is

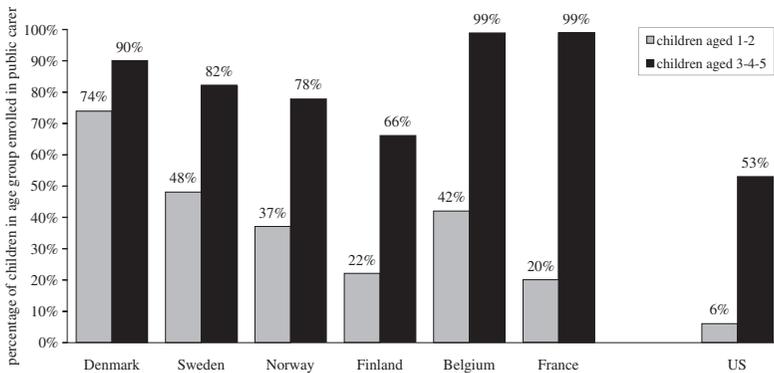


Figure 4. Early childhood education and care (enrollment in publicly provided or publicly financed care (approximately 2000).

financed with a combination of national, regional, and municipal funds and parental fees. Parent fees cover about 17 to 25 percent of the cost of care for children under age three (depending on care arrangements), with parental co-payments set on sliding-fee scales at around 8 to 11 percent of family income. In both countries, employers also contribute a share of the costs. Care for children from about age three to the start of primary school is free to parents. Although public provisions are extensive for children beginning at age two-and-a-half or three, parents do incur private child care costs for younger children and for hours of care outside *ecole* and *kleuterschool*. In both countries, parents can deduct a portion of these out-of-pocket child care expenses from income taxes.

Child care availability and affordability are crucial for families, as is the quality of care. Quality of care is important for parents, whose ability to engage in market work depends on their trust in the care that their children are receiving while they are at the workplace. And quality of care is essential for the healthy development of children. Two key mechanisms employed by governments to assure quality are staffing structures and staff preparation; of these, staff preparation is arguably more important. Care providers who have higher levels of education, more extensive training in ECEC, and longer tenure in the field provide better quality care for children. Compensation plays an important indirect role: higher salaries attract and retain more qualified workers to ECEC settings. ECEC compensation is equally central to the achievement of gender equality in market opportunities and wages because the child care workforce is overwhelmingly female.

The systems operating in these six countries all perform well with respect to the quality of care that they provide and in their levels of compensation for the ECEC workforce. The integrated “EduCare” systems in the Nordic countries set the highest educational requirements for workers in both child care centers and preschool programs. All but Finland require bachelor-level university degrees

for both child care workers and preschool teachers; Finland requires a university degree for preschool teachers and a three-year vocational or polytechnic degree for child care workers. In Sweden, 98 percent of Swedish child care workers have specialized certification or university degrees.

In the dual and early-school-enrollment systems in France and Belgium, variation in staff preparation is more pronounced across ECEC settings. Family day care workers often have little formal training. Staff in child care centers (who deal primarily with infants and toddlers younger than age three) are typically required to complete one- or two-year postsecondary vocational programs. In contrast, teachers in preschool classrooms serving children from about age three until the start of school have the same levels of university training as teachers in the regular primary school system.

The high-quality of ECEC staff is, not surprisingly, reflected in relatively high rates of compensation across these countries. To facilitate comparisons, we calculated the usual rate of pay for the equivalent of full-time ECEC workers in each country. Because usual wages vary across countries, we compared these annualized salaries to the average wage of all women workers in the same country. By this metric, the compensation for child care providers in all six of these countries is impressive. Workers in the integrated Nordic systems earn very close to the national average for all women workers in these countries, and considerably more than the average in Denmark. Workers in the dual systems of Belgium and France are also well compensated—particularly teachers in the *ecole*, who earn substantially more than average women's wages in these countries.

CONSIDERING THE OUTCOMES: WHAT DO WE KNOW?

The work–family reconciliation policies we describe have been effective on a number of dimensions. In the Nordic countries, virtually all employed women have access to periods of leave with wage replacement and couples can share as much as a full year of parenting leave at 80 percent or more of their regular wages. A substantial share of children aged one and two are in high-quality child care settings and nearly all children are in such care as they approach school age. In these countries, as in France and Belgium, care is either free or very low cost for parents and it is provided by professionals with high levels of education who earn wages that are comparable or even higher than other workers—two of the key indicators of high-quality care.

Other outcomes of work–family reconciliation policies are more difficult to observe. Evidence about the effect of various gender-equalizing provisions on men's take-up of parenting leave is exceedingly scarce. We do know that men's likelihood of taking leave lags behind women's everywhere, and the gender gap with respect to total amount of time taken is even larger. Although substantial gaps in leave usage persist even in the Nordic countries, fathers' use of leave in

these countries is well above that of men in other European countries. DeHenau reports, for example, that in Sweden, as of 2002, 78 percent of first-time fathers take some leave, compared to 90 percent of mothers.²⁹ But while Swedish fathers account for nearly half of all leave takers, they still take less than one-fifth of the total leave days claimed, probably because of the brief duration of Sweden's nontransferable leaves for men. Norway's implementation of "use-or-lose" leave in Norway has been associated with a sharp increase in fathers' take-up, from less than 5 percent to more than 70 percent following implementation.³⁰ The introduction of so-called "daddy days" in Sweden has had less effect, possibly because fathers' take-up was already relatively high.³¹

Do these policies move us closer to the Real Utopia of gender-egalitarian caregiving and employment? Table 1 compares these six countries to the United States, which has been an international laggard in these work-family policies. The United States has a weak national family leave law (the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993) that provides some parents limited rights to periods of unpaid leave to take care of infants and other family members, but there is no national law requiring paid leave. The standard work week remains set at forty hours, a level established more than six decades ago, and American working-time law is silent on maximum work hours, on equal treatment for part-time workers, on rights to part-time or flexible scheduling, and on the right to a minimum number of paid days off per year. The public child care system in the United States is among the least developed in the industrialized world, providing modest tax credits for middle-earning families and child care subsidies for only an estimated 15 percent of eligible working poor families.

The indicators in Table 1 show that all of these countries are still far from gender equality in earnings.³² Mothers account for only about one-third of parental earnings in Norway, Sweden, Belgium, and France—and as much as 37 to 38 percent in Denmark and Finland.³³ But mothers in the United States, in the aggregate, take home 28 percent of parental earnings, so they are even more economically dependent on their partners. Comparable data are scarce on gender divisions in unpaid work, but we have some evidence from cross-national time-use data. In the three countries for which we have data—Finland, Norway, and Sweden—fathers assume a somewhat larger share of unpaid work.

Workers in these six European countries log fewer hours at the workplace each year than do their counterparts in the largely unregulated American setting. Average annual hours worked in the Nordic countries, and in Belgium and France, range from 1380 in Denmark to 1727 in Finland, while employed American workers average more than 1,800 hours annually—among the longest work hours in the industrialized world.

On average, parents in dual-earner couples work fewer hours for pay, each week, across these comparison countries than do their counterparts in the United States. American couples with children spend eighty hours per week in

employment, slightly more than their counterparts in Finland, Belgium, and France who log between seventy-six to seventy-eight hours. Swedish dual-earner couples with children work far less—only sixty hours per week. However, the averages are somewhat deceptive because the distribution of work hours is much more dispersed in the United States. Nearly two-thirds of couples in the United States work for pay for more than eighty hours per week, as compared to less than one-third in these comparison countries.

Parents in all countries experience strain related to time constraints, but the number of parents who report that they want to spend more time with their families is, in general, lower in Europe. The figure is 72 to 83 percent of fathers and mothers in these six countries, but 95 percent of fathers in the United States and 90 percent of mothers respond affirmatively to this question.

Finally, there is the impact of these policies on fertility. Researchers, politicians, and journalists worldwide have paid much attention to the low and falling fertility rates seen in much of Europe, most notably in eastern and southern Europe. As Peter McDonald and other researchers have increasingly argued, fertility is falling in those national settings where women experience, or perceive, the most hardship in combining parenting and employment. Faced with the choice between parenthood and quality employment, many women have only one child or forgo childbearing altogether. But as Table 1 shows, fertility rates in these six comparison countries are among the highest in Europe.³⁴

What do we make of these outcomes? Correlations between policies and outcomes cannot establish causation, which might run in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, we would propose a cautious but optimistic interpretation of Table 1. These six countries appear to have made progress toward the key elements of our Real Utopia: gender equality, more parental time for caregiving, and reduction of work–family conflicts.

UNWANTED CONSEQUENCES AND INEVITABLE TRADEOFFS: REFLECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Public policies always have complex consequences, which may be unintended, unwanted, and unanticipated. In this closing section, we consider three potential negative consequences of our proposal that critics are bound to raise. First, would the successful implementation of policies that reduce working time lead to a substantial loss of income, and concomitantly a reduction in the standard of living? Second, would the implementation of policies that reshape the caring practices of parents—and the allocation of time between women and men—necessarily limit the “choices” available to individual women and men? And if such limitations occur, can they be justified? Third, if we implement policies that enable parents to work at reduced hours, part-time, or intermittently, and

Table 1
Key Outcomes

	Gender Equality			Time at Work			Compatibility of Work and Family		
	Mothers' Earnings as a Share of Parents' Earnings (%)	Fathers' Hours in Unpaid Work as a Share of Parents' Hours in Unpaid Work (%)	Annual Hours: All Workers	Weekly Hours, Average: Dual-Earner Couples	Weekly Hours, working > 80 Hours: Dual-Earner Couples	Fathers Report Wanting to Spend More Time with Family (%)	Mothers Report Wanting to Spend More Time with Family (%)	Total Fertility Rate	
Denmark	38	—	1,504	—	—	80	72	1.8	
Finland	37	33	1,727	78	29	—	—	1.7	
Norway	33	35	1,380	—	—	80	74	1.8	
Sweden	34	36	1,625	69	6	83	82	1.6	
Belgium	34	—	1,530	77	34	—	—	1.7	
France	32	—	1,500	76	32	—	—	1.9	
United States	28	31	1,834	80	64	95	90	2.0	

Note: — means "not available."

Total Fertility Rate: The number of children that would be born alive to each woman if she were to live to the end of her childbearing years and if, throughout her reproductive years, the age-specified rates for the specified year remained unchanged.

women disproportionately take up these options, will we cement existing gender differentials into place or, even worse, create new forms of gender inequality?

The Prospect of Income Losses

Critics of European models of social protection, which often include limits on work hours, frequently observe that shorter average work hours will lower the standard of living. These critics often point to the United States as the exemplar of an alternative model of a minimally regulated, highly productive economy. As the argument goes, long work hours in the United States may require some sacrifices by workers and their families, but, overall, their work hours enable them to enjoy a higher standard of living.

The United States does indeed rank near the top of the OECD countries in per-capita income. In 2000, GDP per capita in the United States—nearly US\$36,000—was well higher than in any of our six comparison countries, where per capita GDP ranged from US\$27,000 to \$32,000.³⁵ And, indeed, vis-à-vis the OECD as a whole, nearly half of the income advantage in the United States is because of Americans' relatively long work hours. As Mishel et al. note, "...an important portion of the apparently higher standard of living in the United States comes not from working more efficiently than other comparable economies, but simply from working longer."³⁶

Others scholars argue persuasively that it is misleading to measure "standard of living" without taking into account time investments. As Lars Osberg, a Canadian economist, has argued: "'quality of life' or 'economic well-being' may be hard to define precisely, but most would agree that they depend on both an individual's income level and the discretionary time they have in which to enjoy it."³⁷

Even though workers in the United States, on average, take home high incomes compared to workers elsewhere, that economic payoff is compromised by the family time poverty that enables it. Moreover, time poverty might help to explain why the United States is ranked only eighth among the OECD countries in GDP per worker-hour. In fact, per-hour output in the United States is only average, relative to these six comparison countries with shorter work hours. It is not implausible that if employees in the United States were able to shift some hours from work to family, there could be an offsetting rise in hourly output.

The Question of "Choice"

The policies in our blueprint are designed specifically to advance two goals. The first is to give parents realistic options for combining employment and caregiving, and the second is to encourage gender equality in engagements in work and care. Promoting gender equality requires building in policy-design elements that are intended to reshape parents' caring practices and employment behavior.

Would this policy package, in fact, limit parents' "choices"? We can imagine alternative approaches that, at least in the short term, give parents more freedom to use government resources to support their preferred employment and caregiving arrangements. Couples might be given twelve months of shareable leave, for example, instead of separate, nontransferable rights to six months each. Rather than financing and regulating early childhood education and care programs, government could give parents cash subsidies with which to purchase private care. The entire package of support might even be "cashed out" and provided to parents as an unrestricted benefit that they could use as they wish—to replace mothers' wages, purchase child care, or even save for future expenses.

We think it is important to consider individual preferences and choices when designing policies that affect the intimate sphere of family life, especially in societies that are increasingly diverse and multicultural. While we recognize that our proposed policies do not grant parents unrestricted options, we would argue that the policies that we describe actually give parents considerable flexibility and room for individual choice. And they grant parents with limited means "choices" that they would not otherwise have.

Moreover, the European policies we are emulating have been structured to allow individuals and communities considerable room to maneuver. In the case of family leave, for example, parents in several of the Nordic countries have a nationally established and financed entitlement to a set period of leave. They have enormous flexibility, however, in scheduling their use of that leave. In Finland, for example, they may even elect to take their benefits in the form of either leave or subsidized child care. Choice is protected in early childhood education and care as well, through the local design and delivery of program services. The EduCare systems in the Nordic countries, for example, set overarching objectives at the national level but tailor specific program designs at the community level.

We would also argue that, given existing economic and gender inequalities, these work–family benefits may offer many parents more realistic "choices" than less restricted forms of assistance. Parents may want to allocate substantial time to the care of their infant children but, without explicit rights to take job-protected leaves or reduce working hours, they are often unable to do so without losing their jobs or sacrificing pay and benefits. Mothers and fathers may want to share leave entitlements equally but, in the absence of high wage replacements and individual leave rights, be unable to forfeit the income and career advancement of the higher earner, most often the father. Parents may want to enroll their children in high-quality developmentally enhancing care but, in the absence of stringent public regulation and oversight of quality, be unable to find and purchase such care even with substantial financial resources. These and other limits on parental "choice" are not easily alleviated with other forms of assistance, such as unrestricted cash transfers.

Yet, it is undeniable that some of the policy features designed to shift gender divisions of labor do limit parents' options. In perhaps the most dramatic example,

allowing parents to fully transfer their leave rights and benefits to one another gives some families options that individual nontransferable rights do not. Is disallowing families from taking up those options justifiable? While we recognize that this policy design creates a very real tradeoff—in a sense, between some forms of “choice” and the promotion of gender equality—we argue that it is justifiable, especially when we take a longer-term view. Over time, these restrictions create incentives for both mothers and fathers to engage more fully in caregiving and waged labor which is essential to transform gendered norms about both caregiving and employment.

If these deeply embedded norms are to be changed, mothers need both the opportunity and the social supports to engage on equal terms with men in these spheres. Similarly, to change norms about the role of men in the private sphere of caregiving, fathers need incentives to shift a greater portion of their time and labor from the market to the home. Gender-egalitarian work–family reconciliation policies have the potential to advance both individual well-being and more far-reaching transformations in social and gender norms.

New Forms of Gender Inequality

Strengthening reduced-hour work and extending family leave raise thorny questions about gender equality. If shorter full-time hours, part-time work, and family leave continue to be taken up disproportionately by women, extending these options may free up more parental caregiving time, but deepen gender divisions of labor in both paid and unpaid work.

It is an open question whether men will eventually take advantage of shorter hours and leave options as often as women do. British sociologist Catherine Hakim has long argued that while many women are career oriented, substantial numbers are not and their relatively low employment hours reflect preferences, not constraints or institutional factors.³⁸ Our view is that the intrinsic preferences of women *and men* cannot be identified until gendered expectations and institutional constraints erode. It follows that the long-term prospect for men’s take-up of these arrangements is nearly impossible to predict.

Part of the logic of improving the quality of part-time work is indeed to draw more men into it. And, the evidence shows, men’s engagement in part-time work increased in the 1990s in a number of European countries, including Belgium and France.³⁹ Recent survey results indicate that a substantial majority of these male part-time workers, like their female counterparts, are voluntarily working part-time, which suggests that new options for reduced-hour work may be a factor underlying men’s increased engagement in part-time work.

Nevertheless, part-time work remains overwhelmingly feminized in most industrialized countries. Even if part-time work remains feminized, improving its quality and compensation still has some gender-equalizing potential both by drawing more women into paid work and by increasing their pay. Ultimately,

however, the effect of improving the availability and quality of part-time work remains an empirical question and one that calls for continuing study.

From a gender-equality perspective, it seems likely that reducing *full-time* weekly hours is a more promising strategy than raising the quality and availability of shorter-hour work. Mutari and Figart make this argument persuasively:

The alternative to policies that accommodate work hours to the gendered division of labor are policies that change the male model of full-time employment. Reductions in the standard work week are a long-term solution for achieving gender equity in the labor market and the redistribution of domestic labor. . . . [A] shorter work week can enable both men and women to participate in the labor market on an equal basis.⁴⁰

In fact, shortening the full-time week, as a gender-parity strategy, seems to be gaining ground in a number of European countries. Fagnani and Letablier observe that in France, where part-time work has always been viewed with skepticism, the French thirty-five-hour law “had the [explicit] objective . . . of improving equality between men and women.”⁴¹ The effects of reducing normal full-time hours on gendered distributions ought to be continually monitored wherever policies with this goal are implemented.

Extending paid family leave raises parallel concerns about possibly worsening gender inequalities. Here, some lessons are clear. Family-leave policies may be generous or gender-egalitarian in design, or both. These are distinct dimensions, and hopes for increased engagement in leave-taking by men rest, to a substantial degree, on the continued incorporation of such design elements as high wage-replacement rates, high-earnings caps, and individual, nontransferable, entitlements for men.

Concerns that work–family policies might in fact worsen gender gaps in employment extend to the demand side of the labor market. Some of the Nordic countries report relatively high levels of occupational segregation, which are usually attributed to employers’ resistance to hiring or promoting women into more demanding positions. Although social insurance financing can lessen the costs of leave-taking for employers, they must still manage workers’ absences. Increasingly, critics of European policy models argue that generous work–family policies, in the end, both lower the “glass ceiling” for women and make it more impenetrable. According to these critics, while the absence of work–family supports may create strains for some women workers, women in settings with meager work–family provisions are more likely to reach senior positions. Employers in policy-rich countries statistically discriminate against women, believing that they are more likely to engage in various forms of employment cutbacks than are their male counterparts, even if both women and men are equally entitled. In settings with few policies operating, the incentive to statistically discriminate is reduced because women are, in effect, forced to behave like men. While there is some empirical evidence in support of these conclusions, the case has by no

means been closed. But the constraints that women face, originating from the demand-side of the labor market, will be lessened if large numbers of men join them in taking up various family-oriented employment options. Whether men will do so depends, in part, on the incentives built into policy designs.

In the end, implementing the policy blueprint we have laid out involves a high-stakes gamble. If, in the long term, large numbers of women avail themselves of the options for shorter employment hours and periodic leaves while most men forgo them, then the gendered division of labor will indeed persist or even deepen. Because we cannot predict the future, why not implement this blueprint and see what happens? If these policies are implemented and, years later, parents' caregiving practices and gendered divisions of labor remain largely unaltered, then we will have to return to the drawing board.

NOTES

1. There are many terms in circulation that are intended to encompass these policies—including “family-friendly policies,” “woman-friendly policies,” and “work-life policies.” We prefer the term “work–family reconciliation policies,” as it is both precise and inclusive. Thus, we use that term here and in our other work, often shortened to “work–family policies.”

2. There is no universally agreed-upon group of “industrialized” or “developed” countries, although these terms are widely used to refer to the highest-income countries in the world, generally captured by GDP per capita. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (the OECD)—an organization of countries with “democratic governments and market economies”—was founded in 1961 by a group of twenty countries, including eighteen European countries and Canada and the United States. Throughout this article, we concentrate our analyses and policy recommendations on these approximately twenty countries, and we refer to them interchangeably as the “rich,” “high-income,” “industrialized,” or “OECD” countries.

In later years, the OECD added ten more countries, including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, Mexico, and Eastern European countries. While a number of these countries have employment patterns and policy configurations that resemble those in the original twenty, some remain somewhat distinct. So, when we refer to “the OECD countries,” we mean, for the most part, the original founding group of twenty.

3. Although we refer throughout this article to the birth and rearing of children, our argument is intended to include care for adopted children. Issues of gender equality are also particularly acute in the case of single-parent families in which one parent (usually the father) has opted out or been forced out as an economic and care provider. With same-sex couples, there are not the same issues of gendered expectations, yet such families also struggle with balancing work and family obligations.

4. Suzanne M. Bianchi, “Maternal Employment and Time with Children: Dramatic Change or Surprising Continuity?” *Demography* 37, no. 4 (2000): 401–14.

5. Eugene Smolensky and Jennifer A. Gootman, eds., *Working Families and Growing Kids: Caring for Children and Adolescents* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2003): 99–177.

6. Trudie Knijn and Monique Kremer, “Gender and the Caring Dimension of Welfare States: Towards Inclusive Citizenship,” *Social Politics* 4, no. 3 (1997): 328–62.

7. Rosemary Crompton, "Discussion and Conclusions," in *Restructuring Gender Relations and Employment: The Decline of the Male Breadwinner*, ed. R. Crompton, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 202–03.

8. In both the United States and some Southern European countries, other family members provide unpaid child care labor, particularly for young children. Although many observers suggest that this female-dominated "kith-and-kin" care is a viable alternative to parental or substitute care, it is becoming less feasible with increases in women's employment rates.

9. In the European literature on the earner–caregiver society and the associated policy packages, substitute child care often gets less attention than measures freeing up parents' time. However, it is clear that for many European feminists and welfare-state scholars, the state's commitment to providing or financing quality child care is taken as a given. For example, Anne-Lise Ellingsaeter, writing about the "Norwegian worker–caregiver model," describes the core policy package, which includes gender-egalitarian family leave, and the right to reduced-hour work. To that, she adds: "The other main policy measure is access to high-quality public child care. Public daycare plays an important part in the everyday life of parents." See Anne-Lise Ellingsaeter, "Dual Breadwinners Between State and Market" in Crompton, *Restructuring Gender Relations and Employment*, 44.

10. The earner–caregiver model has attracted sustained attention in Europe in recent years, especially among feminist welfare-state scholars (e.g., Ruth Lister and Jane Lewis in the United Kingdom, Birgit Pfau-Effinger in Germany, Anne-Lise Ellingsaeter in Norway, and Diane Sainsbury in Sweden) and, to a lesser extent, in the United States. See, for example, Nancy Fraser's call for men to become "like women are now" (Nancy Fraser, "After the Family Wage: Gender Equity and the Welfare State," *Political Theory* 22, no. 4 [1994]: 591–618).

American scholars have addressed a number of related concerns. There are large and excellent literatures on the "costs of motherhood" (for a review, see Ann Crittenden, *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World Is Still the Least Valued* [New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001]); on the determinants of gender differences in unpaid work in the home (see, for example, Julie Brines, "Economic Dependency, Gender, and the Division of Labor at Home," *American Journal of Sociology* 100, no. 3 [1994]: 652–88; Theodore N. Greenstein, "Economic Dependence, Gender, and the Division of Labor in the Home: A Replication and Extension," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62, no. 2 [2000]: 322–35; and Harriet B. Presser, "Employment Schedules Among Dual-Earner Spouses and the Division of Household Labor by Gender," *American Sociological Review* 59, no. 3 [1994]: 348–64); and on "gendered time" (see Ellen Mutari and Deborah M. Figart, "Europe at a Crossroads: Harmonization, Liberalization, and the Gender of Work Time," *Social Politics* 8, no. 1 [2001]: 36–64). There is also a growing literature on factors that strengthen fathers' engagement with child caregiving (for a review, see William Marsiglio, Paul Amato, Randal D. Day, and Michael E. Lamb, "Scholarship on Fatherhood in the 1990s and Beyond," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62, no. 4 [2000]: 1173–91). Nevertheless, American scholars, on the whole, have not granted the earner–caregiver model the centrality in social theory or in policy analysis that European feminists have.

11. See, for example: Nancy Folbre, "Children as Public Goods," *The American Economic Review* 84, no. 2 (1994): 86–90; and Paula England and Nancy Folbre, "Who Should Pay for the Kids?" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 563, May (1999): 194–207.

12. Several countries also have leave provisions that support and remunerate time spent caring for other family members—including, for example, disabled and elderly adults—but for our purposes, we are focusing on child-related provisions.

13. A large body of research focuses on the impact of leave on women's employment. The evidence clearly indicates that access to relatively short-term leaves has the potential to reduce labor-market inequalities between men and women by facilitating continuous maternal employment, reducing women's turnover, and minimizing wage penalties associated with motherhood. See Jennifer Glass and Lisa Riley, "Family Responsive Policies and Employee Retention Following Childbirth," *Social Forces* 76, no. 4 (1998): 1401–35; Sandra L. Hofferth, "Effects of Public and Private Policies on Working After Childbirth," *Work and Occupations* 23 (1996): 378–404; Jutta M. Joesch, "Paid Leave and the Timing of Women's Employment Before and After Birth," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58 (1997): 1008–21; and Kristen Smith, Barbara Downs, and Martin O'Connell, "Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995," *Household Economic Studies* (2001): 70–79.

It is important to clarify, however, that while shorter-term leaves strengthen women's ties to the labor market, the effects of longer leaves—such as the two- or three-year leaves available in some European countries—are much less advantageous with respect to gender equality. Long-term leaves, paid or unpaid, are more problematic for two related reasons: they may erode human capital and, even more than shorter-term leaves, they are overwhelmingly taken up by women. OECD researchers reviewed the small literature on these two- to three-year leaves. They concluded that "schemes to pay parents to look after their own children at home . . . may encourage labor market detachment if they continue over a long period of time." (See OECD, "Balancing Work and Family Life: Helping Parents into Paid Employment," *Employment Outlook* [Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001]:146). It is not yet clear at what duration leaves switch from being advantageous to disadvantageous to women's labor-market attachment; some researchers place the turn-around point at somewhere between six months and one year.

At the same time, while leave duration is a key variable, other aspects of family-leave policy design, such as the extent to which employers bear the brunt of the financing, may ultimately matter more. If employers are unduly burdened, reductions in demand for female labor may set in with relatively shorter leaves.

14. The question is often raised: "What about single parents?" meaning parents whose children have only one caregiver. Should single parents be entitled to one "share" (six months) or two "shares" (twelve months)? There is a case to be made for either result. One share would equalize, across family types, any employment penalties associated with leave-taking. Single mothers would likely claim the same amount of leave as all other parents. Two shares would equalize the total amount of parental care that young children are likely to receive (approximately one year), regardless of their family structure. We see merit in both arguments and propose a compromise: single parents would be entitled to nine months of fully paid leave.

15. To clarify, many countries' leave provisions are already entirely nontransferable. The United States' Family and Medical Leave Act, for example, grants twelve weeks of leave to new parents; parents cannot transfer any or all of their entitlement to their children's other parent.

16. A reasonable earnings cap might be set at approximately twice the level of average annual earnings. To further ensure progressivity, a portion of high-income recipients' benefits could be taxed.

17. Mutari and Figart, "Europe at a Crossroads," 36.

18. The term "early childhood education and care" is often used to emphasize its dual role as substitute care for parents and education for children. For convenience, we shorthand this as child care in this article. In doing so, we do not mean to imply a different or less educationally enriching form of care.

19. Key facets of work–family policy offerings in these six countries, as of approximately 2000, are synthesized in three figures: Figures 2, 3, and 4. Institutional details underlying these synthetic results are presented in much more detail in Gornick and Meyers, *Families That Work*, 112–235.

20. Although we do not discuss them in this article because of space limitations, each of these countries also provides various kinds of “leave for family reasons.” These leaves grant mothers and fathers time off throughout their children’s lives to attend to short-term and unexpected needs. For details, see Gornick and Meyers, *Families That Work*, 112–46.

21. Figure 2 includes only the *earnings-related components* of family-leave programs (and assumes earnings below the cap). Some of these countries supplement the benefits captured in Figure 2 with additional periods of leave paid at a low flat rate—most substantially in Finland and France. We exclude these low-paid benefits here because, in some cases (such as Finland), the benefits are not conditioned on employment, so characterizing them as wage replacement is not fully accurate. In addition, the program in France is payable only for second and subsequent children. Furthermore, take-up is much lower than in the earnings-related programs, so including them distorts the level of provision upward. Figure 2 also excludes the United States’ Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) programs because they are available in only five states.

22. Mothers in Finland may also collect a low flat-rate benefit (a “home-care” benefit) for about two years following the end of maternity and parental leave, i.e., until the child’s third birthday. The benefit is allowed only if the child is not in public child care. Parents may also choose to use that payment to purchase care from a private child care provider.

23. EU Directives are binding for member countries, and Norway implements them voluntarily.

24. Ellingsaeter, “Dual Breadwinners Between State and Market,” 40–59.

25. In Figure 2, we credited Finland with having a “use-or-lose” component. Although it is not part of parental leave (where the term is generally used), the eighteen-day paternity benefit is, in effect, “use or lose,” as fathers cannot transfer those days to their partners. And its duration approaches that of the “use-or-lose” quotas in Norway and Sweden.

26. Council Directive concerning certain aspects of the organization of working time (1993), <http://www.legislationline.org/legislation.php?tid=99&lid=5651&less=false>.

27. Europa, “The Part-Time Work Directive,” (2004), <http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10416.htm>.

28. Three European countries that are not among our six—Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom—have recently enacted laws providing some form of a right to work part-time or flexible hours. For an evaluation of their implementation and outcomes so far, see: Ariane Hegewisch, “Employers and European Flexible Working Rights: When the Floodgates Were Opened,” *Work Life Law (UC Hastings College of The Law Issue Brief)* Fall (2005).

29. Although Norway also provides extensive public ECEC, the costs of this care fall much more heavily on parents (because of high co-payments) and supply shortages have contributed to the growth of a “black market” in private, unregulated care arrangements.

30. Jerome DeHenau, “Gender Role Attitudes, Work Decisions, and Social Policies in Europe: A Series of Empirical Essays” (doctoral dissertation, Université Libre De Bruxelles, Faculté Des Sciences Sociales, Politiques Et Economiques/Solvay Business School, 2006).

31. See Ellingsaeter, “Dual Breadwinners Between State and Market,” 40–59. Also, see Amlaug Leira, “Cash for Child Care and Daddy Leave,” in *Parental Leave: Progress or Pitfall*, ed. Peter Moss and Fred Deven (The Hague/Brussels: NIDI/CBGS Publications, 1999): 267–87.

32. Leira, "Cash for Child Care and Daddy Leave," 267–87.

33. For details on the indicators reported in Table 1, except annual hours and fertility, see Gornick and Meyers, *Families That Work*, 58–83. Annual hours worked are taken from Lawrence Mishel, Jared Bernstein, and Sylvia Allegretto, *The State of Working America: 2004–2005* (Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute, 2005). Total fertility rates (TFR) are from United Nations, *Human Development Reports: Basic Indicators for Other UN Member Countries—Total Fertility Rate*, (2005), <http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/indicators.cfm?x=291&y=1&z=1>. The outcomes in this table pertain to the late 1990s and/or approximately 2000. An exception is the TFRs, which pertain to the period 2000–2005.

34. Higher rates in Denmark and Finland result from a higher ratio of mothers' to fathers' employment rates—and of hours worked among the employed. See Gornick and Meyers, *Families That Work*, 58–71.

35. With respect to the U.S. Comparison, high U.S. fertility rates have been buoyed by the larger families of immigrants and children of immigrants.

36. This comparison is adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP). Note that GDP per capita rankings shift annually. In 2005, Norway's PPP-adjusted GDP per-capita was slightly higher than that of the United States.

37. Mishel, Bernstein, and Allegretto, *The State of Working America: 2004–2005*, 428–29.

38. Lars Osberg, "Time, Money and Inequality in International Perspective," *Luxembourg Income Study Working Paper* no. 334 (2002): 22.

39. Catherine Hakim, "Sociological Perspectives on Part-Time Work," in *Between Equalization and Marginalization: Women Working Part-Time in Europe and the U.S. of America*, ed. Hans-Peter Blossfeld and Catherine Hakim (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 22–70.

40. European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, "Part-Time Work in Europe," (2004), <http://www.eurofound.eu.int/working/reports/ES0403TR01/ES0403TR01.pdf>.

41. Mutari and Figart, "Europe at a Crossroads," 40.

42. Jeanne Fagnani and Marie-Therese Letablier, "Work and Family Life Balance: The Impact of the 35-Hour Laws in France," *Work, Employment, and Society* 10, no. 3 (2004): 551–72.

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