

# CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE FAMILY POLICIES IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES



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ULLA BJÖRNBERG & MAI HEIDE OTTOSEN (EDS.)



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## CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE FAMILY POLICIES IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

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# PREFACE

This anthology is one of several outputs from recent Nordic research collaboration, Reassessing the Nordic Welfare Model, which was initiated in 2007.

The Nordic Centre of Excellence: Reassessing the Nordic Welfare Model is a virtual research centre funded by NordForsk and coordinated from NOVA in Norway. The main goal of the centre is to bring distinguished researchers from all the Nordic countries together in ten thematic strands to investigate and critically discuss whether the Nordic Welfare Model has the ability to renew itself under changing external conditions.

This anthology details the results of the activities in Strand 2: *Family change, public policies and birth rates*. During the lifetime of this project, nine family researchers, representing all five Nordic countries, had the opportunity to meet. Based on available data, their aim was to map and analyse current trends within the area of family policy and outline some possible challenges which the Nordic welfare states will be facing in the future. From the very beginning the research group decided that this joint book project should be given a policy-oriented angle.

The anthology is edited by Professor Emerita, Ulla Björnberg and senior researcher and programme director Mai Heide Ottosen, who was also leader of Strand 2. The other contributors, in chronological or-

der, are: Professor An-Magritt Jensen, research director Mette Deding, Professor Katja Forssen, Professor Gudny Björk Eydal, Professor Tine Rostgaard, Professor Thomas Boje and Associate Professor Anders Ejernæs.

Professor Emerita Margaretha Bäck-Wiklund agreed to review and comment on the manuscripts for the anthology. We are very grateful for her critical and constructive comments. We also wish to thank the managing secretariat of the Reassess Research Centre, Björn Hvinden and Viggo Norvik, for their generosity which made the meetings for the members of this book project group possible.

SFI – The Danish National Centre for Social Research has financed the costs for the publication of this anthology.

Copenhagen, December 2013

AGI CSONKA

# SUMMARY

## ENGLISH SUMMARY

### RESULTS

As a strand within the Nordic research collaboration, *Reassessing the Nordic Welfare Model*, nine family researchers, representing all five Nordic countries, had the opportunity to meet, analyse and map out current trends within the areas of family life and family policies in the Nordic countries in the early 21st century. What are the trends within the context of family life? To what extent do the Nordic welfare states deal with current issues related to children's upbringing and family life? Which possible family policy challenges will the Nordic welfare states face in the future?

This anthology takes following topics for discussion: issues related to family demographics; children's position in the society and in the family; the child's well-being; care policies in relation to children as well as the elderly; reconciliation of work and family life, and finally policies related to gender equality.

What has characterised the Nordic welfare model over decades is that children are not just a private responsibility of parents, but a responsibility to be shared with society. To minimise social inequality and provide equal opportunities for everyone, the state allocates resources for families with children as part of the redistribution policy strategy.

Moreover, the Nordic welfare model is said to go hand-in-hand with the women's movement by offering opportunities for women as well as men to participate in education and employment; by this, the state also enables both parents to take part in child care within the context of the family. To promote social and gender equality, the state has implemented a wide range of universal measures, such as financial support for families with children; leave to care for young children, economic compensation for single parents, and public care services for dependent family members, i.e. children and the elderly.

Yet, over the past decades, New Public Management principles have become more prominent: for example, increased market orientation, private providers and choices for the users. Such trends are observed within the area of day care for children, but especially within the sector of home care for the elderly. However, the prevalence varies between countries. Another recent trend is that policies on children's positions and rights have become more prominent as part of family policy. One can view the increased emphasis on children's rights as a trend towards individualisation.

Compared to other countries, the levels of the Nordic birth rates are quite satisfactory. This suggests that overall the Nordic family policies work well, as they enable parents to combine labour market participation and family life. Most children in the Nordic countries are growing up in a secure family environment, and the Nordic countries are also that region in the world where gender equality appears to be the most complete. Yet, many children experience family breakup – and in the wake of that, new ways of 'doing' families.

The anthology highlights a number of family policy issues that appear to be unresolved, including:

- In all Nordic countries, the fertility rate is close to the replacement level. Nevertheless, the level of fertility differs for women and men. Men remain significantly more often childless than women. More knowledge about fertility in the population is needed, not only as a female, but also as a male issue.
- Compared to other OECD countries, child income poverty is less widespread in the Nordic countries. In recent years, child poverty rates have remained stable, albeit at a slightly higher level. Yet children in single-parent families are persistently poorer than children in

other family types. The anthology also points out that in particular, children in immigrant families have a significantly increased risk of being economically disadvantaged.

- In recent years, youth unemployment has risen, except in Norway. For Sweden and Finland especially, the proportions are high – higher than the OECD average. Young men in particular are affected by unemployment. In addition, figures from Sweden show that youths from families with non-western backgrounds are a very vulnerable group who are at risk of marginalisation.
- Although the Nordic countries are among the forerunners when it comes to gender equality, significant gender differences still exist within the context of adapting working hours to family commitments and allocating the unpaid work in the family. As a trend, women meet the family's needs by taking part-time work: men do not.

#### PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE FAMILY POLICIES

The anthology highlights a number of perspectives and challenges that family policy will face in the future:

- An increasing number of children are born as a result of artificial reproductive technology, and this trend does not appear to stagnate. The anthology recommends that the family policy pays attention to this area, for instance by ensuring necessary access and support to those who are seeking artificial insemination.
- Attention should be given to children and youth (often from disadvantaged families) who have limited education; those who are dropping out of the secondary education system; and those who are affected by youth unemployment. These young people are facing problems in being integrated into the labour market, and as adults they will be more likely to be poor and marginalised. In particular, family and social policies need to be aware (including developing policy tools) of youth with immigrant backgrounds, as this group is at risk of segregation and social exclusion.
- Children in out-of-home placements are a particularly disadvantaged group; research shows that in many cases these children do not fare well. Although some of the Nordic countries have carried out research on the living conditions of these children, there still appears

to be a need for systematic knowledge that can form the basis for effective family policy interventions to enhance the life chances for these children.

- A large share of violence takes place in the private sphere of the home and the perpetrators are to a high extent husbands, ex-partners, fathers and stepfathers. Research has shown that public attention to violence increases the willingness to report it to the police. As a measure to counteract violence in intimate relationships, the anthology suggests that violence should be included as a self-evident part of family policy as an institution.
- As the population ages, the multigenerational family appears to become more important. Grandparents, for example, may play a significant role in the care of grandchildren in order to help their adult children who are doing their jobs in an increasingly flexible labour market. Probably, families will also come to play a greater role in the care for the elderly. Given that it is mostly women who take on the additional responsibility, with repercussions for their work situation, such a scenario could have obvious consequences for gender equality. As a consequence, care policies can be expected to become arenas for new policies in the years to come.

#### METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The analyses of the anthology are based on secondary data and reviews of existing research literature. Wherever possible, the anthology chapters have used comparative data, involving information or studies from all five Nordic countries. Unfortunately, such information does not exist for all issues addressed in the anthology. As a consequence, some of the chapters had to use a more eclectic approach, by basing the analysis on studies conducted in one or a few of the Nordic countries.

## RESUME PÅ DANSK

### RESULTATER

Som del af det fælles nordiske forsknings samarbejde, *Reassessing the Nordic Welfare Model*, fik ni familieforskere, der repræsenterer alle fem nordiske lande, mulighed for at mødes, kortlægge og analysere, hvilke udviklings-træk der karakteriserer familielivet og familiepolitikkerne i de nordiske lande i begyndelsen af det 21. århundrede: Hvor bevæger familielivet sig hen? I hvilken grad tager de nordiske velfærdsstater hånd om aktuelle problemstillinger, som vedrører børns opvækst og familielivet? Og står velfærdsstaterne over for nye familiepolitiske udfordringer?

Antologien tager følgende temaer under behandling: familiedemografiske problemstillinger; børns position i samfundet og i familien; børnevelfærd; omsorgspolitikker, i forhold til såvel børn som ældre; samspillet mellem arbejds- og familieliv; og endelig politikker, der vedrører kønligestilling.

Gennem årtier har det karakteriseret den nordiske velfærdsmodel og familiepolitik, at samfundet påtager sig et medansvar for børnene. For at minimere social ulighed og tilgødese, at alle kan få lige muligheder, allokterer staten ressourcer til børnefamilierne som en del af sin fordelingspolitiske strategi. Desuden siges den nordiske velfærdsmodel at gå hånd i hånd med kvindebevægelsen: Den har gjort det muligt, at både kvinder og mænd kan deltage i uddannelsessystemet og på arbejdsmarkedet, og skaber dermed også forudsætninger for ligestilling i omsorgen for børnene. For at fremme den sociale og kønsmæssige ligestilling har staten iværksat en række universelle instrumenter, fx ydelser til børnefamilier, orlov til pasning af små børn, kompensationer til eneforsørgere og offentlige omsorgstilbud til familiens afhængige medlemmer, dvs. børn og gamle.

Gennem de sidste årtier er New Public Management principper imidlertid blevet mere fremtrædende: fx øget markedsorientering, private udbydere og flere valg for brugerne. Denne trend kan man observere i forhold til dagpasningsområdet, men især i forhold til hjemmehjælp for de ældre. Udbredelsen varierer dog landene imellem. Et andet udviklings-træk er, at også børnepolitikken har fået en mere fremtrædende plads som en del af familiepolitikken. Betoningen af fx børns rettigheder kan ses som en tendens i retning af individualisering.

Relativt til andre lande befinder fødselstallet i de nordiske lande sig på et tilfredsstillende niveau. Det tyder overordnet på, at familiepoltikkerne er indrettet, så forældre kan få deres arbejdsmarkedsdeltagelse og familieliv til at hænge sammen. De fleste børn i de nordiske lande vokser op i trygge materielle rammer, og Norden er også den region i verden, hvor kønsligestillingen forekommer at være mest komplet. Der er imidlertid også relativt mange børn, som oplever familiebrud – og i kølvandet herpå nye måder at 'gøre' familier på.

Antologiens kapitler peger på en række familiepolitiske problemstillinger, der fremstår som uløste, herunder:

- I alle nordiske lande er fertilitetsraten tæt på reproduktionsniveauet. Ikke desto mindre er omfanget af barnløshed forskellig for kvinder og mænd. Mænd forbliver væsentligt hyppigere barnløse end kvinder. Der er behov for mere viden om befolkningens fertilitet; ikke kun som en kvindelig, men også som en mandlig problemstilling.
- I forhold til andre OECD-lande er børnefattigdom (belyst ved indkomstfattigdom) mindre udbredt i de nordiske lande. Gennem de senere år har børnefattighedsraten ligget på et stabilt, om end svagt stigende niveau. Børn i eneforsørgerfamilier er dog hyppigere fattige end børn i andre familietyper, og denne forskel har eksisteret gennem en længere årrække. Antologien peger på, at særlig børn i immigrantfamilier har en markant øget risiko for at være økonomisk udsatte.
- Gennem de senere år har ungdomsarbejdsløsheden været stigende, bortset fra i Norge. Navnlig i Sverige og Finland er andelen høj – højere end OECD-gennemsnittet. Det er især unge mænd, der rammes af arbejdsløshed. Tal fra Sverige viser endvidere, at unge fra familier med ikke-vestlig baggrund er en særlig sårbar gruppe, som har risiko for marginalisering.
- Selvom de nordiske lande er langt fremme på ligestillingsfronten, er der stadig væsentlige kønsforskelle, når det drejer sig om, hvordan mænd og kvinder tilpasser deres arbejdstid til familieforpligtelserne og fordeler det ulønnede arbejde i familien. Som tendens møder kvinderne familiens behov ved at tage deltidsarbejde – det gør mænd ikke.



## PERSPEKTIVER OG UDFORDRINGER FOR FREMTIDENS FAMILIEPOLITIK

Antologien peger på en række perspektiver og udfordringer, som familiepolicen fremover vil stå over for.

- Et stigende antal børn kommer til verden som følge af kunstig befrugtning. Der er ikke tegn på, at udviklingen stagnerer. Der forekommer at være behov for familiepolicisk opmærksomhed på dette område, herunder på, om de, der ønsker kunstig befrugtning, har den nødvendige adgang og støtte dertil.
- Opmærksomheden bør rettes mod de børn og unge – ofte fra resourcesvage familier – som får begrænset uddannelse, som dropper ud af ungdomsuddannelsessystemet, eller som bliver ramt af ungdomsarbejdsløshed. Disse unge står over for vanskeligheder med at blive stabilt integreret på arbejdsmarkedet, og de vil have øget risiko for som voksne at blive fattige og marginaliserede. Særligt er der behov for at rette familie- og socialpolicisk opmærksomhed på at udvikle policyredskaber i forhold til unge med immigrantbaggrund, da denne gruppe har risiko for segregering og eksklusion.
- Børn, der er anbragt uden for hjemmet, er en særlig ugunstigt stillet gruppe, og forskning viser, at mange klarer sig dårligt. Selvom der i nogle af de nordiske lande er gennemført undersøgelser om disse børns livsvilkår, mangler der fortsat systematisk viden, som kan danne grundlag for effektive familiepoliciske indsatser, der kan forbedre disse børn og unges livschancer.
- En del af den vold, som foregår i samfundet, finder sted i den private sfære og begås af ægtemænd, eks partnere, fædre og stedfædre. Forskning har vist, at offentlig opmærksomhed på vold styrker villigheden til at anmelde den. Antologien foreslår, at indsatsen mod vold i nære relationer bliver gjort til en integreret del af familiepolicetikken.
- I takt med at befolkningen bliver ældre, må man forvente, at multigenerationsfamilien bliver vigtigere. For at forældre kan passe deres arbejdsmæssige forpligtelser på et stadig mere fleksibelt arbejdsmarked, vil bedsteforældre fx spille en betydelig rolle i forbindelse med pasning af børnebørn. Udviklingen går også i retning af, at familierne vil spille en større rolle i plejen for de ældre. Det kan få indlysende konsekvenser for kønsligestillingen, givet at det fortrinsvis er

kvinder, der påtager sig dette ekstra ansvar, evt. på bekostning af deres arbejdssituation. Som konsekvens peger antologien på, at omsorgspolitikker forventes at blive et nyt og voksende velfærdfærds-politisk tema i årene fremover.

#### GRUNDLAGET FOR ANTOLOGIEN

Analyserne i antologien er baseret på sekundært indsamlede data og litteraturgennemgang af allerede eksisterende, udførte analyser. Hvor det overhovedet har været muligt, bestræber antologiens kapitler sig på at anvende komparative data, der inddrager sammenlignelige informationer eller studier fra alle fem nordiske lande. Sådanne informationer findes desværre ikke for alle de problemstillinger, som behandles i antologien. Derfor har det i visse af kapitlerne har været nødvendigt at anvende en mere eklektisk tilgang, dvs. at basere analyserne på studier gennemført i et eller få af de nordiske lande.

## SUOMENKIELINEN YHTEENVETO

Pohjoismaisen tutkimusyhteistyöhankkeen 'Reassessing the Nordic Welfare Modelin' perhepoliittista tematiikkaa käsittelevällä yhdeksän hengen alaryhmällä oli tilaisuus tavata, analysoida ja koota yhteen 2000-luvun alun perhe-elämään ja pohjoismaiseen perhepolitiikkaan liittyviä tämän hetkisiä trendejä. Mihin suuntaan perhe-elämä on menossa? Millä tavalla Pohjoismaissa vastataan lasten kasvattamiseen ja perhe-elämään liittyviin haasteisiin? Minkälaisia mahdollisia uusia haasteita Pohjoismaat kohtaavat tulevaisuudessa?

Tässä teoksessa nostetaan keskusteluun seuraavat teemat: perhedemografiaan liittyvät tekijät; lasten asema yhteiskunnassa ja perheessä; lasten hyvinvointi; hoivapolitiikka lasten ja vanhusten näkökulmasta; työn ja perhe-elämän yhteensovittaminen ja lopulta sukupuolten tasa-arvoa lisäävä politiikka.

Pohjoismaisen hyvinvointivaltiomallin erityispiirteenä vuosikymmenien ajan on ollut se, että lapset eivät ole yksinomaan vanhempien yksityisen vastuun piirissä, vaan vastuuta lapsista kantaa myös valtio. Ehkäistäkseen sosiaalista eriarvoisuutta ja luodakseen tasavertaiset mahdollisuudet kaikille, valtio jakaa resursseja lapsiperheille osana uudelleenjakopolitiikkaa. Lisäksi pohjoismaainen hyvinvointivaltiomalli on sanottu kehittyneen yhdessä naisten tasa-arvoistumiskehityksen kanssa tarjoamalla miesten lisäksi myös naisille mahdollisuudet kouluttautumiseen ja työelämään osallistumiseen; näin valtio tukee molempien vanhempien mahdollisuutta osallistua lapsen kotihoitoon. Sosiaalisen ja sukupuolten välisen tasa-arvon lisäämiseksi valtio on tuottanut laajan universaalien tukijärjestelmän, esimerkiksi taloudellisen tuen lapsiperheille, pienten lasten hoitovapaan, taloudellisen tuen yksinhuoltajille ja julkisen hoivapalvelujärjestelmän lapsille ja vanhuksille.

Useiden vuosikymmenien aikana uuden julkishallinnon johtamismallin periaatteet ovat tulleet entistä vahvemmiksi: esimerkiksi kasvava taloudellinen orientaatio, yksityiset palvelutuottajat ja lisääntyneet valinnanmahdollisuudet palvelujen käyttäjille. Näitä suuntauksia tarkastellaan lasten päivähoidon sektorilla, mutta erityisesti vanhusten kotihoidon sektorilla. Toisaalta uusien julkishallinnon periaatteiden levinneisyysasteella on eroja Pohjoismaiden välillä. Toinen nykyään vallitseva trendi on ollut se, että lasten asemaan ja oikeuksiin liittyvä lainsäädäntö on noussut entistä keskeisempään osaan

perhepolitiikassa. Voidaankin nähdä, että lasten oikeuksien lisääntyneet korostuminen on yksi trendi kohti yksilökeskeisempää järjestelmää.

Verrattaessa Pohjoismaita muihin maihin on syntyvyys muita maita paremmalla tasolla. Tästä voidaan päätellä, että kaiken kaikkiaan pohjoismainen perhepolitiikka toimii hyvin, koska se mahdollistaa naisille yhdistää perhe ja työelämään osallistuminen. Suurin osa pohjoismaisista lapsista kasvaa turvallisessa perheympäristössä ja Pohjoismaat ovat maailmanlaajuisesti katsottuna alue, jossa sukupuolten välinen tasa-arvo on muita maita korkeimmalla tasolla. Toisaalta useat lapset joutuvat kokemaan perheen hajoamisen ja samalla kokemaan arjen uudentlaisissa perhemalleissa.

Tässä teoksessa korostetaan useita perhepolitiikkaan liittyviä teemoja, jotka näyttävät olevan vielä ratkaisematta, esimerkiksi:

- Kaikissa Pohjoismaissa syntyvyys on lähellä väestöä ylläpitävää tasoa. Toisaalta lasten hankinnalla on eroja miesten ja naisten välillä. Lapsettomuus on yleisempää miehillä kuin naisilla. Väestötasolla on tarvetta saada enemmän tietoa syntyvyydestä ja siihen liittyvästä miesten ja naisten välisten erojen taustoista.
- Muihin OECD -maihin verrattuna lasten tuloköyhyys on alhaisemmalla tasolla Pohjoismaissa. Viime vuosina lasten köyhyys on pysynyt melko stabiilina, vaikkakin pientä kasvua on tapahtunut. Yksinhuoltajaperheissä asuvien lasten köyhyys on selkeästi yleisempää kuin muiden perhetyyppien lapsilla. Tässä teoksessa tuodaan esiin se, että erityisesti maahanmuuttajataustaisten perheiden lapsilla on selvästi korkeampi riski taloudelliseen ahdinkoon.
- Viime vuosina kaikissa Pohjoismaissa Norjaa lukuun ottamatta nuorten työttömyys on ollut selvästi kasvussa. Erityisesti Ruotsissa ja Suomessa nuorten työttömyys on korkealla tasolla ja korkeampi kuin OECD:n keskiarvo. Työttömyys kohdistuu erityisesti nuoriin miehiin. Lisäksi tilastot Ruotsista osoittavat, että länsimaiden ulkopuolelta tulleet nuoret muodostavat vähäosaisten ryhmän, jolla on selkeä riski syrjäytymiseen.
- Vaikka Pohjoismaat ovat edelläkävijöitä sukupuolten tasa-arvo -kysymyksissä, esiintyy Pohjoismaissa selkeitä sukupuolten välisiä eroja erityisesti perheeseen käytettyjen työtuntien määrässä.

Trendinä on, että naiset huolehtivat perheen hoivavélvoitteista käymällä osa-aikatyössä, miehet eivät.

## NÄKÖKULMIA JA HAASTEITA TULEVAISUUDEN PERHEPOLITIIKKAAN

Teoksessa korostetaan useita tulevaisuuden perhepolitiikkaan liittyviä näkökulmia ja haasteita:

- Lisääntyvä määrä lapsia syntyy keinohedelmöityksen avulla ja tämä trendi on kasvava. Teoksessa esitetään, että perhepolitiikassa kiinnitettäisiin entistä enemmän huomiota tähän alueeseen esimerkiksi siten, että mahdollistettaisiin riittävä pääsy ja tuki niille, jotka hakeutuvat keinohedelmöityshoitoon.
- Huomiota tulisi kiinnittää niihin lapsiin ja nuoriin (jotka usein tulevat vähäosaisista perheistä), joilla on puutteellinen koulutustausta; niihin, jotka ovat jättäneen koulun kesken ja niihin nuoriin, jotka ovat työttöminä. Nämä nuoret kohtaavat vaikeuksia päästä integroitumaan työelämään ja myöhemmin aikuisina heillä on suurempi köyhyys- ja syrjäytymisriski. Perhepolitiikassa ja sosiaalipolitiikassa pitäisi kehittää uusia toimenpiteitä erityisesti maahanmuuttajataustaisten nuorten tukemiseen, koska tällä ryhmällä on selkeä segregaaion ja sosiaalisen syrjäytymisen riski.
- Kodin ulkopuolelle sijoitetut lapset ovat erityisen haavoittuva ryhmä; tutkimukset osoittavat, että monessa tapauksessa nämä lapset eivät voi hyvin. Vaikka useissa Pohjoismaissa on tehty tutkimusta näiden lasten elinoloista, on tarvetta kerätä perhepolitiikan tueksi entistä systemaattisempaa tietoa siitä millaisilla perhepolitiittisilla interventioilla kyettäisiin tehokkaammin vahvistamaan näiden lasten elämän mahdollisuuksia.
- Suurin osa väkivallasta tapahtuu perheen sisällä ja suurin osa väkivallan tekijöistä on puolisoita, ex-puolisoita, isiä ja isäpuolia. Tutkimukset osoittavat, että julkinen keskustelu ja kasvava huomio väkivaltaa kohtaan lisää halukkuutta ilmoittaa asiasta poliisille. Mitattaessa perheväkivaltaa intiimeissä suhteissa teoksessa esitetään, että väkivallan ehkäisyllä tulisi olla selkeä asema perhepolitiikan kokonaisuudessa.
- Väestön ikääntyessä useasta sukupolvesta muodostuvasta perheestä on tullut entistä tärkeämpi. Esimerkiksi isovanhemmilla saattaa olla

merkitsevä rooli lastenlastensa hoitamisessa ja aikuisten lastensa auttamisessa työn ja perhe-elämän yhteensovittamisen ongelmatilanteissa. On todennäköistä, että perheillä tulee olemaan entistä suurempi rooli myös vanhusten hoivassa. On oletettavaa, että juuri naiset ottavat tämän lisävastuun itselleen. Tämä saattaa heikentää sukupuolten välistä tasa-arvoa. Tästä johtuen voidaan olettaa, että hoivapolitiikasta tulee tärkeä osa perhepolitiikkaa tulevien vuosien aikana.

#### METODOLOGISET LÄHTÖKOHDAT

Teoksen analyysit perustuvat sekundaari -aineistoihin ja jo olemassa olevien tutkimuksien katsauksiin. Aina kun mahdollista on teoksen luvuissa pyritty käyttämään vertailevaa aineistoa tai kaikkia viittä Pohjoismaata käsitteleviä tutkimuksia. Valitettavasti joistakin teoksessa käsiteltävistä teemoista ei ole saatavilla vertailukelpoista tietoa. Tästä johtuen joissakin luvuissa on jouduttu käyttämään monista lähteistä ammentavaa lähestymistapaa, joissa analyysi pohjautuu yhteen tai vain muutamaaan Pohjoismaahan.

## HELSTU NIÐURSTÖÐUR (ÍSLENSKA)

### NIÐURSTÖÐUR

Í norræna Öndvegissetrinu *Reassessing the Nordic Welfare Model* störfuðu tíu rannsóknarhópar á ólíkum sviðum. Einn af rannsóknarhópunum vann að rannsóknum á fjölskyldum og fjölskyldustefnum. Níu rannsakendur úr þeim hópi, frá fimm Norðurlöndum, rannsökuðu stöðu og einkenni málaflokksins í upphafi 21. aldarinnar. Áhersla var lögð á eftirtaldar spurningar: Hvað einkennir fjölskyldulífið? Að hversu miklu leyti ná norræn velferðarkerfi að mæta þörfum foreldra fyrir stuðning vegna uppeldis og fjölskyldulífs? Hvaða áskorunum er líklegt að norrænu velferðarkerfin þurfi að mæta í náinni framtíð á sviði fjölskyldustefnu?

Ritið fjallar um eftirfarandi viðfangsefni: lýðfræði, stöðu barna í samfélaginu og fjölskyldunni, velferð barna, umönnun barna og aldraðra, samþættingu vinnu og fjölskyldulífs auk umræðu um stefnumörkun í jafnréttismálum.

Ef litið er til þróunar síðustu áratuga, þá hefur það einkennt hina norrænu leið að ábyrgð á velferð barna hvílir ekki eingöngu á herðum foreldra, heldur deilir samfélagið þessari ábyrgð með þeim. Stuðningi velferðarkerfisins er ætlað að draga úr ójöfnuði og skapa jöfn tækifæri. Norræn velferðarríki hafa verið samstíga kvennahreyfingum sem hafa lagt áherslu á jöfn tækifæri karla og kvenna til menntunnar og þátttöku á vinnumarkaði auk stuðnings við báða foreldra til að taka þátt í umönnun barna sinna og fjölskyldulífi. Til að stuðla að jafnrétti kynjanna og jafnrétti í víðasta skilningi hafa norrænu velferðarríkin stutt fjölskyldur með fjölbreytilegum hætti t.d. með fjárhagslegum stuðningi við barnafjölskyldur þar með talið einstæða foreldra, fæðingarorlofi og þjónustu vegna umönnunnar barna og aldraðra.

Á liðnum áratugum hafa áherslur kenndar við nýskipan í ríkisrekstri orðið fyrirferðarmeiri, t.d. með aukinni áherslu á markaðs- og einkavæðingu auk áherslu á aukið val fyrir notendur. Slíkar áherslur má finna á sviði dagvistunarþjónustu fyrir börn en þær eru þó einkum áberandi á sviði heimaþjónustu fyrir aldraða. Þá hafa öll Norðurlönd lagt mikla áherslu á rétt barna og að fjölskyldustefna taki í auknum mæli mið af stöðu barna og réttindum þeirra. Líta má á áhersluna á réttindi barna sem rökrétt framhald af áherslu á einstaklingsbundin réttindi karla og kvenna.

Fæðingartíðni á Norðurlöndum er með því hæsta sem gerist á Vesturlöndum. Sú staðreynd bendir til að fjölskyldustefnur landanna séu

árangursríkar og að þær auðveldi foreldrum að samþætta vinnu og fjölskyldulíf. Flest börn á Norðurlöndum alast upp í öryggi í fadmi fjölskyldna sinna og alþjóðlegar mælingar sýna að á Norðurlöndum er félagslegur jöfnuður meiri en víðast gerist. Algengt er að börn á Norðurlöndum upplifi að fjölskyldur þeirra taki breytingum í kjölfar skilnaða eða sambúðarslita foreldra.

Ritið tekur sérstaklega til umræðu svið fjölskyldustefnu sem hafa lítið verið rædd, þar á meðal eftirtalin atriði:

- Á öllum Norðurlöndum er frjósemi viðunandi en þrátt fyrir það er frjósemi karla og kvenna mjög ólík. Það er mun algengara að karlar séu barnlausir en konur. Því þarf að auka þekkingu á frjósemi bæði karla og kvenna.
- Borið saman við önnur OECD lönd þá er barnafátækt á Norðurlöndum með því lægsta sem gerist. Þó hefur orðið vart nokkurrar hækkunar á liðnum árum. Börn einstæðra foreldra eru líklegri til að búa við fátækt en börn sem búa með tveimur foreldrum. Niðurstöður bókarinnar benda til að meiri líkur séu á að börn í fjölskyldum innflytjenda hafi tekjur undir lágtekjumörkum.
- Á liðnum árum hefur atvinnuleysi ungs fólks aukist á Norðurlöndum, að Noregi frátöldum. Tölurnar eru sérstaklega háar í Finnlandi og Svíþjóð þar sem þær eru hærri en meðaltal OECD ríkjanna. Ungir menn eru í meiri hættu á að verða atvinnulausir en ungar konur. Tölur frá Svíþjóð benda til að ungt fólk úr fjölskyldum sem eiga uppruna utan Vesturlanda eigi erfðara en aðrir hópar með að ná fótfestu á vinnumarkaði og sé því í aukinni hættu á félagslegri einangrun.
- Þrátt fyrir brautryðjendastarf á sviði jafnréttismála þá er enn mikill munur á kynjunum t.d. hvað varðar lengd vinnutíma og samþættingu vinnu og einkalífs sem og tíma sem varið er til heimilis- og umönnunarstarfa. Algengt er að konur mæti þörfum fjölskyldunnar með því að draga úr launaðri vinnu og stunda hlutastarf, sem karlmenn gera mun sjaldnar.

## SJÓNARHORN OG ÁSKORANIR VEGNA FJÖLSKYLDUSTEFNU FRAMTÍÐARINNAR

Eftirtalin atriði eru meðal þeirra sem höfundar skilgreina sem áskoranir sem fjölskyldustefna framtíðarinnar þarf að takast á við:



- Börnum sem fæðast í kjölfar tæknifrjógvanga (artificial reproductive technology) fer fjölgandi. Hér er því mælt með að fjölskyldustefna taki sérstaklega mið af þessari þróun, t.d. með því að leggja áherslu á stuðning við þá foreldra sem óska eftir tæknifrjógvun.
- Veita þarf börnum og unglingum sem koma frá fjölskyldum sem standa höllum fæti sérstaka athygli, svo að þau geti lokið framhaldsskóla og náð fótfestu á vinnumarkaði. Félagslegir erfiðleikar og/eda fátækt foreldra getur haft neikvæð áhrif á möguleika barna sem alast upp við slíkar aðstæður. Þetta á ekki síst við um ungt fólk af erlendum uppruna og nauðsynlegt er að fjölskyldustefna framtíðarinnar miði að því að skapa öllum jöfn tækifæri til mennta og atvinnuþátttöku og vinni gegn félagslegri einangrun.
- Rannsóknir benda til að huga þurfi sérstaklega að áhættuþáttum varðandi velferð barna sem hefur verið ráðstafað í föstur eða vistuð á stofnunum. Einstök Norðurlönd hafa framkvæmt mikilvægar rannsóknir þar sem þessum hópum er fylgt eftir en það þarf að rannsaka stöðu þeirra með enn kerfisbundnari hætti svo hægt sé að móta stefnu á grundvelli bestu mögulegu þekkingar til að bæta skilyrði þessara barna.
- Ofbeldi er í mjög mörgum tilvikum beitt í fjölskyldum og gerendur eru oftast karlmenn, nú- eða fyrrverandi eigin- eða sambýlismenn, fedur eða stjúpfedur. Rannsóknir sýna að ef þekking og athygli þekking almennings er vakin á ofbeldi þá eykst viljinn til að kæra það til lögreglu. Til að vinna gegn ofbeldi í fjölskyldum þá er hér lagt til að fjölskyldustefna ná til þessa málaflokks og að ofbeldi í fjölskyldum sé skilgreint sem viðfangsefni opinberrar fjölskyldustefnu.
- Í kjölfar hækkandi lífaldurs þá verða þriggja kynslóða fjölskyldur meira áberandi. Afar og ömmur taka til dæmis mjög virkan þátt í umönnun barnabarna. Allt bendir til að fjölskyldan muni leika enn stærra hlutverk en nú er varðandi umönnun aldraðra. Mikilvægt er því að hafa í huga að það eru einkum konur sem axla ábyrgð á umönnun fjölskyldumeðlima sem hefur afleiðingar þegar kemur að stöðu þeirra á vinnumarkaði og þar með augljós áhrif á jafnrétti kynjanna. Því má vænta þess að umönnunarstefna og nýsköpun á því sviði muni fá aukna athygli á komandi árum.

## GÖGN OG AÐFERÐ

Ritið byggir á greiningu á rituðum heimildum og fyrirliggjandi gögnum. Þar sem það hefur verið mögulegt hafa höfundar notað samanburðarhæf gögn frá öllum fimm Norðurlöndunum. Því miður hafa slík gögn ekki verið fyrirliggjandi á öllum sviðum. Í slíkum tilvikum hafa kaflahöfundar nýtt gögn frá einstökum löndum en reynt að beita samanburðarsjónarhorni þar sem þess hefur verið kostur.

# INTRODUCTION

ULLA BJÖRNBERG

## INTRODUCTION

The objective of this book is to problematise and discuss how changes in the Nordic welfare policies, changes in the labour market and changing family practices affect living conditions in different groups of families. In the book we will address how new challenges can be reconciled with the family policies that have been developed over the years in the Nordic nations of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The book will cover seven overall themes: Demographic trends related to intimate relationships and family formation; Trends related to contemporary Nordic childhood; Distribution of material resources with a focus on children; Allocation of time and work life balance; Caring families; Relations of power within families with a special focus on gender; immigration, children and families. Each theme represents a chapter. In the book we intend to raise – and provide answers to – the following questions: Which problems have not been sufficiently met? Which rights should be defended? Which priorities tend to undermine previous objectives initiated for family life?

Behind the national policy measures in these five countries, different incentives have been assumed to govern family behaviour in certain directions, such as promoting female employment and increasingly

also female careers, father involvement in care, gender equality, family formation and fertility, making up the special case of the Nordic countries. The book will present an overview of current family policies and the challenges facing these as well as their successes and shortcomings. While identifying problems and challenges we will look into both common and divergent trends within the Nordic countries. We are, however, obliged to draw on existing data and this does not exist on a comparative basis for all countries. This fact poses an obstacle for us in our endeavor to accomplish this latter objective. The time frame for the analysis in the chapters is primarily the 1990s and forward, however, in some chapters a longer perspective is taken from the 1970s. Trends and challenges for family policy are linked to several areas in societal change, in particular changes on the labour markets and changes in attitudes towards children and children's rights. In addition, changes regarding political attitudes towards the division of responsibility between the public, the market and the individuals/families are analysed.

## WHAT IS FAMILY POLICY IN THE NORDIC CONTEXT?

Family policy in the Nordic countries has formed part of the general social-democratic model of welfare emphasising economic growth, redistribution of wealth, social rights and social security. The overall social policy model incorporates the ideal of economic individual independence of all citizens and regards earning an income as a fundamental right, but also increasingly an obligation. Another basic trait is universalism in the sense that social security and care should be available for every citizen. The social security system aims at decommodification through income compensation at an agreed level. Within the social security system, rights to social security are individual rights, regardless of family situation.

The Nordic Family policy model was elaborated on the basis of Nordic cooperation about 60-70 years ago (Therborn, 2004). The rationale behind the measures was fairly similar, and based on the experiences of the fall in fertility during the 1930s. One aim was to ease family formation through different kinds of financial support such as child allowance, maternity leave, tax reform (individual taxation) and the provision of loans for setting up a household. In addition, housing policy was designed in order to provide a supply of housing at prices that were af-

fordable for ordinary families. A way of accomplishing the goals was to redistribute resources between households with and without children, with arguments that children are not just a private responsibility of parents but one to be shared with society. Another measure to increase the incomes of families was to encourage employment among mothers and also to protect the newborn child with maternity leave; that was equalised with sickness insurance. Lone mothers are granted economic compensation through various means, such as extended child allowance (Sweden) and longer parental leave (Norway).

Comparative studies on Nordic family and welfare policies have concluded that the social policy models in the Nordic countries form a cluster, distinct from those applied in other European countries (Bradshaw & Hatland, 2007; Ellingsæter, 2006; Melby, Ravn & Wetterberg, 2009, Ostner & Schmitt, 2008). A point of departure for the book is that the social policy models that are applied in the Nordic countries carry many similar traits.

In the Nordic countries, family policy has been regarded as one of the strategic priorities for achieving gender equality. Promotion of gender equality primarily through female employment has for many years been an important goal in all Nordic societies within the context of family policy. Parental leave should be gender-neutral and rights to paid leave granted to both parents equally. Defamilisation is a catchword for measures aiming at easing female employment and relieving families (women) from the care of dependent family members through state subsidies and public provision of care. In the later decades, more attention has been directed at encouraging the caring responsibility of fathers, both during the early years of the child's life and in everyday life, not only to take care of children when they are ill, but also through the promotion of paternity leave (father's quota or individual entitlement within parental leave), the right to flexible working hours, and joint legal custody in cases of divorce or separation. Measures have mainly been targeted at institutional policies such as public provision, whereas those targeted directly at family care have been less promoted. Child home care allowance has, however, been increasingly put forward as an alternative to institutional child care to allow parents to choose between institutional versus home-based day care. The parental leave and home care allowance are mainly family rights and defended as such, and also criticised with arguments concerning gender and class inequality. Like in early debates

on care, 'choice' has been seen as a catchword for arguments serving the best interests of the family and/or the child.

Another common denominator for family policies in the Nordic countries is that family relationships and family dissolution are based on free choice. One important measure has been to reduce the regulations behind marriage, choice of spouse and change of partner regardless of sex. In law, cohabitation and marriage have been equalised (although some differences remain) and divorce and separation between spouses/partners have been made easy. In brief, the conception of family within the Nordic model is that families are formed and sustained through individual choices to enter into intimate relationships, and that families are sustained through commitments where emotional ties are central for the maintenance of family relationships. Spouses do not carry lifelong financial responsibilities towards one another. However, parents are responsible for their children, financially and socially, at least until the child is 18 (21) of age. Thus, one could argue that couple formation and the well-being of couples are both left to the individuals themselves to manage, whereas parenthood is to be sustained with encouragements, enforcements and supervision. Child maintenance rules are sharp, with an increasing focus on the visitation rights of non-resident parents, while sharing parental legal custody is the main rule. The biological aspect of parenthood has a strong foothold in Nordic legislation, leaving step fathers and stepmothers almost without rights and obligations as a consequence (Hatland & Mayhew, 2007).

Since the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child around 1990, the rights and interests of children have been placed more in the forefront, at least at the level of rhetoric in policy documents. Increasingly, more attention has been directed at "investment in children" (which was already from the start a governing principle in Sweden and Iceland).

## TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

Our concept of family policy in this book is wide in the sense that we want to highlight that conditions for family life and family welfare are linked to a variety of changes in working life, labour market, housing and policy changes, in economic conditions, demographic change and chang-

es in policy principles, such as the increased emphasis on private solutions for the provision of public services.

#### THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the 1970s a neoliberal ideal for policy-making has swept over the world, including in the Nordic countries. This has implied a critique of the role of the state regarding the extent to which it regulates markets and socio-political activities and individuals. In the Nordic countries the neoliberal way of thinking and of managing policies since the 1980s moved the discourses and governance towards an increased focus on deregulation and privatisation, thus emphasising individual choice and responsibility, market solutions to social services and new public management; however, this has varied in pace across the Nordic countries. These changes are represented in a wide variety of policy areas such as social policy including care policy, labour market policy, housing and security.

In a recently published book on current transformations of the Swedish welfare state, the policy from the 1990s onwards has been identified as "advanced liberal engineering" (Larsson, Letell & Thörn, 2012). The book presents examples from a variety of areas, showing that the transformations imply new kinds of freedom, but also new kinds of regulations and disciplinary powers to deal with the effects of marketisation and choices that are regarded as negative.

The state is still responsible for providing and financing social services like education, health care and social care, but provision of the services is increasingly outsourced to private providers. Until now in the Swedish case, the private providers in schools, hospitals, clinics and institutions giving care are also allowed to make profit and are not obliged to reinvest profits in the business. The social consequences of this transformation have not been systematically evaluated through hard scientific measures, although the potential risks and failures of the institutions in providing quality welfare to the citizens have been discussed (Hartman, 2012). The individual citizens are, following the logics of the new forms of service provision, now regarded as consumers, and their access is linked to their own choice. In principle, having made a bad choice is regarded as an individual failure and thus the individual will take an initiative to improve his/her situation. The service provider can of course also be criticised for

providing a low-quality service and they can lose their contract with the municipality or county.

Regarding decommodification attached to the social benefits: since the 1990s in Sweden the levels of income compensation relating to sickness and unemployment insurance have been drastically reduced and are now far below the formally agreed levels. The income compensation of the unemployment insurance is now below the OECD average (SOU, 2010). The implications are that the decommodifying effects of the social welfare benefits have been reduced due to low compensation rates and to the introduction of more restrictive criteria for entitlements. The development can be regarded as a movement from income compensation towards a basic social security model (op.cit.). The report cited above observes a similar trend in Denmark, but not in Norway and Finland to the same extent. Norway appears as the most generous country, whereas Denmark has seen a lowering of compensation rates in the social welfare benefits studied (unemployment, sickness, industrial injury). Parental payments and provision of child care have, however, not been affected so much, as will be shown in Chapter 5.

The new rules imply that also the middle class has less coverage in income compensation both in sickness and unemployment insurance. The costs of the unemployment insurance have been raised and some people have left the scheme. Besides, an increasing amount of people do not qualify for access to unemployment benefits because their establishment in the labour market is too weak (temporary contracts, involuntary part-time work). In the Swedish case, health insurance (sickness benefits) has undergone reforms to the effect that people with long-term sickness and who do not qualify are kicked out of the system (Björnberg, 2012). Social assistance that is the last resort for these people is also more restrictive due to budget deficits in the municipalities. There is an increased risk of poverty among people who do not qualify for entitlements to social insurances because they have not worked long enough or who are on long-term sick leave, or recently arrived refugees or students (Socialstyrelsen, 2010). In the context of family policy, it is important to address the income inequalities among family types. Lone mothers with children 0-17 years have maintained a consistently low disposable income level in the Nordic countries over many years, as elsewhere in Europe (see Chapter 4). Families with two children and two parents have a low risk of poverty. Among recently arrived refugees, the share of poor



people increased from 25 per cent in 1991 to 50 per cent in 2007. For many refugees the entrance into the labour market can take 5-6 years.

All these changes imply that the decommodification effect of social insurances has been eroded. Some people are compensated for the reduction in income through private insurance, either through contracts set up by labour unions or employers or simply on a personal basis.

At a general level the work strategy is implemented in a stricter way, with the aim being to attach individuals to the labour market. For many people these more restrictive policies imply less freedom and choice (op.cit.) to the extent that they have to accept a job or lose unemployment benefits.

A study of labour market policies over a period of 23 years shows that both active and passive labour market policies have been markedly reduced in Sweden and Denmark since 1992 (Bengtsson & Jakobsson, 2013). Since the centre-right government came into power in Sweden in 2006, active labour market policy has been more focused on coaching individuals to apply for jobs, while education and training opportunities have been substantially reduced (Bengtsson & Berglund, 2012).

Repeated studies of welfare disposable income/poverty, comparing the Nordic region with other EU countries, show that public payments through the social insurance schemes are very important for maintaining an income level above the poverty line (Björklund & Jäntti, 2011; Socialstyrelsen, 2010). The income dispersal in the Nordic countries has seen a fairly low income inequality over many years, which has also been a deliberate policy. Taxes and transfers were important measures behind the low income dispersals until 2009 (Björklund & Jäntti, 2011). However, income inequality has increased since the 1980s, and this is linked to the fact that income from capital has increased. Still, however, the Nordic countries are less unequal within a European context, especially compared to the UK. In the wake of increased income inequalities, we have to pay attention to the fact that payments from social insurances have been lowered and that unemployment is relatively high, especially in Sweden and Finland.

It is also important to consider the role of the family for the income of children of an adult age in relation to the income of parents. A study of this relationship comparing Sweden and the UK shows that

there is a certain connection in Sweden but much less compared to the UK, where income disparity has increased much more.

## TRENDS

### TRENDS IN FAMILY FORMS AND FERTILITY

In contemporary Nordic societies as well as in other parts of the western world trends can be seen that are quite different from the visions of the policy-makers of 60 to 70 years ago, and with implications for family policy. In Chapter 2 An-Magritt Jensen and Mai Heide Ottosen focus on trends in family formation and in the institutionalisation of family relationships.

The most important changes are the demographic imbalance caused by the postponement of childbirth and ageing. What distinguishes the Nordic pattern is the stronger tendency for having children at an older age, and small educational differences such as the educated women 'catching-up' later with the less educated women who have their children when they are younger. Moreover, women have higher education levels combined with high fertility and low childlessness, a combination which is quite unusual in other European countries. Assisted Reproduction Technology (ART) plays an important role in the numbers of women giving birth later in life, and the trend is increasing. Assisted reproduction technology as it is developing makes it possible for an increasing amount of couples and individuals to become parents. Moreover, a more subtle gendering of parenthood is surfacing from the different trends in childlessness among women and men. A marked and steady increase in childlessness among men is taking place. This is a fairly new phenomenon.

Family forms are diverging following the break-up of couples, single mother households and formation of new couples and sibling relationships. A striking impression of the development is the shrinking share of children with only full sisters and brothers combined with the increase in the multitude of types of siblings, dominated by both full and half-siblings. Furthermore, more children have access to step-grandparents.

## THE POSITION OF THE CHILD

The trend towards the diversification of families and family forms has developed in parallel with a change in the position of the child in families. In Chapter 3 Mai Heide Ottosen identifies this development in terms of individualisation and its reconciliation with dependence. She refers to data about the child-rearing values of parents with a focus on independence and of egalitarian relationships between parents and children. From a parental point of view, data seems to reveal that in dual-earner Nordic families, parents tend to devote more time to their children and to live a more family-centred life style. Although one can encourage a more equal orientation towards family chores, parents tend to put more focus on encouraging teenage girls to take on more responsibilities for domestic tasks compared to teenage boys.

In her chapter, Mai Heide Ottosen discusses parental responsibilities towards children after divorce or separation. The institutional regulations on joint parental responsibilities have in all Nordic countries emphasised the interests of the child in maintaining contact with both parents. The implication of this has been that although the couple splits up, they are morally and legally obliged to cooperate about their children for many years. An increasing amount of children with separated or divorced parents live with both parents in a shared living arrangement and parents have joint legal custody for almost every such child. The development has in many respects followed a positive direction, although there are still many problems facing those couples and children where cooperation is not working well.

## CHILD WELFARE

One of the bases for the Nordic family policies was attention to the welfare of children both in terms of economic living standards and in the provision of care. In Chapter 4, Mette Deding and Katja Forssén present Nordic data on child welfare compared with data from selected European countries. Altogether the comparative data shows evidence of a positive picture for a majority of children. However, child poverty (assessed with a relative measure) seems to be remarkably stable over time and affects about 11-13 per cent of children. They point out that the share of poor children is considerably larger in single parent households, where 20-30 per cent of the children live in poor households. Immigrant families are even more exposed to poverty, where the share of children in

poor families is about 50 per cent in the Nordic countries (about 23 per cent in Denmark). The precarious situation on the labour market for parents in these households prevails behind these alarming figures and we need to know more about the duration of the poverty in these families. Still, the figures reveal a structural problem to be dealt with. In their chapter Katja Forssen and Mette Deding also present various data on welfare indicators such as health, education and risk behaviour among teenage children. The more alarming figures in the chapter deal with long term unemployment and education, showing that leaving school early yields exposure to social marginalisation.

### CARING FAMILIES

The parental insurance packages in the Nordic countries have, however, largely been untouched by the new approach to social insurances, although some changes have been introduced. In Chapter 5 Gudny Björk Eydal and Tine Rostgaard examine one of the core parts of family policies: the caring of children. The chapter also addresses care of the elderly in the wake of changing policy regimes as described above.

For parents and their children, parental leave and publicly financed child care can be regarded as success stories in Nordic family policies. The ideological tensions between parental and public care are still present in debates and some measures have been introduced in order to extend a choice for parents by providing both options. The authors conclude that trends show a continued support for public child care and increased emphasis on early education. In all the countries pre-school or kindergarten provision is now the most usual form of day care for children from the age of 2, except for Finland where the children start pre-school later than their counterparts in the other Nordic countries. However, Eydal and Rostgaard also note some country variation in the opinions about what is in the best interests of the child, most noticeably in the development of models of paying parents for parental care over extended periods after parental leave. Overall, this seems to promote care solutions where women are more in charge of the provision of care for the young child, but also care solutions, which to a greater extent reflect the socio-economic and migrant background of the parents. This trend counteracts the traditional goal in Nordic care policies of creating equal opportunities for children's participation, and therefore entails that day

care is both affordable, accessible and of a high standard in order to provide a real alternative to parental care.

Regarding care of the elderly, the authors suggest that trends are moving in the direction of increased responsibilities for the elderly themselves and for members of the family or for purchase on the private market. They discuss various policy changes that are pushing in this direction. The system of elderly care, although diverging between the countries, points overall in a direction of an increased involvement of market mechanisms in care of and by elderly and an increase in informal care provision in all social strata. What is however visible in all countries is that the developing systems create class inequalities in access to care, since informal help is more frequent among those with less education.

#### FLEXIBILISATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Labour market flexibility is regarded as an important measure in the global economies in order to meet fluctuations in demands of production of goods and services. In Chapter 6 by the authors Thomas Boje and Anders Ejrnæs, the Nordic countries are examined regarding the extent of different types of flexibility for employed men and women with and without children and their effects on experiences of work-family balance.

In the chapter it is shown that flexibilisation of working time is widespread in the Nordic countries: in fact, European data shows that the Nordic countries have the highest level of working time flexibility among the EU member states. The flexibility patterns are different between the countries, and this to a large degree seems to be related to regulations and traditions within different spheres (e.g. public and private) within the countries. Men with or without children have access to flexible work hours on their own terms to a larger extent than women do. Long working hours and overtime are more frequent among men, whereas part-time work among women is far more frequent. Part-time work is considered to be an employee-friendly type of working time arrangement for women with care responsibilities. It might be so if the time allocations fits into the opening hours of the childcare institutions, but sometimes part-time jobs are used by the employers to address special supply demands outside the normal working hours – shops with long opening hours, services in early or late hours in the public sector etc. – and then the schedule could be highly inflexible for the employee. Invol-

untary part-time work is higher among women, especially in Sweden and Finland. On the other hand, both women and men in studies referred to would like to work less than they do at the time of the study. Men are more inclined to opt for reducing their working time because of the demands put on them.

Altogether the authors suggest that working conditions are more important than caring responsibilities in the creation of tensions between work and family life. Variable and unpredictable working hours can be stressful for coping with and raising new demands on child care arrangements and employee-friendly working time arrangements.

#### GENDER EQUALITY

Family policy has been a trademark for policies on gender equality in the Nordic countries. In Chapter 7 Ulla Björnberg discusses accomplishments so far, showing that attitudes towards equal relationships are firmly established in the region. However, practices show another picture of persistence, which is visible in figures on labour market and sharing of domestic work and care. In various spheres of working life, especially the private sector, women's career aspirations are counteracted by traditional attitudes on gendered capabilities for high-ranked jobs. The provision of family care to elderly parents is growing and it is more widespread among middle aged women with a lower level of education. In the chapter she also argues that violence against women and children should be an issue for family policies. A number of studies have shown substantial evidence that power relations within families based on male supremacy are still prevailing, although with various strength in different kinds of families. The violence of men and fathers is harmful to the health and wellbeing of women, mothers and children. There is a general need for a more institutionalised attention to violence in family settings. By highlighting the problems, more detailed statistics should be developed and more regular financing of preventive measures could be accomplished.

#### MIGRATION CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

A topic that is rarely dealt with in family policy is the role of migration in shaping the living conditions of children and families in contemporary Nordic societies. Many of the children with a migration background, either of their own or of their parents, have adversities to cope with in their everyday life. Unfortunately there is not much comparative research

to draw upon about how children and parents with these experiences develop. In Chapter 8 we highlight some perspectives on the economic and social disadvantages of some of the children. We also explore some issues related to transnational families, such as family formation through migration of spouses, with examples from Norway and Denmark.

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# DIVERSITIES IN FAMILY FORMATION AND FAMILY FORMS

AN-MAGRITT JENSEN & MAI HEIDE OTTOSEN

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a broad overview of the main demographic trends that affect contemporary family life in the Nordic countries and may pose challenges for family policies in the future. Issues related to the distribution of people are usually described from the perspective of adults; here – when relevant – we present and discuss them primarily using children as the analytical unit. Where information on children is not available, we will supplement with alternative data. We shall draw a picture of some main features by focusing on three issues: 1) fertility levels and development, 2) children's family diversities; and 3) some impacts of how an ageing society affects children's lives.

Demographic development and children's families are linked, but the paths are not always straight-forward. For example, increasing diversity in children's families may be associated with higher fertility in the 'diverse' family types, as a child will often glue new partners together. However, fertility was higher during periods of fewer 'diverse' families, such as in the 1950s, than in a time where diversity has increased, as in the 2010s. Moreover, there are more grandparents living as longevity increases. However, the postponement of the first births may have an opposite consequence in terms of how many grandparents are available

to children. Even more complexity arises if we consider the linkage between children's family diversity and new grandparent constellations following this development.

Where comparable information from the Nordic countries is accessible, this will be used. Examples and supplementary information will add to this picture.

## FERTILITY LEVELS AND DEVELOPMENT

### GENERAL TRENDS

Although a result of the most intimate behaviour, and subject to individual choices on whether, when and how many children one might decide to have, fertility rates change in surprisingly similar ways across European countries. Fertility is consistently lower than it was in 1950. However, in the Nordic countries it increased around the mid-1980s and the result is a comparatively high fertility rate. Despite minor variations<sup>1</sup> the Nordic countries have developed in parallel directions, as seen from Figure 2.1: Andersson et al. (2008) found strong similarities in fertility patterns across the Nordic countries when comparing trends in women's cohort fertility and concluded that: '... there is a common Nordic fertility regime.' (p. 22).<sup>2</sup> What distinguishes the Nordic pattern is the stronger trend of having children at older ages, and small educational differences as the educated women 'catch-up' with the less educated women who have their children at younger ages. The total fertility rate (TFR)<sup>3</sup> (in 2011) is close to the reproduction level in all countries.<sup>4</sup>

Nordic women are in general well-educated and the increase in fertility over the last decades has been followed with much attention since it counteracted the expectations of the Second Demographic Transition that more female education and employment were the main factors behind the post-war fertility decline (Lesthaeghe, 1995). In the Nordic countries the cohort fertility (the final number of children) of women born between 1935 to 1963 was around 2 children, and was highest in

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1. Thus, the fertility level is slightly higher in Iceland compared to the other Nordic countries. Moreover, Icelandic women tend to be younger when giving birth. It should also be noted that fertility in Sweden has had some notable ups and downs in the period, in particular around 2000.
  2. The analyses included cohort fertility, postponement of the first child and childlessness, with interactions by education. Iceland was excluded.
  3. Average number of births in a given year to women 15-49 years.
  4. CIA World Fact book, estimate.

Norway and lowest in Denmark according to Andersson et al. (2008)<sup>5</sup> and the similarity between countries has increased over time (Vikat, 2004). Like the rest of Europe, Nordic women tend to have their children at older ages. Postponement of the first birth cuts across the educational levels. The largest differences in fertility by educational levels are found in Denmark and Norway. Andersson et al. (2008) found only a moderate variation in childlessness among women according to educational groups. Over the last years a modest increase in childlessness among women at age 40 has taken place, but remains relatively low, highest in Finland (21 per cent) and lowest in Norway (14 per cent). In 1990 the share of women without children at this age was 15 per cent and 9 per cent in the two countries respectively (Statistics Finland, 2010; Statistics Norway, 2010).

Hence fertility is relatively high, childlessness among women relatively low, and a major change has taken place in terms of when people have their first child. As an example we find that, in Finland in 1990, 67 per cent of 30-year old women had a child. At the end of 2011 only one in two women was a mother at this age.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in Norway in 1990, 83 per cent of the women aged 30 had given birth to their first child, compared to 59 per cent in 2011.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, women have advanced education, high fertility and low childlessness rates, a combination which is quite unusual in other European countries. This is explained first by long traditions of liberal family values in Nordic countries (Therborn, 2004) and secondly by the relative wealth and generous family policies in these countries (Andersson et al., 2008).

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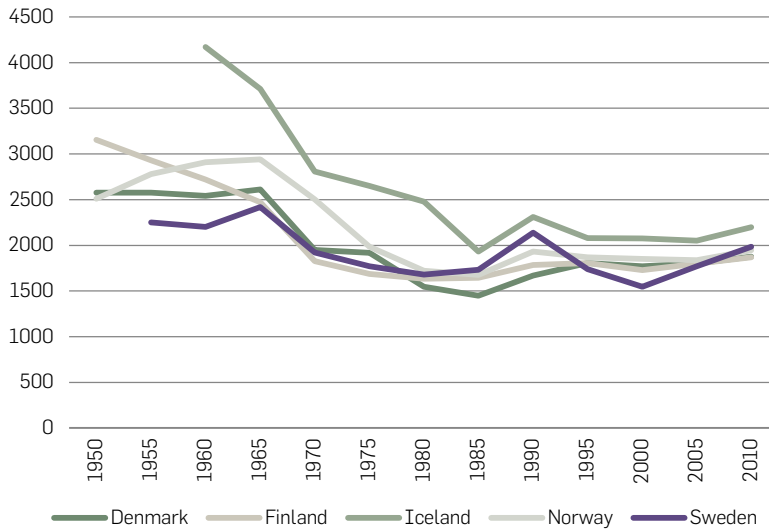
5. Andersson et al. do not include Iceland.

6. Statistics Finland [http://tilastokeskus.fi/til/vaerak/2010/01/vaerak\\_2010\\_01\\_2011-09-30\\_tie\\_001\\_en.html](http://tilastokeskus.fi/til/vaerak/2010/01/vaerak_2010_01_2011-09-30_tie_001_en.html).

7. Statistics Norway: <http://www.ssb.no/emner/02/02/10/fodte/tab-2012-04-11-09.html>.

FIGURE 2.1

Fertility rates in the Nordic countries 1950-2010.



Source: <http://www.norden.org>.

## CHILD-BEARING AND WORKING PATTERNS

To understand fertility development among men it can be worthwhile to start with the division of labour among women and men: the home and the labour market. The recent trends towards gender equality are based upon women's movement out of the home into the labour market, and the expectation of an opposite movement among men, from the labour market into the home. Men and women are expected to participate in both spheres, on (more or less) equal terms.

Traditionally, marriage confirmed, as Therborn expresses it, 'The rule of the father and the rule of the husband, in that order' (Therborn, 2004: p. 13). Going back to pre-modern Europe, Gillis (2000) describes a society in which the father's position as the head of a family was the basis upon which property, power and prestige rested. Fatherhood was a social necessity: bachelors had no social position. These descriptions are based upon a society with a sharp division of labour. Children maintained an economic value to their parents, securing the line of inheritance and ensuring societal prestige and belonging. The shift from the economic to the emotional value of children was followed by a sharp

fertility decline (the first demographic transition) around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Half a century later, the second demographic transition, Lesthaeghe (1995) suggested, was driven by the changes in women's roles as they (through education and employment) became less dependent on a husband's economic support. As can be noticed from Figure 2.2, all Nordic countries are 'in the lead' in births outside marriage, with a major change taking place since 1970. Taking Norway as the example, only four per cent of children were born to cohabiting parents in 1972 (Jensen & Clausen, 2003). Today, 55 per cent of the children are born outside marriage, the majority to cohabiting parents, and about 10 per cent to a single mother (Statistics Norway, 2012)<sup>8</sup>. Surprisingly, given the importance of marriage for men in previous times, this development, with broad similarities in Nordic countries, has evolved without much resistance among men.

The gender segregation of the Nordic labour market is, somewhat ironically, a result of the expanding welfare sectors. As care-institutions for old people and children became a public matter, these occupations were filled by women. As a result, the Nordic labour market became one of the most gender segregated in the world (Anker, 1998; Rønsen & Skrede, 2010). This had implications for fertility, as women in 'child-friendly' occupations have much higher fertility compared to women in the private sector (Rønsen, Skrede & Lappegård, 2011).

In the public sector, part-time work is widespread and salaries are modest, while work security is relatively high. In contrast, men tend to work in the private sectors full-time (sometimes 'overtime'), earning higher salaries, but they have less work security. Mothers adjust their working patterns to child bearing; men do not. A Swedish study finds that part-time work among fathers remains highly unusual (Statistics Sweden, 2010). 93 per cent of the Swedish fathers aged 25-54 with children at home work full time, compared to 89 per cent of the childless men and 66 per cent of the mothers. For Norway, Hardoy and Schøne (2008) find that women experience a 'child punishment' at work as their income is lowered after they have become mothers. In contrast, men experience a 'child gain' as their income is higher than that among childless men. The 'child punishment' is highest for mothers with high salaries, while for fathers the 'child gain' is highest for those with a high salary. The overall higher usage of parental leaves among mothers is suggest-

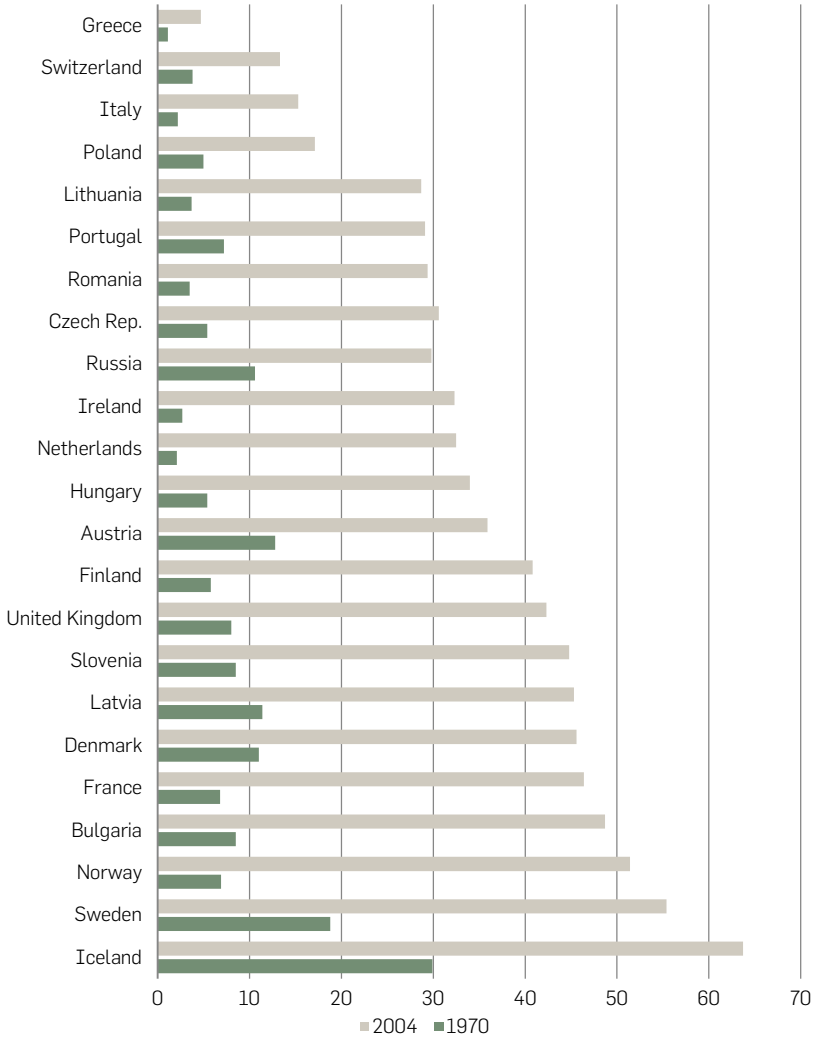
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8. <http://www.ssb.no/emner/02/02/10/fodte/tab-2012-04-11-01.html>.

ed to be an important explanation for the prevailing income gaps between women and men (op.cit.).

FIGURE 2.2

Extramarital births 1970-2004 in selected European countries. Per cent.



## CHILDLESSNESS AMONG MEN

If fatherhood is associated with higher incomes, one might expect a positive impact on men's fertility. However, a strong increase in childlessness among men is taking place at least in Norway (Jensen, 2013). A more subtle gendering of parenthood is surfacing from the different trends in childlessness among women and men.

Figure 2.3 shows childlessness at age 40 in 2002/2003 for the Scandinavian countries, while Figure 2.4 illustrates childlessness among Finnish men and women in selected age groups in 2011. However, the message for both figures is similar. Childlessness is higher for men than for women in all countries. In Finland (2010) 30 per cent of the men are childless at age 40-44. The total number of children per Finnish man is 1.61, while the number of children among fathers is higher, 2.29. The higher the share of childless men, the larger the difference in the number of children between men and fathers. Among all Finnish men (aged 15 to 75), 57 per cent are fathers (Statistics Finland, 2011).<sup>9</sup>

Linking back to the association between income and fatherhood, we have seen that fathers earn more than childless men. One likely explanation is that childlessness remains higher among men with less education (where income may also be lower). Skrede (2005) found a positive relationship between income and fatherhood by age 40, while a negative relationship is found between education and fatherhood. This could indicate, as Skrede suggests, that men with higher education have a stronger inclination to be fathers after the age of 40.

An alternative or additional suggestion is that education can have other implications apart than income. For example, education can be taken as a kind of insurance, something to fall back on after having explored other lifestyles to that of the family man. We may also wonder if *the fear* of risks may have importance for men's perceptions of fatherhood, also beyond the actual risk. A study from Statistics Sweden (2003) found that young men (not yet fathers) expect a negative impact of parenthood on their labour market prospects. The fear is stronger among women but is also present among men even though the actual risk for them is quite low (p. 11). One in five men without children expected risks associated with parenthood for their employment, which in turn may have implications for their timing of fatherhood.

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9. [http://tilastokeskus.fi/til/vaerak/2010/01/vaerak\\_2010\\_01\\_2011-09-30\\_tau\\_006\\_en.html](http://tilastokeskus.fi/til/vaerak/2010/01/vaerak_2010_01_2011-09-30_tau_006_en.html).

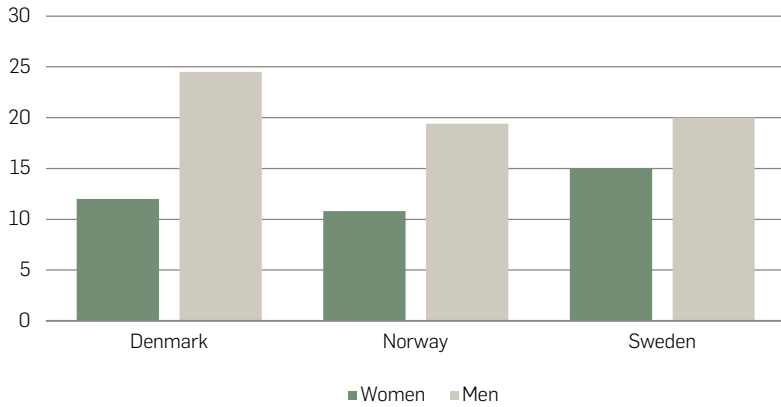
Quantitative and qualitative studies of this life phase suggest that the 20s are typically perceived as a period for gaining experience and personal freedom, while the 30s are the time for settling down and having children (Ottosen & Mouritzen, 2013). But men seem to be more ambivalent towards having children than women are (Bergnéhr & Bernhardt, 2013). Children are a matter of discussion as women meet in their networks of friends. They refer to childbearing in ‘waves’, or ‘explosions’, glueing friendships together. In contrast, discussions on having babies are marginal among men. As friends become fathers, those remaining childless see friendships as lost for them (Jensen, 2013).

Much attention is given to the relationship between welfare policies, the father’s quotas in particular, and fertility (Brandth & Kvande, 2003). The assumption has been that where fathers are given more possibilities to spend time with their children, their motivation to have another child increases. However, in Sweden, where this assumption has been tested, it has only partly been verified. Fathers taking a maximum amount of leave have a lower likelihood of having a second child compared to fathers taking only moderate leave (Neyer & Andersson, 2008). A take up of father’s quotas up to a certain level seem to be more beneficial for fertility motivations than a maximum take-up. Most women have their first child at around the age of 30, while most men remain childless at this age. Women’s child-rearing responsibilities are unfolding in the life stage when young adults establish themselves at the labour market, primarily through their 30s. Among men a sequential pattern is emerging, in which they can establish themselves in the labour market while child responsibilities are delayed, limited or abstained from, until employment is ascertained.



FIGURE 2.3

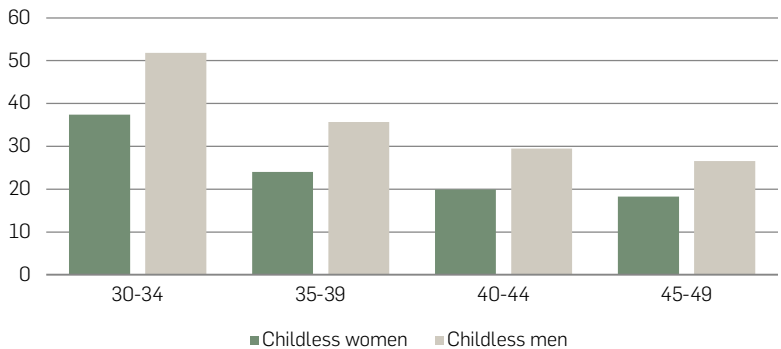
Childless men and women born in 1960. Denmark, Norway and Sweden (2002 women/2003 men). Per cent.



Source: DK Men: Sobotka, 2007; DK, N women: Tanturri & Mencarini, 2008; N men: Statistics Norway, 2010; S Ds 2001.

FIGURE 2.4

Childless women and men in selected age groups. Finland 2011. Per cent.



Source: Statistics Finland, 2010.

## ART – ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Studies suggest that the majority of young adult women and men want to become parents; only a few (1-4 per cent) wish to remain childless by

deliberate choice (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2009a). Yet, as mentioned above, Nordic studies suggest that 11-17 per cent of Nordic women (from the 1955-59 birth cohorts) remained childless at age 40. Infertility may be due to reproductive illnesses, individual risk factors such as smoking or obesity, or it may be due to increased age as a result of postponement processes.

Like other Nordic countries a strong recovery in births of a first child has taken place and ART has played an important role in this development (Sobotka et al., 2008). It is worth noticing that ART, originally an abbreviation for Artificial Reproductive Technology, now stands for Assisted Reproductive Technology, thus indicating an ideological shift pointing toward normalisation and routine incorporation (Melhuus, 2012). In general it is estimated that in vitro fertilisation (IVF) for women aged 30-35 'can make up for half of the births "lost" due to age-related declines in conception rates' (p. 81). In the case of Denmark the use of ART has increased sharply and it is estimated that 8-9 per cent of children from a birth cohort have been born as a result of ART (Schmidt & Sejbæk, 2012: p. 107).

In Denmark the conservative coalition government decided to charge for ART treatment (by user-payment) in January 2011, yet this arrangement was rolled back by the social-democratic government in January 2012. With the publication of the fall in the rate of fertility from 2010 to 2011, the reduction in the availability of ART was pointed to. Thus, the Danish Fertility Society<sup>10</sup> estimated that the introduction of user-payment on ART (in 2011) reduced the number of births as a result of treatment by 900 in 2011 (out of 58.898 births in total) compared to 2010. In Norway, five children were born with ART in 1984. Since then a steady increase has taken place until: by 2011, 1902 children had been born as a result of ART (all methods). Of these 900 children were born as a result of IVF (in vitro fertilisation) (Folkehelseinstituttet, 2012).<sup>11</sup>

ART contributes towards the increasing diversity of family patterns. While parental divorce or dissolution of a relationship marked the period from the 1980s to 2000, new types of families have been emerging in recent years. Among these are same-sex families and children born as a result of ART, though they are still marginal in the large picture. Nevertheless, these families may have a potential of growth in the years

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10. [http://www.fertilitetsselskab.dk/images/2012\\_dok/dfs1997-2011%20oversigt.pdf](http://www.fertilitetsselskab.dk/images/2012_dok/dfs1997-2011%20oversigt.pdf).

11. <http://mfr-nesstar.uib.no/mfr/>.

to come. Children born as a result of ART treatment may have heterosexual parents struggling to get pregnant, same-sex parents who in general will have children this way, or heterosexual solo women who do not want to wait (any longer) for ‘Mr Right’ to be the father for a potential child.<sup>12</sup> Thus, embedded in the new options following ART, women and men may seek to have a child outside marriage or cohabitation for several reasons, including freedom from demands on a common child after dissolution of a relationship.

While some types of reproductive technologies such as IVF enable couples to have ‘their own child’, others involve the donation of biological materials such as insemination of sperm by donor, donation of egg or surrogate motherhood (the latter is currently not permitted in Scandinavia). The implications of these technologies not only raise ethical questions, but also contribute towards blurring the conceptions of what constitutes kinship and parenthood.<sup>13</sup> This in turn may also affect an individual’s feeling of identity, belonging and filiation.

Stories brought up by the news media illustrate the complexity that follows from these technologies. Children resulting from anonymous sperm donation, who wish to know about their progenitor, may – if they succeed – discover that they have a large number of half siblings. In some cases such discoveries can lead to creation of new bonds; however, biomedicine can also insist on connecting those who may have chosen not to be united (Finkler, 2001). This was the case for a least a dozen young half siblings, spread all over Scandinavia, who were in the risk zone for a serious illness due to genetic disposition from the sperm donor. In another recent case, also resulting from anonymous sperm donation, a young married couple from France with three children was found to be brother and sister.<sup>14</sup>

During the last decade Scandinavian legislation has become responsive toward claims of abandoning previous strict demands for sperm donators to remain anonymous. By taking such steps, legislators not only recognize the right of children to know their biological father,

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12. Yet only a minority of those who are having fertility treatments are single or lesbian. According to the Danish Fertility Society, only 6.2 per cent of all fertility treatments (at public clinics) in 2011 were performed on women without a male partner.

13. This is not to say that IVF remains ethically unproblematic. For instance: can frozen semen from a deceased husband be used by the widow to have children (full siblings to children conceived while the husband/father was alive)?

14. *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 26. February 2013.

but also tend to redefine the constitution of paternity. Paternity, which used to be based on a social principle (the so-called *pater-est* principle) is becoming more like maternity, which is based on a biological principle. Thus, regarding fatherhood the biogenetic origin might be seen as fundamental to how children perceive their identity, to knowing who you are (Melhuus, 2012). On the other hand, by focusing on the social practice of everyday life, the father who lives with the child and who takes part in the upbringing of it is might be more important for the child's identity.

Until now, surrogate motherhood has not been legally allowed in Scandinavia. This is, however, not to say that surrogacy is an irrelevant phenomenon. Due to increasing reproductive tourism, infertile couples from all over world can find surrogate mothers in other countries: India, for instance, is one of the world's most popular providers of reproductive services. Here, poor women can carry and deliver a child for a couple, while being handsomely paid, receiving anything from \$2000 to \$6000 per pregnancy, which is considerably more than she is typically likely to see in a year (Raywat, 2011). To our knowledge, no official statistics have counted the number of children that are imported into Scandinavia as a result of the outsourcing of baby-making; but it is probably not many. Yet, in qualitative terms, surrogacy raises complex questions of a legal, ethical, medical and social nature (Hermerén, 2011). Among these, surrogacy tends to break the unitary view of physical motherhood into several parts. Maternity becomes an ambiguous category (similar to what paternity used to be), by leaving out the possibility that a child can have more mothers (i.e. biological, genetic, social) as well as no mother (unknown). The latter could be the case when male homosexual couples buy a child abroad.

Even if such scenarios may appear to be a long way from Scandinavian notions of maternity, the question is how legislators within the Nordic countries will react to pressures that arise from a globalised industry of baby-making or from peoples' claims of having rights to a child under the ethos of equality (Melhuus, 2009). However, it is not only a matter of commercialisation, but also of childlessness due to sickness or circumstances that prevent a woman carrying her own baby.

Evidence from recent public debates in Sweden suggests that the time for this discussion is about to come, as the National Medical-Ethical Advice put the introduction of surrogacy onto the agenda in late 2012.<sup>15</sup>

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15. <http://www.surrogat.info/statens-medicin-etiska-rad-tar-upp-surrogatmodraskap/>.

## DE-INSTITUTIONALISATION OF MARRIAGE

Changes in family forms in recent years have challenged the conventional understanding of the constitution of the bonds of kinship in modern western societies. In this modernisation process, the Nordic/Scandinavian countries have been among the frontrunners.

From a purely quantitative point of view, the institution of marriage has weakened during the period from ca. 1970 onwards, as can be seen from Figures 2.5 and 2.6 which illustrate the case of Denmark in 1986 and 2012. Over time, more people (women and men) have been living a single life; more live in other family types than in marriage; and fewer are getting married. This has happened due to increasing divorce rates as well as the emergence of consensual unions.

In 2008, the mean age for first marriages was 32.4 years for Danish women and 34.8 for men, while the mean age of women giving birth to their first child was about 29. These trends are similar in other Nordic countries (Immerfall & Therborn, 2009).

Exemplified from the case of Norway, by the end of the 1980s births were still monopolised by marriage. By 2011 about half of the children were born out of wedlock. Similar developments are also found in other Nordic countries.<sup>16</sup>

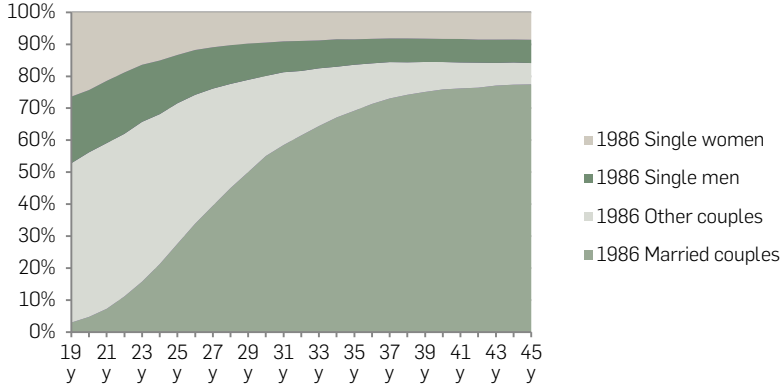
This, however, does not imply that cohabitation has substituted for marriage. Only a minority of cohabiting couples do not eventually marry: over time they either tend to marry or to dissolve the relationship. Trends in cohabitation form the basis for arguing that marriage has been de-institutionalised. This is also underlined by the demographical fact that it is no longer marriage, but parenthood that institutes the family.

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16. Data with children as the statistical unit is not necessarily available in all countries.

FIGURE 2.5

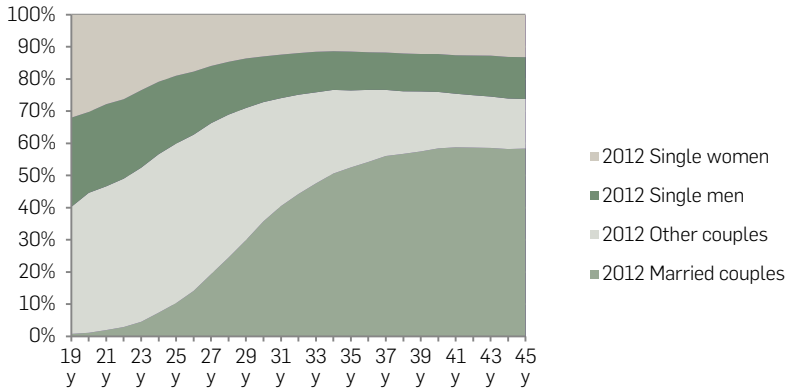
Distribution of the Danish population, aged 19-45 according to family type, 1986.



Source: Danmarks Statistik, various years calculated by Mai Heide Ottosen.

FIGURE 2.6

Distribution of the Danish population, aged 19-45 according to family type, 2012.



Source: Danmarks Statistik, various years calculated by Mai Heide Ottosen.

## DIVERSIFICATION OF HORIZONTAL FAMILY PATTERNS

### CHILDREN'S FAMILIES

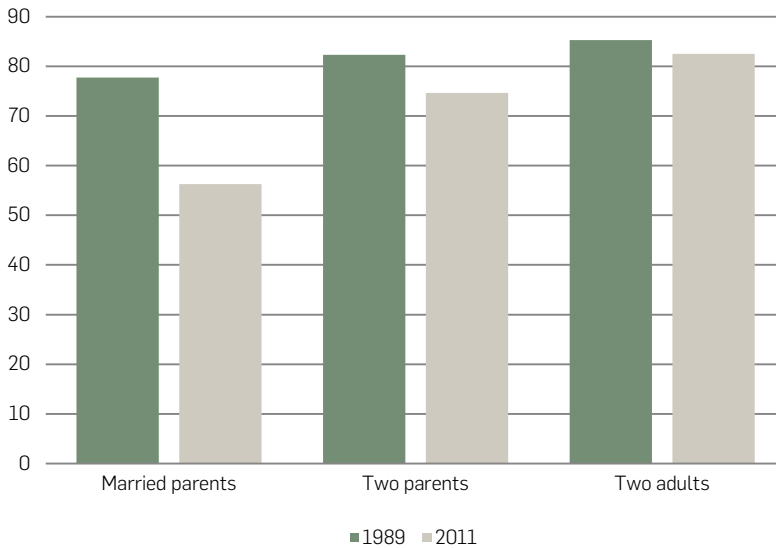
Figure 2.2 revealed that more children are born outside marriage, in particular in the Nordic countries. Whether this constituted a change in formalities or in realities was a central issue in initial debates, as the increasing proportion of children born in these unions was followed by research analysing the consequences for children. Early studies were swift to observe the higher instability of consensual unions compared to marriage (among others Cherlin, 2004; Hoem & Hoem, 1992; Jensen & Clausen, 1997; Ottosen, 2000, 1999; Toulemon, 1997) and this is confirmed in later studies. Jensen and Clausen (2003) found that the risk of dissolution remained high despite the spread of consensual unions. Instability in families increased both in marriages (divorce) and in consensual unions, with the latter being the most unstable. By 2004 one in four of all children aged 0-17 did not live with both parents and this proportion remained stable until 2011 (Statistics Norway, various years). This development seems to have reached a level of saturation. Across Nordic countries there has been stabilisation in the risk of parental dissolution over the last few years. The change over time is illustrated for Norway (Figure 2.7) showing a sharp decline in the proportion of children living with married parents.

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FIGURE 2.7

Proportion of children by family composition, 1989 and 2011. Norway.

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More children do not live with married parents, and 75 per cent live with two parents (married or cohabiting). The distribution of children's family types is quite similar across the Scandinavian countries (see Table 2.1). Despite the decline in marriage as an institution, relatively few children live with only one adult (about every 6<sup>th</sup> child). The main change has taken place in the composition of parents, whether children live with their mother and father or with step-parents, and increasingly more often with a diversity of siblings.

Thus, a striking impression of the development is the shrinking share of children with only 'full' sisters and brothers combined with the increase in the multitude of types of siblings, dominated by half-siblings and both full and step-siblings, as illustrated by the case of Denmark (Figure 2.8). While in 1982 about 15 per cent of children had half and step-siblings, this proportion had almost doubled 30 years later (2012).



TABLE 2.1

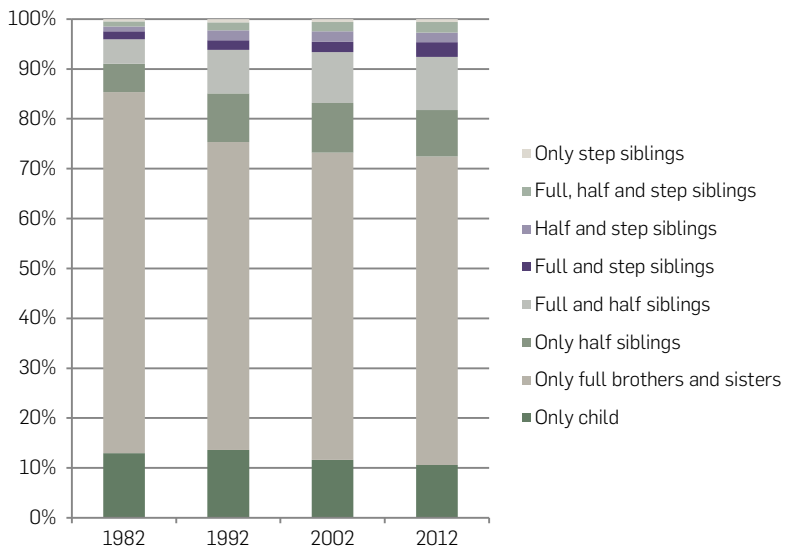
Children, age 0-17 by family type in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Per cent.

Year	Denmark	Norway	Sweden
	2012	2010	2010
<i>Both parents</i>	72	74	75
Married	60	56	
Consensual	12	18	
<i>Single parent</i>	18	18	19
Mother	16	15	16
Father	2	3	3
<i>Step-families</i>	8	8	4
Mother & partner	7	7	3
Father & partner	1	1	1
Other	2	0	1

Source: Danmarks Statistik; Statistiska Centralbyrån; Statistisk Sentralbyrå.

FIGURE 2.8

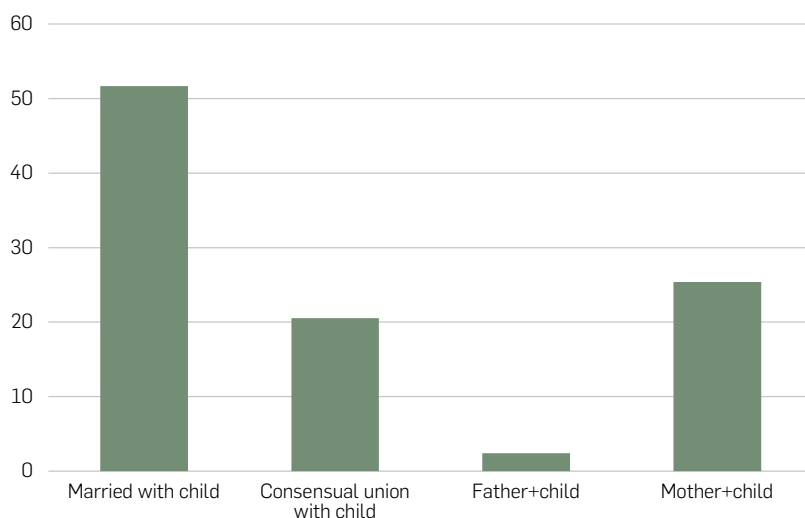
Children distributed by the type of siblings, 1982 to 2012. Denmark. Per cent.



Source: Statistics Denmark, calculated by Mai Heide Ottosen.

FIGUR 2.9

Families with children in Iceland, 2010. Per cent.



Source: <http://www.statice.is>.

In Icelandic and Finnish statistics families, not children, are used as the analytical unit. Figure 2.9 demonstrates that among families with children in Iceland, one in two consists of married couples with children, one in four is a single mother and one in five a consensual union with children. We do not know if the children in married couples and consensual unions are living with both parents.

In Finland a slight decline in the total number of families with children is taking place (1995-2011). This is traced primarily to married couples with children amounting to 61 per cent in 2011. 19 per cent were cohabiting, almost the same as single mother families (18 per cent). The number of single father families is less than three per cent over the period.

In an international comparison the share of children who do not live with both parents is high, and similar to but not the highest among western countries. Both the USA and England have higher shares (Curie et al., 2009/2010)<sup>17</sup> as shown in Figure 2.10. This figure is based on re-

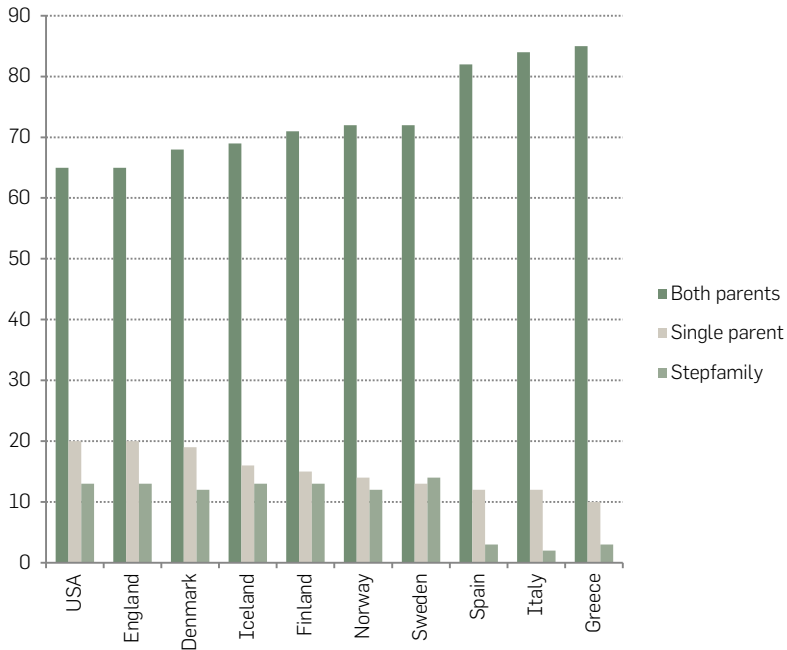
17. [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/163857/Social-determinants-of-health-and-well-being-among-young-people.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/163857/Social-determinants-of-health-and-well-being-among-young-people.pdf).

sponses among older children (11-15 years). Changes in families with children have implied a gradual but consistent decline in the proportion of children who live with both parents.

There are several combined consequences of changes in fertility for children and family patterns: as fewer men become fathers, more children are born outside marriage and fathers have children in more ‘sets’; more children do not live with their father. Furthermore, with more break-ups and more ‘recirculation’ of fathers, more children live with half-siblings and step-siblings.

FIGURE 2.10

Family types among young people (11, 13, 15 years). Selected western countries. 2009/2010.



Source: Currie et al., 2009/2010: p. 229.

#### FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN AFTER PARENTAL BREAK-UP

Over the last 20-30 years we have witnessed significant changes in the way in which the family relationships of children of divorced parents are

arranged. In Chapter 3 we will discuss the implications and effects of the welfare state regulation; here, we present some central figures to illustrate how the framework of the lives of children in such families has undergone changes. In contrast to statistical information on fertility, household composition, etc., most data on *parenting* after family dissolution is not registered in the administrative records, but is based on surveys conducted among the population.

Yet, information on *children's residence* is available via registers. Focusing first on trends over time, data from Denmark show that the vast majority of children with separated/divorced parents – then as now – have their permanent residence with their mothers. This pattern appears to be quite stable across the last approximately 30 years, and reflects no development toward greater equality between fathers and mothers. Similar patterns are found in Norway and Sweden. Viewed from a life course perspective of the children, almost all young children are living with their mothers. As they grow up increasing proportions move to live with the fathers, especially boys (Statistics Denmark, 2012; Statistics Norway, 2011<sup>18</sup>; Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2009b). It is worth noting, however, that even among the oldest teenage boys, more than 3 out of 4 still live in their mothers' households (according to Statistics Sweden, 2009).

Findings from Denmark (Ottosen et al., 2010) suggest that young people (aged 19) from broken homes tend to leave the parental nest earlier compared to peers who grow up in intact families, as seen from Figure 2.11. This may be a result of parents' new family formation. A youth might find it difficult to live in new family constellations, which the residing parent – not the young person him- or herself – has chosen. Another explanation may rely on the fact that single parent families in general have fewer economic resources compared to two-parent families and therefore cannot afford to support a young person living at home. That early disruption is associated with divorce and few socioeconomic resources in the family of origin is found in another study on moving patterns among Scandinavian youth (Bernhardt, Gahler & Goldscheider, 2005). Whatever the reasons are, these young movers may meet special challenges/risks by standing on their own feet at a relatively early age.

With regard to *contact*, little statistical evidence exists on how divorced parents organised the relationship between the child and non-

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18. <http://www.ssb.no/a/barnogunge/2011/tabeller/familie/fam1000.html>.

resident parent in the days before the so-called divorce revolution took place (from the 1970s onward). Qualitative data based on individual biographical accounts suggests that it was not unusual for children to have very little or even no contact with the father after divorce (Ottosen, 2012b). One of the first Scandinavian survey-based studies on children of divorced parents conducted in Denmark in the early 1980s revealed that a 'normal visiting arrangement' between the child and the father at that time was defined by contact every third week (Koch-Nielsen, 1983; Koch-Nielsen & Transgaard, 1987). Some years later 'normal visiting' came to mean contact every other weekend, eventually supplemented by a weekday and some kind of shared holidays (Ottosen, 2004).

In recent years, we have witnessed a trend towards shared parenting for children of divorced parents. This trend includes a growing proportion of children who are living for about the same amount of time in each of the parent's households, for instance one week in each place. From being a rather marginal phenomenon a couple of decades ago, 50/50 living arrangements are approaching a mainstream phenomenon: approximately every fifth child of divorced parents in Denmark lives in this way. The same trend appears in Norway, with 25 per cent of such children living in an equally shared arrangement (Skjorten, Barlindhaug & Lidén, 2007; Ådnanes et al., 2011). According to Statistics Sweden, 28 per cent of children with divorced parents were living in a shared residence arrangement in 2008 (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2009b).<sup>19</sup> Similar trends are observed in other parts of the Western world. Thus, children have increasingly gained access to maintaining closer contact with their father, though the majority live with their mothers. Even if children's sibling relationships have become more complex, as described above, Danish data shows that in most cases the visiting family consists of only one person, usually a single father.

When looking at the frequency of child-parent contact from the life course perspective of children of divorced parents, it appears that extended arrangements (including shared living) tend to peak in the middle part of childhood. Data from the Danish Longitudinal Study of Children born in 1995 suggests that very few children in the pre-school age had a shared living arrangement (see Figure 2.12). Similarly, the proportions living in these extended contact arrangements decrease significantly as children reach their teens (Ottosen & Stage, 2012): one explanation

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19. No data is available from Finland and Iceland.

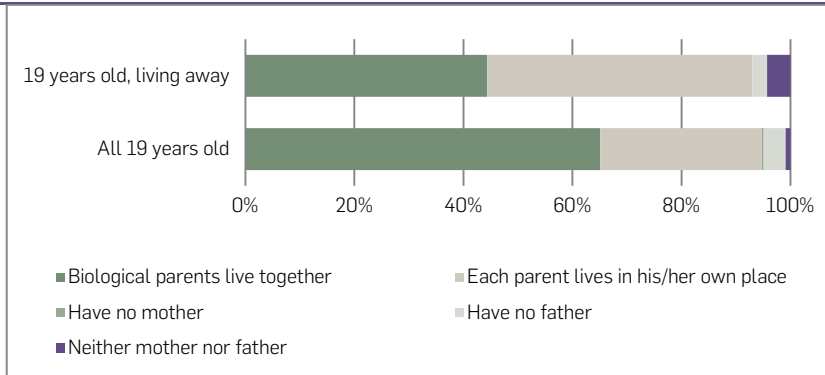
for this may be that extended contact arrangements do not fit very well with a young person's increased need for socialising with friends, and with their school commitments or leisure activities. Thus, decreasing patterns of contact frequency with the non-resident parent are likely reflecting that children's needs change (Ottosen, Stage & Jensen, 2011).

The Nordic countries have at varying pace introduced access to *joint legal custody* for parents who are not living together (see Chapter 3). Taking the point of departure as the case of Sweden, a country that introduced joint legal custody at an early stage, one notices a striking development over the past 30 years (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2009b). While in the early 1980s only 1/3 of children from broken families had parents who were sharing the parental responsibility, today (2008) the same is true for almost every child with separated/divorced parents. Given the time of legal implementation, we assume this development to have parallels in the other Nordic countries as well.

Taken together, these trends leave the impression that the majority of children from broken families maintain contact with both biological parents, and especially that the relationship between children and fathers has strengthened. Thus, an initial concern about a 'fatherless society' following the increases in parental dissolutions is shifted to a broad prominence on the continued place of fathers in their children's lives. However, one should not forget that a small – and probably stable – proportion of such children have no contact with the non-resident parent (Ottosen, 2004; Ottosen & Stage, 2012). There may be several explanations for why this happens, yet empirical evidence suggests that some of these children would like to reassume the connection with the absent parent (Ottosen & Stage, 2012).

FIGURE 2.11

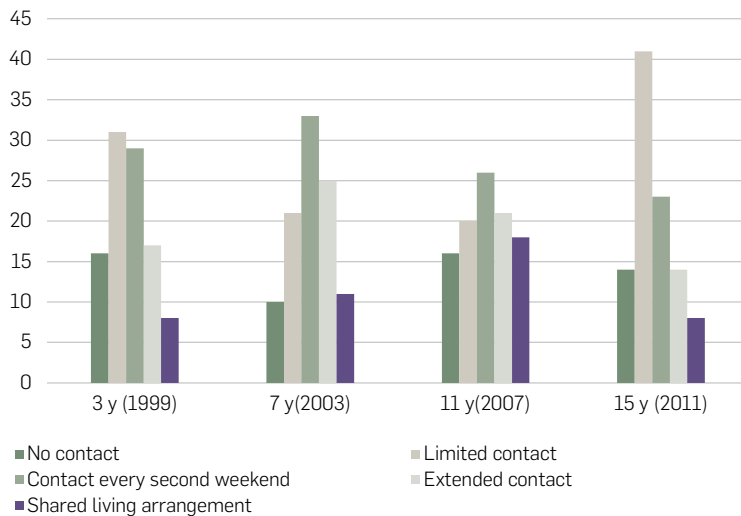
Young people aged 19, living away, by family type. Denmark.



Source: Ottosen et al., 2010.

FIGURE 2.12

Contact frequency between Danish children of divorced parents (born 1995) and contact with parent across life span (age 3, 7, 11 and 15).



Source: Danish Longitudinal Survey of Children, SFI – Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd.

## SAME SEX FAMILIES

Over the last decade gay families (partnerships and marriages) have been accepted in a growing number of countries. The development in Nordic countries has several similarities. Denmark introduced registered partnerships in 1989, followed by Norway in 1993. Today, all the Scandinavian countries have introduced a common marriage law. At present the proportion of same-sex marriages is most widespread in Denmark (7.4 per cent) and least in Iceland (4.1 per cent). Despite being pioneers in the process of legitimising same-sex relationships, the Nordic countries are below the average of Western Europe (7.6) (Banens, 2012).

Figure 2.13 illustrates the number of children living in households with registered partners in Denmark, 1989-2012. This shows a strong increase, in particular since 2000. Other Nordic countries have experienced a similar development, while levels may differ.

In Norway, since 1993, the rights for homosexual partners to family formation have gradually expanded. By 2009 the gender neutral marriage law had come into force. With this law existing partnerships can be converted to marriage, and new partners can marry. About one in three partnerships were transformed to marriage by the change in the law. The frequencies of partnerships and marriage (since 2009) are about 0.8 to 1.2 per 100 marriages since 1993. The majority are women (which is unlike the European pattern where men dominate, according to Banens, 2012). The number of children in Norway born to a mother in a registered partnership has increased from four in 1998 to 72 in 2008 (Dyben-dal & Noack, 2010). Statistics Finland notes 300 families with children of parents registered as same-sex couples.<sup>20</sup> Statistics Iceland has information since 1996, when 21 same-sex marriages and five divorces were registered. During the 2000s the number declined, followed by a slow increase. By 2010, 13 same-sex marriages and 24 consensual unions had been registered, while 5 marriages and 13 consensual unions had been dissolved.<sup>21</sup>

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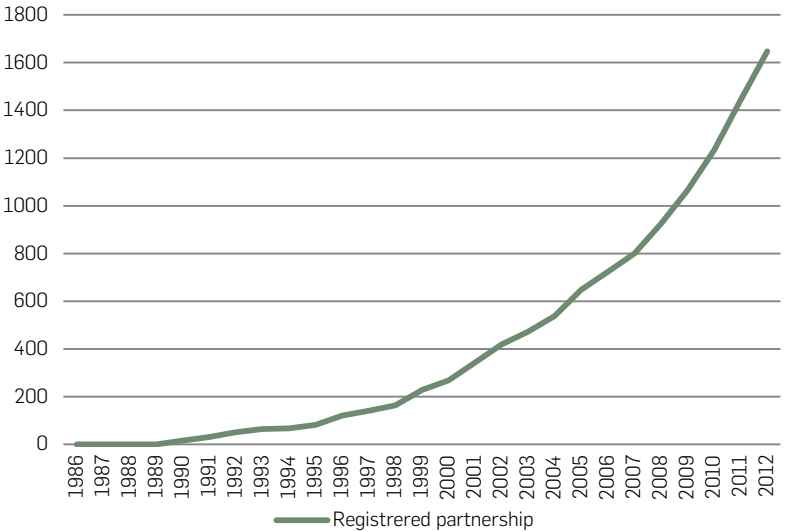
20. [http://www.stat.fi/til/perh/2011/perh\\_2011\\_2012-05-25\\_tie\\_001\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/perh/2011/perh_2011_2012-05-25_tie_001_en.html).

21. [http://www.statice.is/?PageID=1176&src=/temp\\_en/Dialog/varval.asp?ma=MAN06301%26ti=Same+sex+marriages+and+divorces+1996%2D2010+%26path=./Database/mannfoldi/Giftingar/%26lang=1%26units=Number](http://www.statice.is/?PageID=1176&src=/temp_en/Dialog/varval.asp?ma=MAN06301%26ti=Same+sex+marriages+and+divorces+1996%2D2010+%26path=./Database/mannfoldi/Giftingar/%26lang=1%26units=Number).



FIGURE 2.13

Number of Danish children living in families where parents are registered partners, 1989-2012.



Source: Danmarks Statistik, calculated by Mai Heide Ottosen.

### THE VERTICAL DIRECTION: INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The horizontal diversification of family patterns evolves along with a stretching of the generational family lines, the ‘beanpole’ family (Bengtsson, 2001). With ageing societies the potential for living grandparents increases.

An ageing society implies that the grandparent generation is growing while the child generation is shrinking, as demonstrated in Table 2.2. The share of elderly people has increased strongly since 1950 when it was about 10 per cent or less, to a range from the lowest 12 per cent (in Iceland) to the highest 18 per cent in Sweden in 2010. Projections indicate that some 40 years ahead, every fourth person in the Nordic countries will be aged 65 or more. Present-day children will have more old people to support as they become adults and enter the labour force. Fu-

ture children will have more grandparents than siblings. In Norway, taking the perspective of children, the vast majority of children (0-17 years) had grandparents alive in 2001. As illustrated by Figure 2.14, this share has increased significantly.

Among children below the age of six, every second (49 per cent) had all four grandparents alive, while this was the case for about one in four teenagers (23 per cent aged 13-17 years). This suggests that it is very uncommon to grow up without at least one grandparent alive, in the case of Norway 11 and 13 per cent respectively for the youngest and oldest age groups. Some of these children may have grandparents outside Norway, and information about these is not available in statistics. Still, large differences prevail as to which grandparent is alive throughout the childhood. While two out of three children aged 13-17 had a maternal grandmother alive, only every second had a paternal grandfather.

Taking the perspective of grandparents, Noack, Dommermuth and Lyngstad (2011) found that in their mid-60s the large majority (78 per cent) of women and 68 per cent of men in Norway were grandparents. About half of them have from one to four grandchildren, and every third have from five to ten grandchildren. But the picture can be more complicated, as more grandparents may have 'step-' or 'bonus' grandchildren, following unstable family patterns. About every fourth woman and every fifth man in their later 60s are 'step-grandparents'.

Grandparents can be a significant network resource, particularly for young children. As they grow up this relationship typically tends to become weaker, but given the conditions, it may be reactivated. Grandparents can act as resource persons for young people who might have experienced parental divorce, or they might offer a 'safe haven' in cases where adolescents have moved away from the parental nest, but live close to the grandparents.

A Danish study on children's well-being, including the child population from the ages of 3 to 19 (Ottosen et al., 2010) suggests, measured by the frequency of contact, that young children (aged 3 and 7), appear to have close contact with their grandparents. More than half of them visit their grandparents every week; 85 per cent of children in these age groups are in touch with the grandparents at least once a month. Although the frequency of contact decreases with children's increasing age, it is noteworthy that among teenagers at age 15, about 2 out of 3 meet their grandparents at least once a month (Figure 2.15).

At age 19, some young people might have lost one or more grandparents, but like Norway, very few have no grandparents at all (or have lost contact to those who are still alive). The proportion of children without any contact with grandparents varies according to socio-demographic characteristics: children with ethnic minority backgrounds and children living in a single parent family tend more often than other children to have lost contact with their grandparents (Ottosen et al., 2010). The same is true for children with less educated or unemployed mothers. Thus, a socially unequal distribution of available grandparents points to the fact that those children and young people who in particular might have benefited from a compensatory network of grandparents appear to be the very same who are deprived of this option.

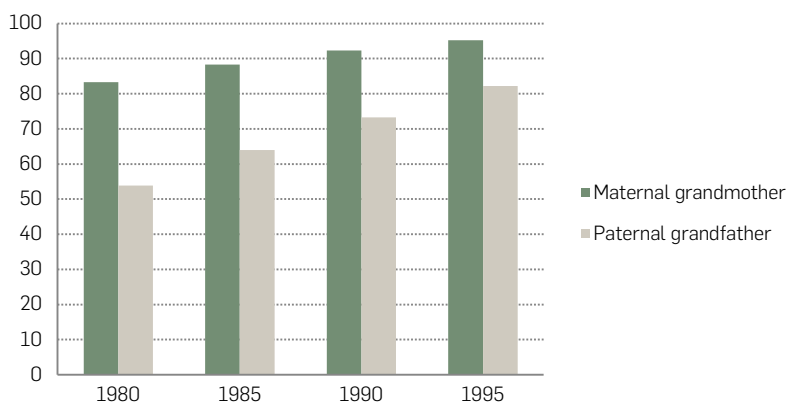
TABLE 2.2

Share of the population age 65+. Per cent.

	1950	2010	2050*
Denmark	9	16.5	24.1
Finland	6.7	17.2	25.7
Iceland	7.7	12	23.1
Norway	9.7	14.7	23.7
Sweden	10.3	18.2	24.6

FIGURE 2.14

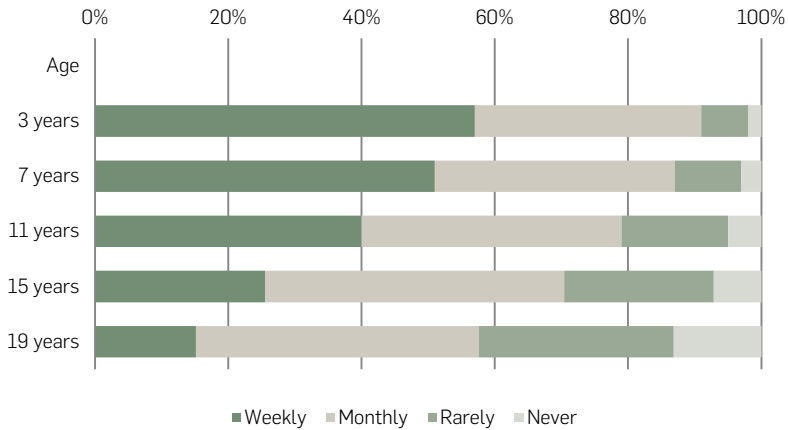
Type of grandparents alive at time of birth of child. Norway. 1980-96. Per cent.



Source: Barnefilen Barn født i Norge. SSB 2001.

FIGURE 2.15

Children's contact with grandparents. Denmark, 2010. Per cent.



Source: Ottosen et al., 2010.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

While fertility is increasingly seen as a result of individual choices, the common features suggest a collective behaviour shaping a distinct fertility pattern in the Nordic countries. This chapter has pointed to the paradoxes of increasing gender equality in options of choices, along with decreasing gender equality of consequences. Increases in fertility, births outside marriage and childlessness among men are examples of such paradoxes.

The increase in births outside marriage, hand-in-hand with a high level of gender equality (measured through female education and employment), are aspects of the 'something' that pushes fertility upwards in Nordic countries. The liberal marriage norms (Therborn, 2004) are suggested to be a driving factor behind the high fertility rates as opposed to the suppressing impact on fertility in countries confining births to marriage, such as Italy and Spain (Billari & Kohler, 2004; McDonald, 2006; Vikat, 2004). In an international context, the women in the Nordic countries have children independently of their marital status. The de-institutionalisation and diversification of family patterns imply that horizontal bonds between adults are destabilised and take new forms. At the

same time vertical bonds between generations are gaining weight as a result of the ageing society.

Nordic countries are where the ‘incomplete gender revolution’ is most complete (Esping-Andersen, 2009). Still, while old gender divisions are fading, new ones are emerging. One example of this is the emerging gender gap in parenthood through rising childlessness among men. With the transformation of the social value of children, from economic to emotional, the prestige of having children is likely to be weaker than that which can be gained through the labour market. Rising number of births outside marriage may be spurred by this societal change. Furthermore, with increased expectations of active fatherhood, children can represent a risk climbing the employment ladder, not only for women but increasingly also for men.

Increasingly, concern has been raised, also at an international level, about the consequences of new family patterns for children. McLanahan (2004) published her seminal article on American children’s ‘diverging destinies’ following the socio-economic association between consensual unions, social and material resources and instability, where children born in consensual unions suffered from a lack of resources in all respects. The association between weak socio-economic resources, cohabitation and dissolutions is traced in several studies (Manning, 2004; Manning & Brown, 2006), including the Nordic (Jensen & Clausen, 1999; Ottosen, 2012, 2001).

Despite the fact that family dissolution followed by the parents’ break-up nowadays involves a considerable proportion of children (and individual children of divorced parents are therefore no longer the object of stigmatisation), it appears nevertheless from social research on the well-being of children that family dissolution as a social phenomenon may contribute to creating inequalities and thus impact negatively on the individual children involved.

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# NORDIC CHILDREN – BETWEEN INDIVIDUALISATION AND DEPENDENCE

MAI HEIDE OTTOSEN

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last about 40 years, and especially from 1990 onwards, the perspectives on childhood as well as on children's actual lives have changed significantly. While historically one tended to view childhood as a period of waiting for the real life, adulthood, childhood is now perceived as a life phase in its own right (Qvortrup, 1999). Today, the everyday life of children takes place in several social arenas: in the family, in the day care centres, in the schools and among peers. It is also a generally accepted view that we should perceive children as relatively competent and independent social actors, and that they should be assigned with the rights to be seen and heard in the matters that concern them (Prout & James, 1990). This applies within the families as well as in the societal context.

The purpose of this chapter is to illuminate the position of the child from two points of view: as a citizen within the public realm, and as a member of a family within the private sphere. As the Nordic countries have promoted equality and solidarity between classes and between men and women, the question to be illuminated and discussed here is: To which extent does the understanding of equality affect the everyday lives of Nordic children?

We approach the issue from different angles. The first section illuminates the changing position of children in the public area, including their citizenship and rights. The second section focuses on the generational relationships within the family, structurally hierarchical as they are, and highlights how parents' values on socialisation contribute to positioning children as relatively equal and thus the intergenerational relationships as relatively democratic. Following on from this, we also describe how ideas about gender equality are expressed through family practice, in relation to mothers' and fathers' distribution of care work, as well as with respect to what parents expect from their boys and girls when it comes to domestic duties. The last section is dedicated to the children with experience of family break-up (a socially unevenly distributed phenomenon). Again, related to the mindset of equality, we draw attention to the increasingly popular trend that a number of children from broken homes are equally shared between their parents' households.

Where possible, we use comparative data; otherwise we rely on country-specific studies, especially from Sweden and Denmark.

## **NORDIC CHILD WELFARE POLICIES: INDIVIDUALISATION OF CHILDREN**

From the very beginning of the Nordic Welfare Model, children – as the future citizens – and their families have been at the heart of the welfare policies. However, following Therborn (1993) and Satka and Eydal (2004) the Nordic child welfare policies have undergone different stages during the 20th century and up until now. In the early days of the Nordic welfare states – around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the societies developed towards industrialisation – policies put emphasis on child protection by introducing laws concerning compulsory schooling and legislation that aimed to protect young children from labour (long working hours), as they were considered too young to work. The Nordic countries also emancipated the child thorough family law reforms in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by granting both parents the right to legal custody to their child, by taking the child's interest into account when deciding on custody after divorce, and by allowing children of married and unmarried parents equality with respect to inheritance and the rights to bear the father's name. Protection policies have been modernised

since then. Some important examples are legislation to protect children from corporal punishment in the schools (around 1960) and by their parents in the families (around 1970-80). One can view the latter as a trend towards individualisation of the child, as the welfare state had then assumed measures to protect the single child from his/her own family.

In the second phase – that of the strong welfare state that developed after second world war – child policies were directed towards provision, by introducing public school education, family benefits and child care (including the development of parental leave schemes) for every child according to the principles of universalism and social security. The policies were based on ideals of creating equality among citizens, in particular among the children and their families (Satka & Eydal, 2004: p. 41). This also included mothers' equal opportunities to participate in the labour market. Thus, child care policies became a joint responsibility of the state and the parents.

The last two-three decades have witnessed a new and increasing trend toward policies that aim to promote children's participation and opportunities in expressing their opinion on matters that concern their own life. The ideas of "the best interest of the child" and "children's rights" were initially promoted by the International Year of the Child, 1979, and a decade later the Nordic countries (together with other European countries) ratified the Convention of Rights of the Child. By taking the forefront in this process, the Nordic countries demonstrated their will to shift the child welfare agenda from a set of limited measures concerning specific groups of children to a programme that not only included the whole population of children, but also tended to recognise the child as an autonomous subject with legal rights (ibid., 2004: p. 53).

One manifestation of the trend towards making children visible as citizens was by establishing the so called "Children's Ombudsman", a governmental appeals committee that oversees matters relating to children. In this process Norway (1981) was the pioneer, followed by Sweden (1993), Iceland (1994) and Finland (2005); Denmark has a similar system (Children's Office of the Ombudsman, 2012). Such initiatives tend to configure the child as an individual with rights – a legal subject.

In recent years these trends appear to have become even stronger. There has been a major shift towards involving not only adolescents, but also younger children in legal decisions which concern them. That is primarily the case in legal disputes over custody, residence and contact,

as well as in cases about out-of-home placement. As "the best interest of the child" is now a paramount principle, judges should take children's views into account before taking decisions, either by conducting interviews with the child or by collecting other information to illuminate the child's perspective (Ministeriet for familie- og forbrugeranliggender, 2006: p. 74). However, an assessment of the extent to which these intentions have been carried out in real life, and how the system works and affects children, will remain an open question here, as we have no data to provide a full picture of how the Nordic countries have implemented these principles.

The findings from a Danish survey carried out among children (age 11-12) by the National Children's Council indicate that most children concur with the idea that children of divorced parents should have the right to express their opinions and be listened to by a judge or a child welfare expert (Børnerådet, 2011). Respondents in that age group also think that their own opinions should influence the decisions about their residence after family break-up as well as how the contact arrangement should be organised (Børnerådet, 2000). Data gathered from Danish courts about legal disputes over custody, residence and contact suggest that the child's perspective had been implemented in a majority of these cases; however, the views and perspectives from adolescents are still represented to a larger extent than those from younger children (Ottosen & Stage, 2011). Examples of a similar kind are also found within other areas. According to the Danish National Council for children, the official supervision of children placed outside the home, which should ensure that children thrive and develop according to the intentions, are criticised for being inadequate; more than half of school children (5th grade) consider that they have too little influence on their education and would like to be listened to more; and an alarmingly high number of Danish children do not know about the Convention of Children's Rights (Børnerådet, 2009). Such examples suggest that there are still potentials for improvements, at least in the Danish context.

On one hand, one could view these trends as a result of the implementation of the UN Convention of Children's Rights. On the other, one should bear in mind that the political will to implement the Convention might depend on the cultural climate in a given country. In this respect, the Nordic countries have been defined by their abilities to take a

child-centred approach (Kristjansson, 2006), even if the practical implementations appear to lag behind the general principles.

## CHILDREN'S' POSITION IN THE FAMILY

### PARENTING PRACTICES IN NON-HIERARCHICAL FAMILIES

In this section we turn to some private aspects of Nordic childhood by illuminating aspects of what is going on inside the families as far as parenting practices are concerned.

When asking children and young people about how they assess the quality of their relationship with their parents, there is no substantial evidence of conflicts between generations, at least in Denmark. A large, nationwide Danish study illustrated the family relationships by questioning young people aged 11, 15 and 19 years old (Ottofen et al., 2010). The findings suggested that the huge majority, around 90 per cent or more, considered their parents as key resource people. They felt loved by their parents and their experience was that their parents gave priority to spending time just talking with them – even if mothers more frequently than fathers appeared to be the central source of love and communication. Thus, the study left a predominant impression that most children and young people feel good about their families.

What qualities do Nordic parents encourage their children to acquire at home? According to Halman, Sieben & van Zudert (2012), findings from the European Value Studies suggest that as society continuously changes, so do values regarding upbringing. While European parents used to put emphasis on traditional values such as teaching discipline, obedience, good manners and respect for adults, they now tend to devote more attention to values concerning the child's emotional and personal development. This may be a consequence of the fact that we have moved into a late-modern, individualised society. In such a society parents (in particular from the highly educated segments) emphasise virtues that support individual freedom and self-actualisation, such as responsibility, creativity and independence.

Even if this development appears to be a part of a general trend across the European continent, there are still regional variations. According to Halman, Sieben & van Zudert (2012: p. 28), parents from the Nordic countries (and Germany) distinguish themselves from other Eu-

European parents by placing least emphasis on obedience as a quality they want to teach their children. Similarly, we see from Table 3.1 (based on data from EVS-2008) that in comparison to other selected European populations, the Nordic countries in general tend to put less weight on traditional socialisation values such as ‘hard work’ and ‘thrift’ (except Sweden). Instead, they appear to be more oriented towards virtues such as independence (except Finland); they also put a little more weight on feelings of responsibility, and on tolerance and respect. Moreover, the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) tend to value imagination. Based on these distributions, the populations in the Nordic countries appear to be in the forefront of valuing socialisation virtues that reflect (late) modernity.

TABLE 3.1

Traditional respectively modern virtues to teach children. The Nordic countries and selected European countries inclusive of the average European score.

	Nordic countries					Selected European countries				
	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden	Germany	Netherlands	Spain	Great Britain	European average
<i>Traditional values</i>										
Good manners	76	88	74	78	77	79	87	85	92	77
Thrift	9	21	20	10	51	44	34	36	28	40
Hard work	5	7	46	11	9	17	21	21	44	56
<i>Modern values</i>										
Independence	80	51	82	86	65	72	48	38	49	50
Imagination	32	25	20	31	38	27	23	21	30	21
Feeling of responsibility	81	90	79	88	87	84	87	83	49	74
Tolerance + respect	87	87	86	90	91	73	85	82	79	70

Source: European Values Study, 2008, <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/>.

Some cross-country studies have provided a more detailed picture of Nordic attitudes towards socialisation/upbringing by including the case of Sweden in comparison with countries outside the Nordic area. Even if trends towards democratisation of the parent-child relationship may result from general cultural and societal changes (Giddens, 1992), these studies point out that parents within the Swedish cultural context are more eager to place emphasis on children’s agency and on egalitarian relationships between children and parents (Harkness et al., 2001; Sor-



bing & Gurdal, 2011). Similar characteristics are found in studies conducted among Norwegian (Gullestad, 1996) and Danish families (Dahl, 2012). With respect to child-rearing attitudes, Swedish parents rate authoritarian attitudes on a low scale, while progressive and modern attitudes are rated relatively highly (Durrant & Olsen, 1997; Hindberg, 2001). According to comparative value studies, Swedish parents do not distinguish themselves from other European parents with respect to norms and ideas concerning child versus adult orientation or the child's own responsibilities for personal-social routines (Lassbo & Hakvoort, 1998). Swedish mothers, however, are found to differ from their counterparts in 15 other European countries in terms of being less strict in their child-rearing practices, by giving more freedom to children, and by lending less support towards conformist behaviour and obedience (see Dahlberg 1992 as cited in Tulviste et al., 2007). Swedish parents tend to "negotiate" with their children, instead of dominating them (Carlson & Earls, 2001), viewing their task as a parent to be a resource and always available. Child development is not regarded as something that has to be formed or shaped; instead, parents express the opinion that children are individuals, not to be directed, but to be supported. Parents' responsibility is to guarantee a morally and socially accepted behaviour, mainly through role-modelling (Hallden, 1991; Sorbing & Gurdal, 2011). Thus, in contrast to a cultural pathway, whereby children are socialised towards interdependence (stressing group membership, interdependence and conformity), Swedish parents appear to follow the pathway of *socialisation towards independence* with an emphasis on individualistic values related to self-achievement, self-actualisation, self-expression and autonomy (see Greenfield et al., 2003).

The trends described may be associated with recent processes of modernisation; one should, however, also note that there appears to be a long-standing tradition in the Nordic countries for conceptualising the child in the terms of individuals and equal beings. The quote in text box 3.1 does not derive from a parenting manual written by psy-experts addressed to parents of the 21st century: It stems from a bestseller (throughout the decades) on social conventions of everyday life, written in 1918 by Danish author, Emma Gad. The quote reflects that ideas or even experiences of perceiving the parent-child-relationships in terms of non-hierarchical positions were thought about at that time. Thus, ideas of treating children as equals were already fundamental at the beginning of the 20th century, when a Swedish counterpart to Gad, Ellen Key, in

her book from 1900 about children and their rights (Key, 1995), declared the 20<sup>th</sup> century to be the century of the child. As a famous pedagogue, Key advocated schools for all children, regardless of gender, class, or area of residence; laws against maltreatment and child labour; and the idea that children had the right to a childhood.

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### BOX 3.1

On children's position (Gad, 1918).

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"One of the greatest changes over the last century concerns probably – and beyond all comparison – the children's position within the family. In former times, the upbringing was not only of greater strictness, but also carried out according to the principle, that children should be kept in the background, not be too visible, not be asked, not play any role until they became adults. Today, by contrast, one takes the opposite point of view by letting the kids be the foreground figures in all areas, while parents are only there to serve the needs of the dear children".

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Source: Gad,1918/2001).

Yet, even if the above-cited studies about late-modern parenting values point to conclusions about the relationship between Nordic children and parents as being constituted by equality and democracy, one should bear in mind that these observations are statistically based averages in comparison to value orientations in other national/cultural settings. A number of country-specific studies on parent-child relationships, conducted over the last four decades, have found that within a given (national) population a variety of family rearing practices exist, and these may be associated with family resources. This is also true within the Nordic context. In a recent Danish study, theoretically inspired by Baumrind (1971, 1966) and empirically conducted among families with 15-year-old children, Dahl (2012) establishes a typology of family practice that applies to Danish families at the beginning of the 21st century. The first type, the *permissive* type (40 per cent), report an emotionally close parent-child relationship combined with a very low level of strictness. The permissive parenting practice is found to be most widespread among less educated families and families with the lowest mean incomes. The second type, the *authoritative* families (34 per cent) combines a close emotional parent – child relationship with a relatively high level of proactive strictness. The authoritative family type tends to be most widespread in families with a high educational level and higher incomes. Finally, the *authoritarian* type (26 per cent) report a more distant and confrontational parent-child

relationship combined with a reactive type of authority. These authoritarian families are characterised by higher incidence of lack of resources in terms of poor economy, and physical and mental health problems.

Findings from other similar studies form the basis for assuming that parenting practice is associated with a wide range of youth outcomes, including subjective well-being and self-esteem, health and risky behaviour, and school results and enrolment. In general, adolescents from authoritative families are found to apply most adaptive achievement strategies compared to those from permissive and authoritarian families (e.g. Adalbjarnardottir & Hafsteinsson, 2001; Aunola & Stattin, 2000; Chan & Koo, 2011). Such findings point to the importance of parents shaping their children's aspirations and possible life chances, thus stressing that parenting practice may be a key dimension of family life and of social reproduction.

#### PARENTS' TIME INVESTMENT IN CHILDREN

One challenge of everyday family life within the context of the Nordic welfare model may be related to the fact that both fathers and mothers are working full-time in the labour market. How do dual earner families with young children manage to combine work life and family life? This section focuses on parents' time investment in their children by taking the point of departure as the case of Denmark.

A few years ago research was carried out among Danish families with younger children to identify the proportion of families who were suffering from work-related stress, and experienced time conflicts (Deding, Lausten & Andersen, 2006; Familie- og Arbejdslivskommissionen, 2007). The studies suggested that one third of the families occasionally or frequently experienced time-bind-conflicts, whereas the majority seldom or never suffered from these problems (see also Boje & Ejrnæs, this volume). In particular, families with very young children, career-oriented families and parents with no flexibility in their work organisation reported problems. Yet, when questioning children and young people (age 11, 15, 19) themselves, another study observes that the majority of them report that they have never experienced problems with time pressure (Ottosen et al., 2010).

A time-panel study on time distribution in Danish families has provided some interesting findings (Bonke, 2009). When measuring how much time parents spent on child care in 1987 and in 2008, it appears that parents nowadays are spending more time with their children during

the week, compared to what parents previously did. These results are quite surprising, as the institutionalisation of early childhood was only partly implemented in 1987. At that time, about half of Danish mothers with young children (< age 7) were working full-time. Consequently, fewer children were enrolled in institutional care settings such as kindergarten (70 per cent) and after-school care (20 per cent). About two decades later (2008) the share of full-time working mothers with young children had risen to 64 per cent and almost all toddlers were in daycare (96 per cent). The after-school care coverage had risen to 70 per cent. Despite this development, which points towards increased institutionalisation of childhood, the daily time parents spent with their children on average was almost 40 per cent higher in 2008 compared to 1987. It appears obvious to interpret such a finding as a trend towards increased child-centredness in the families. Instead of using their free time for personal (or social) purposes, mothers and fathers are increasingly giving priority to family time. The same study also showed that highly-educated parents – whom we would expect to be most career-oriented and thus time pressured – were significantly more inclined to invest their time in the children compared to their less educated counterparts (Bonke, 2009).

As far as the gendered division of labour is concerned, men and women in young couples act in quite similar ways, professionally in their working life as well as privately in their family life, until the arrival of their first child; thereafter they begin to specialise. When becoming a mother, a woman's working time increases in the household by doing more domestic and care work, while men's working time increases at the labour market. For both partners this intensification results in less time for themselves. Yet, viewed across time (from 2001 to 2008), these gender-specific patterns have tended to develop into a less remarkable way (Bonke, 2009): In 2001 Danish mothers with infants (aged 0-2-year-old) spent on average 3.5 hours a day doing child care work, whereas fathers worked 1.5 hours daily for this purpose. In 2008 this distance had narrowed significantly from about two to one hours, a development which is mainly due to fathers' increased efforts at home. For families with older but still dependent children, the trends go into the same direction. Thus, during the first decade of the 21st century, Danish fathers have apparently become more involved in child care tasks. Yet, the findings also suggest that fathers prefer the playful and funny tasks, and tend to hand over the practical and planning part of the care work to the mothers. This observation is quite similar to findings from an earlier study by Swedish Bäck-Wiklund and Bergsten (1997), who noticed a discrepancy

between the rhetoric of parental roles and the social practice. When interviewing Swedish parents of young children for a study of contemporary family life, they observed that fathers and mothers in general talk about their family life in terms of gender equality; both also consider the family and the child in particular, to be a central joint project. Yet when parents talk about what they actually do – their family practice, their activities and everyday routines – they describe their family life in more gender-specific terms.

How do Nordic parents fare compared to parents in other countries? Table 3.2 includes a range of selected European countries, and shows country by country how much extra time mothers spend on child care for older children, aged 7-17, compared to fathers. The smaller percentage, the more homogeneity between parents in time spent with children. Swedish mothers spent 60 per cent more time with their children than Swedish fathers (see also Björnberg, Chapter 7, this volume), followed by the other Nordic countries, whereas French mothers are spending 240 per cent more than the other parent. Thus, viewed as a gender equality barometer, Nordic parents appear to have a more extended gender equal parenting practice (Bonke, 2009).

TABLE 3.2

Mothers' extra time spent on children and adolescents (aged 7-17 years) per week. Per cent.

Country	Per cent
Sweden	60
Finland	70
Norway	70
Denmark	80
Belgium	90
England	130
Italy	140
Germany	140
Poland	150
Spain	170
France	240

Source: Bonke, 2009; Rockwool Foundation's Research Unit. Data from 1998+2003/04.

#### CHILDREN – BROUGHT UP IN GENDER EQUALITY?

As future citizens of the welfare state, boys and girls are raised to act on an equal footing with regard to educational attendance and labour market participation. With regard to the proportions completing a secondary or academic education, young women have not only caught up with their male counterparts in the last decades, but even surpassed them. Thus,

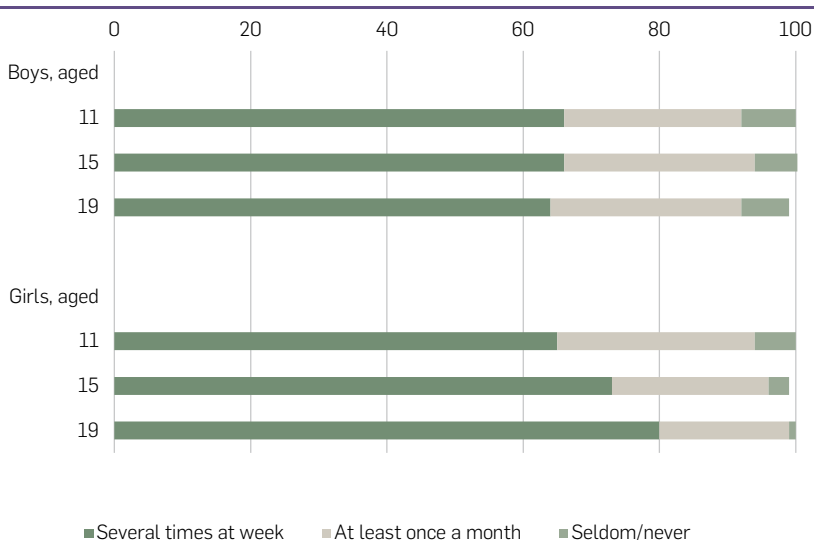
the women appear to emerge as the winners of tomorrow's knowledge society.

But are girls and boys also raised to handle the everyday life practice in the families according to a norm of gender equality? As an indicator of everyday life practices, we focus on the execution of domestic work by using Danish data to illustrate this question. In a nationwide, representative Danish study on child well-being (Ottosen et al. 2010), young respondents aged 11, 15 and 19 (the latter all living in their parents' household) were asked how often they were doing domestic work in terms of cleaning, cooking, washing clothes, doing the dishes etc. The distribution of answers according to age and gender, which appears in Figure 3.1, suggests that there are no gendered imbalances among the youngest age group of the sample: 2/3 of 11-year-old boys and girls are doing domestic work several times a week. However, as the young people grow up there appears to be an increased pressure on teenage girls to take responsibility for domestic tasks, while the expectations about practical contribution from young teenage boys seem to cease at the age of 11. Such findings might lead to the conclusion that there are still some debates to be had by the future generation before gender equality is reached.

Taken together, these central features on family practice leave the impression that the Nordic Welfare States have created a child-friendly framework for the conditions in which young people grow up. Children born in the Nordic countries are welcomed by their parents, and they grow up in child-centred families with parents who are increasingly investing their time in child care despite the fact that both of them are working in the labour market.

FIGUR 3.1

Boys and girls aged 11, 15, 19, according to the frequency of doing domestic work.



Source: Ottosen et al., 2010.

## TIES BETWEEN CHILDREN AND THEIR DIVORCED PARENTS

### SOME GENERAL TRENDS

As described in Chapter 2, about 1/3 of children experience parental separation. Even if family dissolution nowadays involves a considerable proportion of children (and the individual children from families experiencing divorce are therefore less stigmatised than they were some decades ago), it appears from social research on child well-being that family dissolution as a social phenomenon may contribute to creating inequalities and thus impact negatively on some of the individual children involved.

According to a Danish study on child well-being (Ottosen et al. 2010), experiences with family forms other than the intact nuclear family tend to be biased towards the bottom of society in terms of low parental education, low positions in the labour market and low income (cf. figure 2.2). Similar trends are found in statistics from Sweden (Statistics Sweden, 2009: p. 22).

In accordance with international studies on child well-being, findings from Denmark suggest that the majority of children of divorced parents fare just as well as their peers in intact families. Yet, at the same time, the shares of children, who do not fare well, are larger: Compared to children in intact family households, children and young people of divorced parents have a higher risk of being socially marginalised. This is partly due to the fact that a larger share of these children is living in materially deprived households: lower material resources may prevent young people from participating in the same activities as their peers from nuclear family households. Moreover, in relation to the domain of health, young children from single parent households also tend to be more deprived. They do not benefit from the welfare state's provision of health prevention strategies to the same extent as children from nuclear families, and they are also found to have a higher prevalence of illness.

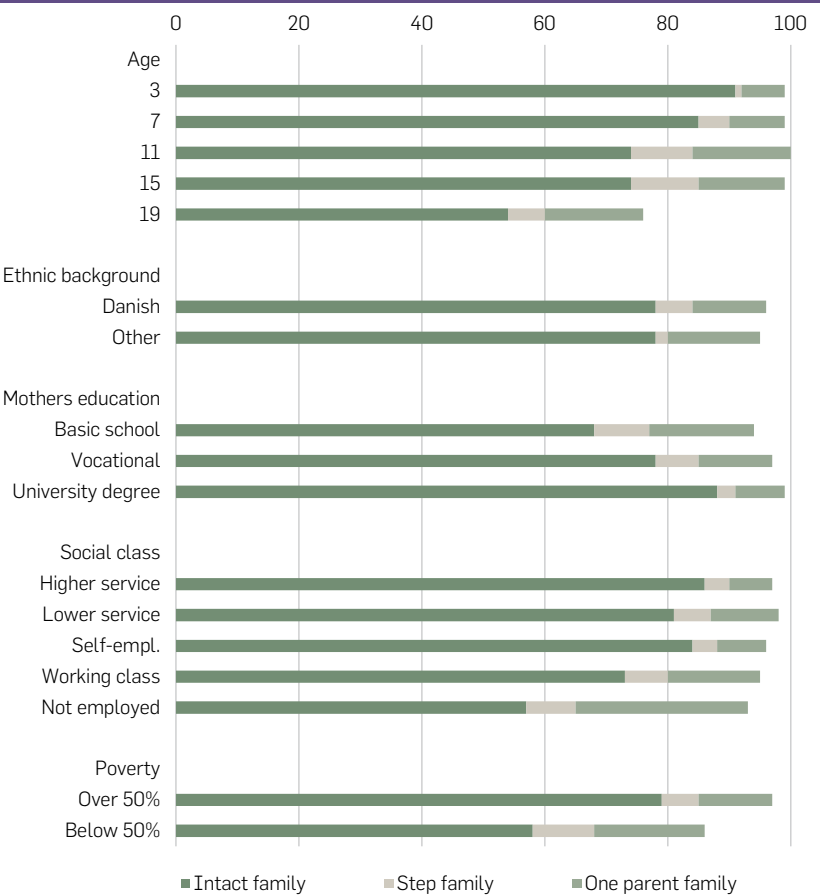
The descriptive findings also suggest that living in an intact family structure appears to protect youth from risk behaviour. When focusing on several components of this (such as health, consumption of alcohol, smoking and drugs; sexual behaviour; victimisation and criminal behaviour; drop-out from school), young people growing up in intact family households tend to be less exposed to such risks compared to their peers from dissolved families (Ottosen et al., 2010; Rasmussen, 2009).

Thus, it appears that the diversification of family forms may have costs for some children from divorced families, in the sense that changes in family relationships may push them into unequal positions. From the perspective of the Nordic context, however, these findings are challenging, as they indicate that the way of organising children's family relationships masks social inequalities. It is, however, important to stress that several types of explanations may contribute to the understanding of why these variations exist: they may rely on effects of selection process; varying levels of family resources (in broad sense); and circumstances directly related to the family break-up.



FIGUR 3.2

Danish children, ages 3-19, distributed according to family types.



Note: The reason why the columns do not total 100 per cent is that some young people are living in other family types, e.g. have moved away from the parent's household.

Source: Ottosen et al., 2010.

ORGANISING THE FAMILY BONDS OF CHILDREN OF DIVORCED PARENTS:  
DEVELOPMENTS IN CONTACT, CUSTODY, RESIDENCE

To avoid any development that tends to feminise childhood (Jensen & Clausen, 1999), the welfare state policies have regulated and intervened into the domestic sphere, with family law as the main instrument. In terms of divorced couples with children, the welfare states have encouraged parents to cooperate in child-rearing issues by applying the principle

of joint legal custody as the general norm and/or by setting up standards for regular contact between the child and the non-resident parent.

In the Nordic countries this process has been taking place since around 1980. The literature reflects, however, that this development has been paralleled in other western countries, albeit with regional variations (i.e. Wade & Smart, 2003).

Studies conducted among Danish divorced families have shown that the majority of them meet the expectations about functioning as cooperating parents following the breakup of the nuclear household (Ottofen, 2012, 2004a, 2000, 1997). Although most children still live in their mother's household most divorced parents nowadays hold joint legal custody of their children (see also below). A majority of the parents appear to have a well-functioning and relatively comprehensive practical cooperation. Over a period of about 30 years, the extent of contact between children and the non-resident parent has increased remarkably: hence, 2 out of 3 children (aged 7-11) now visit their non-resident parent at least every second week, and arrangements implying shared residence have become more widespread. In most cases, the parents themselves organise the continued parenting and contact arrangements according to mutual agreement, without involving any judicial authorities.

The majority of Danish divorced/separated parents report that both parents and children are satisfied with the operation of these arrangements. However, it is difficult to assess whether this generally positive picture of the formation of late-modern family bonds is a result of a successful social engineering process, or whether the divorced parents, independently of this process, themselves wish to be obligated in a life-long alliance around the shared children following family break-up.

#### LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS TOWARDS CO-PARENTING: JOINT LEGAL CUSTODY

The Nordic countries have a longstanding tradition for close legislative cooperation within the area of family law. Over the last few decades law reforms have been centred on the idea of co-parenting in the wake of parental separation. Thus, all five countries have introduced joint legal custody after parental separation, however at varying pace. Though Sweden was the first country to introduce agreed joint parental responsibility (1976), the Norwegian and Finnish Acts of 1981 and 1983 were more far-reaching, as these did not presuppose parental agreement. This implies that the court can order parents to exercise joint legal custody

against the will of one of the parents. Sweden implemented this principle in 1998 and Denmark in 2007. Iceland joined this principle in 2012 (Friðriksdóttir, forthcoming). By this implementation joint legal custody (as the legal recognition of exercising social parenthood) is considered to be the norm, the general rule. Parents under the regime of joint legal custody are expected to agree on important matters concerning their child, while the resident parent is authorised to make decisions that concern aspects of the child's daily care. An important explicit rationale underlying these law reforms has been to ensure that the child can maintain contact with both parents following family dissolution, as this is regarded to be in the best interest of the child. This line of thought follows the UN Convention of Children's Rights (art. 18) that encourages parents to take common responsibility for the upbringing of the child. However, the political debates within this field also reflect that other types of discourses are at play, as this area occasionally serves as a battlefield for parents' demands of fairness and rights to have equal access to their child. Thus, there appears to be an ever existing intrinsic tension between the discourse of the needs of the child and the discourse of gender equality, i.e. mothers' and fathers' rights (Ottosen, 2004b).

The presumption of joint legal custody as the general rule as well as the idea that family law can use joint legal custody as a pedagogical instrument to encourage and improve co-parenting has been objects of criticism. One argument is that family law tends to overlook the needs of the actual, single child by presuming joint legal custody, especially in the light of the fact that a certain proportion of cases that are brought to the legal authorities are characterised by social problems (Koch, 2000; Ottosen, 2004b; Ottosen & Stage, 2011; Rejmer, 2003). Another type argument has questioned how a legal decision taken by a judge could possibly affect the everyday parenting practice. A Danish study (Ottosen & Stage, 2011) analysed this topic by focusing on parents (and children) who had been involved in a legal dispute over parental responsibility: what happened after the parents left the courtroom and how did they come to live with the judgment that the court had ordered? The study included all cases of parental responsibility disputes closed by the Danish district courts in 2009. One year after the court case, there was potential conflict in at least one half of the cases that could develop into another legal dispute. Parents who were ordered by the court to exercise joint legal custody generally described their parental co-operation climate as

better, and the proportions of parents with extensive or moderate parental cooperation were significantly higher than in cases with sole parental authority. However, considering that joint legal custody should imply some kind of co-parenting, it is noteworthy that 43 per cent of the parents, who ended up with joint legal custody, did not have any capacity to discuss everyday matters concerning their child. Among these, a considerable proportion did not communicate at all. Similarly, only half of them believed that they could reach agreement in important matters. Thus, many of the parents, who the court expected to have the potential for cooperation, were not able to meet the minimum standards set by the law. Such findings raise the question as to whether it is possible for family law to regulate the content of intimate relationships.

#### SHARED LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

In recent years, we have witnessed a trend towards shared parenting for children of divorced parents. This trend includes a growing proportion of children who are living for about the same amount of time in each of the parent's households, for instance one week in each place. As described in Chapter 2, 50/50 living arrangements have developed into a mainstream phenomenon, as 20-30 per cent of children of divorced parents live in this way. The same trend appears in Norway, with 25 per cent of such children living in equally shared arrangements (Haugen, 2010; Skjørten, Barlindhaug & Lidén, 2006). No data is available from Finland and Iceland. In all Nordic countries it is possible for family law authorities to decide that a child of divorced parents should have a 50/50 living arrangement.

Studies from Denmark and Norway (Haugen, 2010; Ottosen, Stage & Jensen, 2011; Skjørten, Barlindhaug & Lidén, 2006) suggest that a 50/50 living arrangement may work well for some children, but not for all of them. It depends on individual circumstances, including the child's own resilience, and how the 50/50 arrangement is organised, including the proximity between the two homes, and not least, the parental capability to help their child to build a bridge between his or her two family lives and to obtain continuity in everyday life.

Children talking about 50/50 living arrangements

When children point out advantages, many of them argue that a 50/50 living arrangement allows them to have access to both parents to the

same extent. According to qualitative studies conducted among children and parents, "fairness" and "being equally shared" appear to be important concepts, not only for the children, but also for the parents (Haugen, 2010; Ottosen, Stage & Jensen, 2011, Smart 2004). Nevertheless, living in a 50/50 arrangement may also be a logistical challenge that complicates everyday life. To pack, to move, to unpack and to adapt to a new household every week is more burdensome than living permanently in one place. Compared to other children of divorced parents, these commuting children are exposed to special burdens.

According to their accounts, children can handle different sets of household norms and parental styles, as long as these do not clash. The idea of having two homes appears to be easier to handle for the younger children than for teenagers: when reaching their teens children may perceive this arrangement to be more burdensome. Having constant access to one's favorite things and being in touch with one's friends becomes increasingly important. Thus, statistics from Sweden and Denmark suggest that the percentage of young people living in shared living arrangements declines as they grow older (Ottosen & Stage, 2011; Statistics Sweden, 2009).

Geographical proximity between the parents' homes is essential for the child's opportunity to be rooted in his/her local environment, as short distances facilitate contact with peers and participation in leisure activities. In some cases children might live on isolated family islands half of the time, without being able to integrate their extra-familial social life, because one of the parent lives too far away (Ottosen & Stage, 2011). In her Norwegian study, Jensen (2009) shows that children have more influence on handling their living arrangement if there is just a short distance between the parental homes. However, most (Norwegian) children (79 per cent) do not live within walking distance of the two homes. Findings from Denmark suggest in contrast that most children from such families, living in 50/50 arrangements, have short distances between the homes, compared to children with other contact arrangements.

#### Parental cooperation

Research on divorce as well as on child welfare expertise has pointed out that a well-functioning 50/50 arrangement requires a relatively high standard of parental cooperation. To avoid the life of their common child becoming fragmented, parents need to exchange information about

practical issues, to discuss matters concerning child well-being, and to establish a basic level of common normative standards. Similarly, parental flexibility and generosity around the practical organisation of the living arrangement appear to be crucial for the child's ability to integrate the two family lives in a harmonious way. Some divorced parents are not able to meet the minimal level of parental cooperation. This puts a strain on the children, sometimes leading to further trouble with respect to the practical aspects of their everyday life. If one parent, for instance, initiates activities for the child (e.g. extra homework, a diet, or attendance in sport), while the other parent ignores such initiatives, it becomes difficult for the child. Other children with equally shared residence are sharing the fate with other children of divorced parents (not living in 50/50 arrangements) in that their parents have fraught relationships or are even in open conflict. These children are stuck in dilemmas of loyalty or drawn into allying themselves with one parent against the other. To cope with such critical parental relationships some children exercise self-censorship or refrain from talking about what is going on in the other household. They navigate through life by hiding feelings for the one parent from the other. As a result they may come to have two completely separate family lives.

#### CONCLUSION AND CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE POLICIES

The picture emerging from studies on Nordic children's family relationships leaves the impression that children grow up within a normative context that socialises and encourages them to become autonomous and equal individuals. Moreover, even though the dual-earner model forms the framework for their home conditions when they growing up, and childhood consequently has become more institutionalised, some evidence suggests – somewhat paradoxically – that family life has increasingly become more child-centred, as parents nowadays tend to spend more time with their children than they used to. With the parents as their role models, today's children are also – and to an increasing extent – confronted with the norm of gender equality through family practice, even if there still appear to be observable differences between mothers and fathers and the way in which girls and boys carry out family responsibilities. Taken together, the findings leave an overall impression that most children grow up in a secure family environment that equips them to become good future citizens of the Nordic welfare states. Despite this

generally positive conclusion we observe, however, a number of points which deserve attention in relation to a family policy context. First, not all children grow up in families that provide a foundation for a secure upbringing and a prosperous future. This issue will be developed in Chapter 4 by Deding and Forssen. Another issue relates to the children who are experiencing family break-up due to parental separation or divorce. Statistically, these children appear to be more exposed to risks in several areas of life. Finally, in continuation of the topic of broken families, we will draw attention to the children who spend an equal time in both parents' households. Shared living arrangements may not be a risk factor *per se*, but when such arrangements are established on the basis of parental conflicts or due to parents' claims for "equal shares" according to a Solomon principle, such solutions may not be in the best interests of the child.

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# CHILD WELFARE

METTE DEDING & KATJA FORSSEN

## INTRODUCTION

A distinctive feature of the Nordic welfare states is the norm of equality. The concept of distributing resources from the well-off to the less well-off is well grounded in the populations of the countries. This redistribution serves several purposes, the most important being the provision of a safety net for people in need, i.e. the sick, the unemployed or the elderly. Another important aspect is to provide everybody with equal opportunities, no matter what circumstances they are born into. Hence, the equal opportunities and well-being of children comprise an important and common goal across the Nordic countries.

Measured by the Gini coefficient, all Nordic countries are fairly equal countries in a comparative perspective. In recent years, however, we have seen developments that might challenge equality in the longer run. To mention a few: first, following the financial crisis in Europe less public money is available and thus, prioritising resources such as public benefits becomes much more important (Atkinson et al., 2010; Kuivalainen & Nelson, 2011); second, increased immigration from non-European countries affects unemployment, housing segregation and poverty with consequences for the distribution of opportunities for different citizens, which in turn challenge the social cohesion (Andersson et

al., 2010); and third, related to the two other developments, there is a growing concern that not everybody contributes as needed to the financing of our public goods and hence there is an increasing focus on economic incentives (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Normann, Ronning & Norgard, 2009). As a result, in recent years many countries have introduced activation measures to prevent an increase in youth unemployment, long-term unemployment and exclusion.

The challenging developments mentioned here are important for the future of the Nordic welfare states. In this chapter, we focus on the distribution of resources with a special focus on children. Children are especially important in this context, because the children of today are the adults of tomorrow, and children with lost opportunities today may be very costly for societies throughout their life (Esping-Andersen, 2009). The facts and trends that we present in this chapter all contribute to the same story: children in the Nordic countries are indeed very well-off compared to children in other countries. However, a small, but significant share of them are faced with poor living conditions and bad life opportunities. Furthermore, in some areas this share is increasing.

In the chapter, we look at various aspects of resources for children in the Nordic countries. Where possible, we present data from all the countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. In addition, we compare the situation of children in the Nordic countries with children from other European countries: where possible we look at a fixed subset of countries (Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom), chosen to represent the North, the Middle and the South of Europe.

The data in the chapter comes from various sources. We have made our own calculations based on the EU-SILC Data (2010), and have also found various figures in different published texts. The chapter starts with a discussion of child poverty; then we focus on children's health, life satisfaction and risk behaviour themes. Finally, we look at aspects of children's life opportunities such as employment, education and child protection services.

## **CHILD POVERTY**

Children growing up in poverty are a concern in most countries. Although children in the western world usually have food and roofs over

their heads, a lack of financial resources can have serious consequences, for instance in terms of limited access to education. As shown in Table 4.1, about 10 per cent of children in the Nordic countries live in poor families (here defined as the most commonly used relative poverty measure: family income below 60 per cent of the median income in the country). This is fewer than the percentage of children living in poor families in the other countries that we have chosen for comparison, although the figure for the Netherlands is close to the figures for Iceland and Sweden.

TABLE 4.1

Child poverty and poverty among single-parent households, per cent.

Country	Below 60 per cent poverty line	Below 60 per cent poverty line	Percentage of single-parent households among all households with children
	Children younger than 18	Single parent household	
Denmark	11	20	10
Finland	11	22	10
Iceland	13	30	10
Norway	11	29	9
Sweden	13	34	11
Greece	23	33	23
United Kingdom	20	37	18
Germany	18	43	15
The Netherlands	14	29	11

Source: Own calculations based on EU-SILC 2010.

The poverty measure used here is one of relative poverty, i.e. poverty is defined relative to other incomes in the country. Using this definition, it is difficult to completely avoid some families falling under the poverty threshold from time to time, for instance due to periods of unemployment, sickness or when parents are studying. It is potentially more worrying, however, if poverty systematically hits some children more often and seriously than others. An example of this is children growing up in single-parent families. The percentage of single-parent households with children is about 10 per cent in all the Nordic countries. However, the percentage of poor households among the single-parent households is considerably larger – around 20 per cent in Denmark and Finland and around 30 per cent in Iceland, Norway and Sweden. It is common sense that the risk of poverty is higher in a family with one, rather than two, adults, but still it should be noted that financial concerns are substantial in

these families. This phenomenon is not restricted to the Nordic countries; it is also evident in other European countries, but it is still noteworthy.

Another category of children at risk comprises those in immigrant families. In many European countries, the share of immigrants from outside EU has increased substantially during the past decades, and it has been a difficult task to integrate them into the local labour markets. This is reflected in the percentage of immigrant children living in families with incomes below the poverty threshold; see Table 4.2. In Sweden, Norway, Finland and Germany in particular, this percentage is very high and much higher than the share of immigrants in the general population would suggest. This indicates that the immigrant children constitute a high-risk group that policymakers should pay specific attention to in the coming years.

TABLE 4.2

Percentage of immigrant (outside EU) children in poor families, per cent.

Country	Share of children living in immigrant families	Share of immigrant children in poor families
Denmark	14	22.8
Finland	10	49.0
Iceland	12	..
Norway	15	50.9
Sweden	21	56.5
Greece	19	22.2
United Kingdom	20	25.0
Germany	12	51.5
The Netherlands	11	..

Source: Own calculations based on EU-SILC 2010.

During the last decade, Europe has been through business upturns as well as downturns, especially as the financial crisis hit in 2008. However, poverty rates for children are remarkably stable; see Table 4.3. The ranking of European countries in terms of child poverty has not changed during the last decade, and the level of poverty also remains at almost the same level in all countries.



TABLE 4.3

Percentage of children under 18 living in poor households, 2004-10.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Denmark	9	10	10	10	9	11	11
Finland	10	10	9	10	12	12	11
Iceland	12	10	12	12	12	10	13
Norway	8	9	9	12	9	11	11
Sweden	12	9	14	12	13	13	13
Greece	20	20	22	23	23	24	23
United Kingdom	-	22	24	23	24	21	20
Germany	-	12	12	14	15	15	18
The Netherlands	-	16	14	14	13	15	14
Italy	25	24	25	25	25	24	25
Spain	25	24	24	24	24	24	25
EU-total	19	19	19	19	20	20	20

Source: Own calculations based on EU-SILC 2004-2010.

The figures above have all concentrated on income poverty. Poverty, however, can be measured in a variety of ways (UNICEF, 2012b; 2012c) and another very common measure is the deprivation index (UNICEF, 2012a). This counts how many of the items in the following list children lack:

1. Three meals a day
2. At least one meal a day with meat, chicken or fish (or a vegetarian equivalent)
3. Fresh fruit and vegetables every day
4. Books suitable for the child's age and knowledge level (not including schoolbooks)
5. Outdoor leisure equipment (bicycle, roller-skates, etc.)
6. Regular leisure activities (swimming, playing an instrument, participating in youth organisations etc.)
7. Indoor games (at least one per child, including educational baby toys, building blocks, board games, computer games etc.)
8. Money to participate in school trips and events
9. A quiet place with enough room and light to do homework
10. An Internet connection
11. Some new clothes (i.e. not all second-hand)
12. Two pairs of properly fitting shoes (including at least one pair of all-weather shoes)
13. The opportunity, from time to time, to invite friends home to play and eat

14. The opportunity to celebrate special occasions such as birthdays, name days, religious events, etc.

It is a matter of judgment where the threshold for the index is drawn. According to UNICEF (2012a), a child is defined as deprived if he/she lacks two or more of the items on the list. The discussion of how to measure poverty is long and sometimes intense, because different measures give different results. However, we should all agree that a child is poor according to several definitions if he/she indeed has fewer resources than other children. In Table 4.4, we show the percentage of children defined as poor according to the relative income definition as well as according to the UNICEF deprivation index.

TABLE 4.4

Overlap between European Child Deprivation Index and Child Income Poverty.

	Neither	Deprived not poor	Poor not deprived	Poor and deprived
Denmark	88.3	1.2	9.1	1.5
Finland	87.0	1.1	10.5	1.4
Iceland	89.4	0.8	9.7	0.1
Norway	88.0	0.4	10.0	1.5
Sweden	87.1	0.7	11.4	0.8
Greece	69.2	6.6	13.6	10.6
United Kingdom	76.8	2.5	17.7	3.0
Germany	80.7	5.1	10.4	3.8
The Netherlands	83.5	0.9	13.8	1.8

Source: UNICEF, 2012a.

It is clear that fewer children are deprived than those who are financially poor, and also that only very few children are both poor and deprived in all countries, except Greece.

In conclusion, about one out of ten children in the Nordic countries live in households below the poverty threshold. Although this is fewer than the percentage of poor children in other European countries, this pattern has not changed over the last decade. Furthermore, not many children are both financially poor and materially deprived. Thus, in terms of poverty measures, children in the Nordic countries are well off.

## CHILD HEALTH AND LIFE SATISFACTION

Child mortality and birth weight are – together with vaccinations – regarded as fundamental and classic indicators of child wellbeing (UNICEF, 2004). Infant mortality is low in all European countries; see Table 4.5. However, differences are found: thus, the mortality rate is twice as high in Denmark as in Iceland. The same pattern is found for the percentage of children born with a weight lower than 2500g, the standard threshold for low birth weight. Again, the Nordic countries rank at the best end of the European countries, but the percentage is twice as high in Denmark as in Iceland. One explanation for these figures could be the high number of Danish women smoking (e.g. Cavelaars et al., 2000). Although the numbers are low, they are still worth noting: a low birth weight is a risk factor for a number of problems for the child later in life (e.g. Gupta, Deding & Lausten, 2013).

TABLE 4.5

Health at birth – Infant mortality rate and low birth weight, per cent.

	Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live birth)	Low birth weight (per cent births less than 2500g)
Denmark	4	6
Finland	3	4
Iceland	2	3
Norway	3	5
Sweden	3	5
Greece	5	8
United Kingdom	5	8
Germany	4	7
Netherlands	5	5

Source: UNICEF, 2007. Data from 2003 (for low birth weight 2002 for Greece, 2001 for the Netherlands).

Turning to the health of adolescents, findings from the international HBSC study suggest that most 15-year-old children in the Nordic countries perceive their health as good. Table 4.6 shows the percentage of young people who perceive their health to be fair or poor and in general this percentage is around 20 per cent. Girls' perception of health is worse than boys; other than that it is difficult to find specific trends in the figures. Looking at the development over the last decade, however, the percentage of girls in Norway with poor health has decreased, while the percentage of boys with poor health in Finland and Sweden has increased substantially.

TABLE 4.6

Perception of health among 15-year-old children, 2001/2 and 2009/2010, per cent.

Country	Health is fair or poor 2001/2002		Health is fair or poor 2009/2010	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Denmark	20	15	22	15
Finland	16	2	15	13
Iceland	-	-	21	13
Norway	27	20	18	16
Sweden	23	12	21	18
Greece	17	8	8	7
United Kingdom	33	19	23	15
Germany	22	12	19	12
Netherlands	27	18	24	13

Source: HBSC 2001/2002 survey, 2009/2010 survey.

Another central health indicator is BMI (Body Mass Index), the importance of which has become more evident in recent years because overweight is an increasing problem in many countries. Table 4.7 shows the percentage of 15-year-old children who are overweight or obese according to their BMI. It is remarkable that close to 1 out of 6 boys in Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden are overweight or obese. For girls in all the Nordic countries and boys in Denmark the number is around 10 per cent, while boys in Germany and especially Greece also have weight problems. Note that the Nordic countries are very close to the average of all countries participating in the HBSC survey. But the fact that so many boys have weight problems – and do not necessarily consider this to be an issue, as they generally perceive their health as fairly good (Table 4.6) – raises some concern for their future health.

TABLE 4.7

Percentage of 15-year-old children who are overweight or obese according to BMI.

Country	2001/2002		2009/2010	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Denmark	10	14	8	10
Finland	9	17	11	17
Iceland	-	-	13	20
Norway	10	14	11	17
Sweden	7	15	7	17
Greece	8	23	13	28
United Kingdom	13	16	11	11
Germany	7	16	10	18
Netherlands	8	10	5	11
HBSC average	9	15	10	18

Source: Currie et al., 2004: HBSC 2001/2002 survey, Currie et al., 2012: HBSC 2009/2010 survey.

Finally, as a third indicator of health, we look at life satisfaction. We use Cantril's (1965) ladder scale, ranging from zero (lowest) to 10 (highest). According to this instrument, scores over 7 (i.e. 8-10) are defined as high life satisfaction. The dominant shares of 15-year-old children are highly satisfied with their life and boys more than girls; see Table 4.8. In general, life satisfaction for the 15-year-old children in the Nordic countries is above the HBSC average. The exception is girls from Sweden, who are less satisfied, and also to some extent girls from Norway. Girls from both of these countries were also relatively less satisfied a decade ago and have improved since then, but still the difference between girls and boys is larger in Norway and Sweden than in the other Nordic countries.

TABLE 4.8

Percentage of 15-year-old children indicating that they are highly satisfied with their life, 2001/2-2009/2010.

Country	High life satisfaction 2001/2002		High life satisfaction 2009/2010	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Denmark	84	92	84	90
Finland	87	92	87	90
Iceland	-	-	85	89
Norway	74	83	80	89
Sweden	74	86	77	88
Greece	86	92	80	89
United Kingdom	78	85	79	89
Germany	84	87	81	89
Netherlands	90	96	90	96
HBSC average	77	85	79	86

Source: Currie et al., 2004: HBSC 2001/2002 survey, Currie et al., 2012: HBSC 2009/2010 survey.

In the Nordic countries, health-related outcomes of children seem to be fairly good and stable. The majority of Nordic children perceive their health as good. Infant mortality is low, as it is in other European countries. Most of the children are highly satisfied with their life. However, there are clear gender differences in life satisfaction. One health indicator, overweight/obesity raises some concern. In all Nordic countries except Denmark, the share of overweight boys is very close to HBSC average. This might be a future challenge for the health of these boys.

## RISK BEHAVIOUR

In this section, we look at risk behaviour, defined as consumption of alcohol and smoking habits for 15-year-old children. In Table 4.9, we present figures for alcohol from the HBSC survey in 2001/2002 and 2009/2010 respectively. Note that the definition of this drinking variable has changed slightly between the two waves. In 2001/2002 the variable is coded as ‘Young people who drink any alcoholic drink weekly (per cent)’ while the wording in 2009/2010 is ‘Young people who drink alcohol at least once a week (per cent)’. However, the figures can be regarded as comparable.

Across all countries, except for Greece, alcohol consumption among 15-year-old children has decreased significantly over the decade. In all Nordic countries, except for Denmark, the figures in 2009/2010 are relatively modest, less than or around 10 per cent. This is in line with the increased focus in recent years on postponing the alcohol consumption of young people.

TABLE 4.9

Alcohol consumption for 15-year-old children, 2001/2002-2009/2010, Per cent.

Country	Drinks alcohol weekly 2001/2002		Drinks alcohol at least once a week 2009/2010	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Denmark	44	50	17	26
Finland	16	18	8	7
Iceland	-	-	5	8
Norway	19	20	9	11
Sweden	17	23	9	11
Greece	18	38	34	43
United Kingdom	49	56	22	31
Germany	33	46	15	28
Netherlands	49	56	18	25

Source: Currie et al., 2004: HBSC 2001/2002 survey, Currie et al., 2012: HBSC 2009/2010 survey.

For Denmark, the percentage of young drinkers is higher and about the same level as the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands. But the decrease over the last decade is remarkable and shows a promising trend.

However, the results from another survey on youth drinking are somewhat different: see Table 4.10 where the figures from ESPAD 2011 are presented. Although the numbers are not exactly the same, the percentage of Danish youth, in particular, who have been drinking during the last month is remarkable. Other figures from the same report about alcohol consumption, drunkenness and binge-drinking also put Denmark

at the top of the international statistics (ESPAD, 2012). Thus, although the situation among Danish youth may have been even worse a decade ago, alcohol is still a risk factor for the adolescents.

TABLE 4.10

Percentage of 15-year-old children who have consumed alcohol during the last month.

Country	Alcohol use during the last 30 days 2011	
	Girls	Boys
Denmark	75	77
Finland	50	46
Iceland	19	16
Norway	36	33
Sweden	41	34
Greece	68	76
United Kingdom	65	66
Germany	70	76
Netherlands	-	-

Source: ESPAD, 2012.

In Table 4.11, we present figures from the HBSC surveys on young people's smoking habits. Unlike alcohol consumption, where it is part of the ordinary life as an adult to consume modest amounts of alcohol, all research stresses that smoking should be abolished completely, in particular for the young generations.

TABLE 4.11

Smoking habits for 15-year-old children, 2001/2002-2009/2010, per cent.

Country	Smokes at least once a week 2001/2002		Smokes at least once a week 2009/2010	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Denmark	21	17	13	14
Finland	32	28	19	20
Iceland	-	-	7	9
Norway	27	20	8	9
Sweden	19	11	15	13
Greece	14	14	13	18
United Kingdom	28	21	14	9
Germany	34	32	15	15
Netherlands	24	23	17	15

Source: Currie et al., 2004: HBSC 2001/2002 survey; Currie et al., 2012: HBSC 2009/2010 survey.

With that in mind, the figures in Table 4.11 appear to be too high, especially in Finland, where about 1 out of 5 15-year-old children smoke,

while the percentages in Iceland and Norway are about half this magnitude. For all countries, except boys in Sweden and Greece, the percentages are lower in 2009/10 than in 2001/02. Furthermore, it should be noted that there is almost no gender difference in smoking habits across the countries (except in the United Kingdom).

Many countries have launched national smoking-prevention programmes to reduce smoking among young people and the general population. But the figures presented here indicate that the battle against smoking has not yet been won.

## EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The educational system is an important aspect of life opportunities. As for the distribution of economic resources, it has been a priority of the Nordic countries to supply a public school system that allows all children the opportunity of an education, no matter their family background. The public school system has been successful in the sense that social mobility is relatively large. For instance, the correlation between parents and children's education is much stronger in the US than in the Nordic countries (d'Addio, 2007; Hämäläinen & Kangas, 2010.) On the other hand, all Nordic countries face issues with selection of schools where it seems to be an increasing trend that parents with more resources pick 'better' schools for their children (European Commission, 2010).

Although the educational level in general is high and has increased significantly over the last decades, all Nordic countries have significant problems with young people not getting an education beyond primary and lower secondary school. Table 4.12 shows the percentage of 15-19-year-old children who are neither in education nor employment. Some young people will always be part of this statistic, for instance due to sickness, impairment or travel abroad. Nevertheless, the figure for Finland is striking, comprising one out of ten of the 15-19-year-olds, which is a high number and a share comparable to the figures for Greece and the United Kingdom. Table 4.12 also shows the percentage of 18-24 year-old youth with at most lower secondary education and not in education and training in 2009. The situation is alarming, especially in Iceland and Norway. In Iceland every fifth young adult has only the lowest secondary education; in Norway the share is 17.6.



There are studies showing that young people who have difficulties entering the labour market and a high risk of long-term unemployment have some characteristics in common. They have not completed their education or training; they are of foreign origin and often come from lower social strata (Hammer, 2000). And the group without more than basic education is especially problematic because technological development has squeezed out blue-collar work and low-skilled jobs are outsourced to countries with lower levels of salaries. This issue is reflected in the high youth unemployment rates, particularly in Sweden and Finland (well above the OECD average in 2010). Furthermore, for all 5 Nordic countries the rate has been increasing over the past years, and although the rates are below those for the South European countries, this is a trend that deserves attention.

TABLE 4.12

Percentage of 15-19 year-olds not in education or employment and percentage of 18-24 year-olds with at most lower secondary education and not in education and training in 2009.

Country	Percentage of 15-19 year-olds not in education or employment in 2003	Percentage of 18-24 year-olds with at most lower secondary education and not in education and training in 2009
Denmark	3	10.6
Finland	10	9.9
Iceland	4	21.4
Norway	3	17.6
Sweden	4	10.7
Greece	9	14.5
United Kingdom	9	15.7
Germany	5	11.1
Netherlands	5	10.9

Source: UNICEF, 2007.

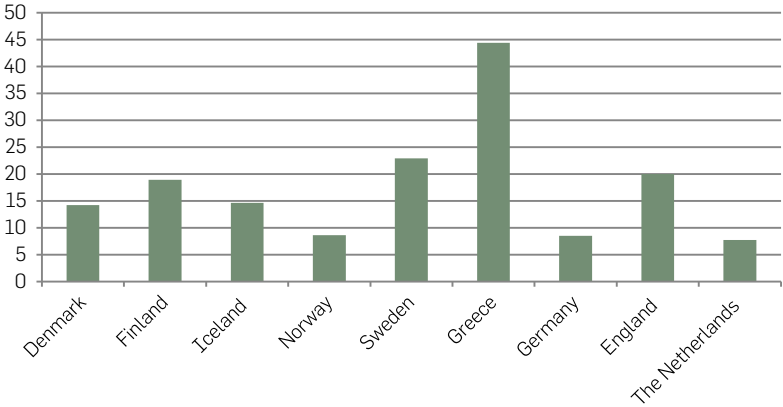
Related to the discussion about the group without further education, there has been increased debate about the early school leaving age in Europe. Leaving school early can be defined as a failure to complete upper secondary school, a failure to complete compulsory schooling or a failure to gain qualifications or school leaving certificates. The profile of early school leavers varies considerably according to their labour market status and their ethnic origin. Over 70 per cent of early school leavers in the EU complete only lower secondary education and 18 per cent have completed only primary education. In 2009, less than 50 per cent of early

school leavers were employed, while 52 per cent were either unemployed or outside the labour market. The risk of early school leaving is doubled for migrant first generation youth compared to natives. There are many reasons for leaving school too early: among other things, children of parents who left education and training prematurely have a high risk of becoming early school leavers themselves; household mobility; dysfunctional family dynamics; limited family support; and home-school conflicts (d'Addio, 2007; European Commission, 2010).

A low level of education implies a higher risk of unemployment. Youth unemployment is a serious problem in many countries, and if this is high, there is a risk of a number of young people never getting a real chance in the labour market. Figure 4.1 shows the youth unemployment rate across the selected European countries in 2011. Not unexpectedly, Greece is an outlier where the financial situation has caused very high unemployment rates among the 15-24-year-olds. But also in Sweden, the United Kingdom and Finland, unemployment is relatively high, at around 20 per cent. In Figure 4.2 we present the trends of youth unemployment from 2004 to 2011. There are huge differences between the Nordic countries. Sweden and Finland have consistent youth unemployment rates above the OECD average in this period, while Denmark, Iceland and especially Norway are below the OECD average. This implies that young people in Sweden and Finland have more difficulties in getting established in the labour market than their counterparts in many other countries. One reason for this might be that in these countries there are fewer low skill jobs available than in other countries. Note that the situation was especially bad around 2010, but seemingly has recovered somewhat since then.

FIGURE 4.1

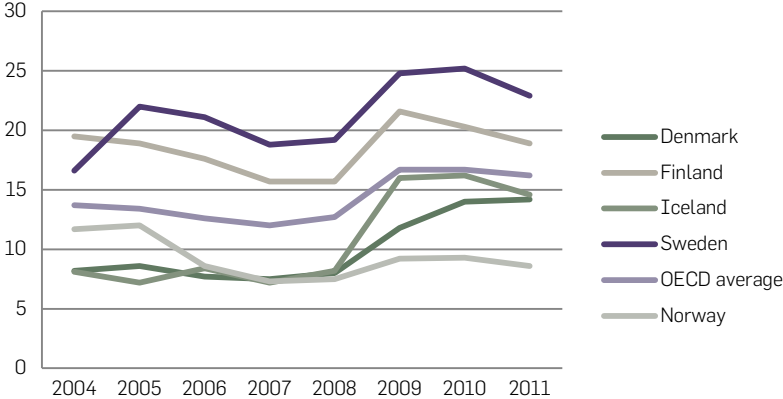
Youth unemployment in Europe, per cent of labor force, 15-24, 2011.



Source: OECD, 2012.

FIGURE 4.2

Youth unemployment in the Nordic countries, 15-24, 2004-2011, per cent.



Source: OECD, 2012.

In general, youth unemployment is strongly gender-related (figures divided by gender not shown). The youth unemployment rate and gender

differences in the unemployment rate are relatively low in Norway compared to other Nordic countries. In Sweden, the youth unemployment rate was higher among men than women throughout the 2000s; however, up until 2009 women were affected by long-term unemployment to a higher degree than men. A particularly vulnerable group comprises non-western youth. In Sweden, the unemployment rate was 15.1 per cent in 2009 and was highest among young men of non-western origin. The youth unemployment rate in Iceland has in general been low. Also in Iceland the risk of youth unemployment is higher among young men than young women. The unemployment rate among youth increased rapidly in Denmark along with the financial crisis, but it has been relatively evenly broken down by gender. In Finland the unemployment rate among youth between 16-29 years was lower in 2010 than at the beginning of the decade. The trend for men and women differs considerably, with unemployment being lower for women (NOSOSCO, 2011).

As mentioned above, the young people's chances in the labour market are related to their success in school. One of most common measures of school outcomes in recent years has been the PISA scores.

TABLE 4.13  
PISA scores in reading and mathematics 2009.

Country	Reading scale 2009	Mathematics scale 2009
	Mean score	Mean score
Finland	536 *	541 *
Netherlands	508 *	526 *
Norway	503 *	498 **
Iceland	500 *	507 *
Sweden	497 **	494 **
Germany	497 **	513 *
Denmark	495 **	503 *
United Kingdom	494 **	492 **
Greece	483 ***	466 ***

Ann: \* = Statistically significantly above the OECD average. \*\* = Not statistically significantly different from the OECD average. \*\*\* = Statistically significantly below the OECD average.

Source: PISA 2009 database: <http://pisa2009.acer.edu.au/>.

Table 4.13 presents results from the 2009 PISA survey and shows that Finnish students achieve very highly both on the reading and the mathematics scale. One star = \* mark countries that are above the OECD average, and although the difference between Finland and the other countries is striking, Norway and Iceland are also above the OECD av-

erage in the reading test, while Iceland and Denmark are above average in the mathematics scale.

The 2009 Pisa survey shows that in OECD countries boys are on average 39 points behind girls in reading, and furthermore that social background is important for student performance. Students in families with higher socio-economic status are more likely to experience academic success. At the school level, the average social, economic and cultural status of the students can influence the learning environment of the class both positively and negatively (OECD, 2010).

Related to the discussion of the PISA results is the subjective dimension of children who like school. Again, we focus on the 15-year-olds: this is the age where the young people are about to enrol in secondary education and their subjective feeling about being in school is important for this decision. As seen in Table 4.14, 15-year-olds from Iceland and Norway in particular like their school, while 15-year-olds from Sweden and especially Finland are less enthusiastic. This is potentially worrying, as it is exactly the young people from these two countries who also face the highest unemployment rates. One of the explanations for the country differences is the great variation in educational setting among the Nordic countries (Suldo & Huebner, 2006). There are also gender differences: in all countries girls like school more than boys and this trend can be seen in both time periods. It is notable that the share of children who like school has increased during the past ten years in all Nordic countries, although the increase has been modest in Sweden.

TABLE 4.14

Percentage of young people who like school a lot, 2001/2-2009/10.

Country	Young people who like school a lot 2001/2002		Young people who like school a lot 2009/2010	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Denmark	17	13	24	17
Finland	5	4	13	8
Iceland	-	-	43	38
Norway	32	31	31	29
Sweden	13	13	14	14
Greece	16	14	13	7
United Kingdom	15	15	17	13
Germany	14	14	20	20
Netherlands	22	21	28	19
HBSC average	17	15	25	20

Source: Currie et al., 2004: HBSC 2001/2002 survey; Currie et al., 2012: HBSC 2009/2010 survey.

Liking school is related to experiences of bullying. Bullying is a negative outcome that is more common among disadvantaged children (European Commission, 2010). There are different kinds of dimensions of bullying: physical and mental as well as more passive exclusion of the child being bullied. The experience of bullying is a little more common among girls than boys. There is also a wide variation in bullying rates between countries. It is experienced least by children in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands and most by children in Greece; see Table 4.15.

TABLE 4.15

Percentage of 15-year-old children in selected European countries who have experienced bullying at school, 2005/2006.

Country	Young people who have experienced bullying at school	
	Girls	Boys
Denmark	6	5
Finland	6	5
Iceland	4	2
Norway	7	6
Sweden	5	3
Greece	21	17
United Kingdom	9	8
Germany	13	11
Netherlands	6	4
HBSC average	9	7

Source: Currie et al., 2008: HBSC 2005/2006 survey.

In this section we have provided statistics on the situation of children and young people in the labour market and the educational system. Although in the Nordic countries it is fairly good from an international perspective, there are also some negative trends. The share of young adults with only a basic education level is relatively high in all Nordic countries but especially in Iceland and Norway. In Finland, 10 per cent of the youth are neither in education nor employment. This group is vulnerable in the labour market and faces a great risk of marginalisation.

## CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

Securing the welfare of children is one of the main social policy goals in all welfare states. As deficiencies in the environments of children have been found to have extensive and long-lasting effects on the later devel-

opment of individuals (Hessle, 1988; Holman, 1978; Jonsson, 1973), welfare policies have been oriented to preventing the emergence of, or minimising the effects of, such environments. Increasing numbers of children and young adults live at risk of marginalisation. A clearly distinguishable group among them is those children who are clients of child protection services. In all Nordic countries child protection services have been criticised. In evaluating the quality of child protection work, its marginal position must be kept in mind (Forssén, 1998). The child protection services generally come into the picture only after the realisation that the client's problems cannot be resolved by the general social welfare services, and so the child's problems may have advanced so far that not even out-of-home care interventions can solve them.

In the literature, child welfare<sup>22</sup> or child protection services are sometimes included in the definition of family policy (e.g. Eydal & Kröger, 2010; Kamerman & Kahn, 1997). The law on child welfare addresses the core duties of parents towards their children, and when the public authorities have the right and duty to intervene in family life to ensure the best interests of the children. Child protection measures belong to the strongest social policy interventions on individual and family lives.

The first national acts of child welfare came into force at the turn of the nineteenth century: Norway in 1899, Sweden in 1902 and Denmark in 1905; see Table 16. Later, both Finland (1936) and Iceland (1932) enacted similar laws aiming at intervening in problems of ill-treated children (Eydal & Satka, 2006). Gradually, social services gained more expertise and knowledge in child psychology, child psychiatry, family therapy and social work. This knowledge was implemented into practice in the sense of an increased emphasis on the importance of the relationships between child and parents (Forsberg & Kröger, 2010; Júlíusdóttir, 2008). Until the 1970s the relationship between mother and child was considered especially important, leading to increased emphasis on supporting mothers in taking care of their children (e.g. Satka, 2003).

From the 1970s and onward the primary goal of the child welfare policies has been to support families in taking care of their children. However, if the parents fail to fulfill their duties towards the child, or the child is considered to be in danger, it is the duty of the child welfare authorities to ensure the best interest of that child. In order to be able to protect children, the child welfare authorities have the power to enter the

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22. Often also referred to as child protection.

private sphere of family life and implement measures such as out of home placement for the child or removing the custody of the children from the parents (Forsberg & Kröger, 2010; Grinde, 2004). The laws on child welfare have addressed the role of mothers and fathers in a gender-neutral tone as the role and obligation of the parents. In practice it has been the mother who has received the main attention of the child welfare authorities (E.g. Kristinsdóttir, 1991)<sup>23</sup>.

Research has documented the lack of knowledge in this area and concludes that the children had been interviewed by a social/case worker in only a minority of cases (e.g. Egelund & Sundell, 2001; Hollander, 1998). It has been shown in many studies that children are invisible in child protection services. In the light of such results, the importance of including both the fathers and the children has been emphasised, in particular that the children's voices should be heard (Folleso, 2006; Folleso & Mevik, 2010). Rights of children to be heard were enacted into the child welfare law relatively early (see Table 5) but the development of legal rights has been empowered by the United Nations' Convention of Children's Rights (CRC) and child welfare laws have increasingly emphasised the importance of children's right to participation. The children do have the legal right to have a say in their own matters, specifically when major decisions are made by authorities when protecting their interests. Such rights were usually previously limited to children older than 12, but recent development has followed the directives of the CRC that states that these rights should be enforced based on the child's maturity rather than age (Hestbæk, 2001, 1998). Furthermore, the importance of agency and user involvement in social policies from the 2000s and onward has also contributed working methods that emphasise the inclusion of all family members (e.g. Oterholm, 2003; Saasen, 2002; Sandbæk, 2000).

According to Forsberg and Kröger (2010), the emphasis on prevention and family work has increased, and the contact between children and parents is emphasised in cases where children are placed outside their home. While this development is considered positive by most, Forsberg and Kröger warn that "When child welfare is defined as prevention and support for families with children, control and protection of children vanishes out of sight ... As a consequence, problems that re-

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23. Kristinsdóttir points out that the literature in social work supports the view that it was primarily the women who dealt with welfare agencies on behalf of their families and they were considered to carry the main responsibility for their children (e.g. Brook & Davis, 1985; McLeod & Dominelli, 1982; Wilson, 1977, in Kristinsdóttir, 1991).



quire direct intervention and even control, like violence in families and close relations, also become difficult to raise and address” (2010: p. 4). Child protection services have also been criticised for inefficiency, slowness, and excessive reliance on ”expert” input (see Pösö, 1997). The highly specified welfare machinery of experts has not always been sufficiently capable of taking the clients’ subjective views into account.

The Nordic countries have all ratified the CRC. Norway was the first country in the world to establish a special office of Ombudsman for Children and the other Nordic countries have followed that example (see Table 4.16). Sweden was the first country to explicitly ban corporal punishment in child welfare law and the other Nordic countries have followed their example (in Denmark, the duties of the Ombudsman for Children lies with the National Council for Children).

TABLE 4.16

Development of Nordic Child Welfare Policies in Children’s Protection.

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
First child protection act	1905	1936	1936	1900	1902
Law against rights of parents to use corporal punishment	1985	1983	-	1972	1979
Legal rights for children to have a say according to Child Protection Acts	n.a.	1983	1966	1953	1980
Law on Ombudsman for children	1994	2005	1994	1981	1993
Ratification of the CRC	1991	1991	1992	1991	1990

Source: Eydal & Satka, 2006; Stang-Dahl, 1985; Therborn, 1993.

The Nordic child welfare systems share important similarities both regarding organisational factors, and values and definitions of the children’s best interests (Bengtsson & Jakobsen, 2012; Blomberg et al., 2010; Grinde, 2004, 1989; Hestbæk, 1998). A recent study comparing the practices of out-of-home placements in all the five Nordic countries concludes that despite the fact that the legislation in the Nordic countries does not define in detail the criteria for when such measures should be taken, the authorities in all the countries use relatively identical justifications for interventions (Bengtsson & Jakobsen, 2009). The study also reports important differences not only in the organisation of child protection services, but also in the framing of when parental support is not enough and authorities need to intervene. This is also documented in a comparative study by Grinde (2004) among local municipalities and au-

thorities in three Nordic countries that shows country-specific differences in the decision-making process.

In all the Nordic countries authorities have the right to place a child or young person away from home. Common reasons for this are parents' needs for help raising the child or that the child's health or development is threatened due to neglect or to the child's own behaviour.

The statistics from the Nordic Statistical Committee on the number of out-of-home placements (with or without consent of the parents) show that there are some differences among the countries regarding these; see Table 4.17.

As can be seen from Table 4.17, the number of children that are placed outside their home differs between age groups and between countries. In 2009, Finland has by far the highest figures for the youngest age group 0-6 years and the Finnish figures have increased during the aftermath of the economic crisis in the 1990s. In 1991, 8,724 0-6-year-old children in Finland were based outside their home. In 2011, 17,409 children were placed outside their home. Denmark, Norway and Sweden have similar figures for this age group, while it is by far the lowest in Iceland.

For the age group 7-14 years, Denmark, Finland and Norway are similar, with around 10 out of 1000 children placed outside their home, compared to 8.3‰ in Sweden and 2.9‰ in Iceland. Norway and Sweden place around 20 children aged 15-17 out of 1000 compared to around 25 both in Denmark and Finland. Again Iceland has by far the lowest figure with around 15 out of 1000 children. How can these differences be interpreted and understood? As frequently pointed out in the child welfare literature, it is difficult to conclude if high figures are tokens of more children at risk or of a better and more efficient child welfare services or changes in child welfare legislation. Or, as Wiklund has pointed out, the low representation of abuse and neglect in the Swedish system can be interpreted two ways: "In a positive sense, it could be viewed as a strong system that is able to address family problems before they escalate. In a more critical sense, the system could be perceived as an obtrusive one, where the threshold for state intervention is set too low." (Wiklund, 2006, pp. 19-20).

TABLE 4.17

Nordic countries: Children and young people placed outside their own homes during the year 2000, 2005 and 2009 by age and per 1000 inhabitants in their respective age groups.

Year	2000	2005	2009
<i>Denmark*</i>	-	-	
0-6 years	-	-	3.7
7-14 years	-	-	10.5
15-17 years	-	-	25.0
18-20 years	-	-	-
0-17 years	-	-	11.2
<i>Finland</i>			
0-6 years	5.7	6.0	6.8
7-14 years	9.6	11.1	11.5
15-17 years	16.1	20.9	24.4
18-20 years	11.7	14.4	14.4
0-20 years	9.7	11.7	12.4
<i>Iceland</i>			
0-6 years	2.5	0.6	0.5
7-14 years	4.5	2.9	2.9
15-17 years	8.3	12.5	14.9
18-20 years	-	-	14
0-20 years	4.9	4.2	3.7
<i>Norway</i>			
0-6 years	3.6	4.1	4.5
7-14 years	7.9	8.8	10.0
15-17 years	17.4	18.0	21.2
18-19 years	11.0	16.6	17.8
0-19 years	7.9	9.3	10.7
<i>Sweden</i>			
0-6 years	3.6	3.9	4.0
7-14 years	7.1	7.7	8.3
15-17 years	16.8	17.1	21.9
18-20 years	11.8	13.5	14.4
0-20 years	8.0	8.9	10.1

Note: \* Includes children with mental or physical handicaps. Because of changes in data collection methods in 2007, the data from 2009 cannot be compared with earlier years.

Source: NOSOSCO, 2011.

Nordic child welfare authorities and laws have from the beginning defined risks that endanger children and emphasised prevention and saving children from these risks. During the last century the Nordic welfare model was established and its social support to families and children is considered among the best in the world. At the same time, child welfare authorities still face parents that neglect or abuse their children. Thus, the Nordic welfare states have not been able to ensure all children parental care and a safe childhood. There is also evidence to suggest that some

children who have experienced out-of-home care do not fare well as adults. In particular, those children who have been taken into care before they have reached their teenage years have a higher risk of psychological illness, suicide or attempts at suicide as well as low educational achievement when adults. Many of these children have lost their biological parents or parent during their upbringing. The conclusions drawn on data for children who have been placed in out-of-home care due to their behavioural problems are fairly pessimistic, since the prognosis for them shows a great risk of future instability and health problems. The experience of out-of-home care is an important explanatory factor behind educational achievement in compulsory education (Socialstyrelsen, 2009; Vinnerljung & Franzén, 2006; Vinnerljung, Berlin & Hjern, 2010). Obviously more research and development needs to be invested into the solutions of care for these children.

Finally in this section, we will point to the fact that risks outside the families – societal risks – have changed and legislators always face new challenges. The most recent example is the new social media that expose children to new risks, such as the possibility for sexual abusers to contact children and gain their trust (e.g. Eydal & Satka, 2006). In addition, increased opportunities for cyber bullying occurs; while schools in the Nordic countries have implemented plans for abolishing bullying from schools they cannot keep track of what happens in the social media, where lots of both bullying and social pressure take place (Reynisson et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the increasingly multicultural constellation of the Nordic nations creates new challenges as cultural values regarding children differ. The Nordic value systems are well established and, as pointed out above, even when they are not clearly articulated in the legislation, the authorities in all the countries share a common understanding of what is best for children, an understanding that is challenged by other cultural understandings (Bengtsson & Jakobsen, 2009). One example is that in many cultures physical punishment is recognised as the best way of disciplining children; another is the issue of forced marriages that have created heated debates in the Nordic countries. The child welfare systems and the Nordic legislation emphasises on one hand that all cultures should be respected and treated equally and on the other that children's rights, as defined in the Nordic legislation shall be ensured at all costs.

This has thus established new challenges not only for child welfare but for the Nordic welfare systems in general.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of our chapter is to point to some key challenges that face children, youth and young adults in the Nordic welfare states. All Nordic countries aim to guarantee all their citizens equal opportunities to succeed in life regardless of social background. The aim of Nordic family policies is to create a safe environment for children to grow up in and to support parents to have and raise children. Parents have the primary responsibility for children's well-being. According to Ringen (1997) "the well-being of children depends on two processes, first how the families in which children live fare in society, and then how children specifically fare in their families." The role of universal family policy is important in these processes. Family policy services support parents in their efforts to ensure the well-being and good upbringing of children. Different policy areas such as environmental policy, education policy and employment policy also have implications on the daily lives of families with children.

Although poverty among children in lone mother households is not a new phenomenon, the rates of income poverty in these households have been stable over years. The trends are increasing. We have also found a high proportion of poverty among children in immigrant families: about half of these children are poor. What are the long term effects of children living in poor families? We know from the Danish study on the wellbeing of children (Ottosen et al., 2010) that children risk social exclusion depending on family type. Children in lone parent families and children in reconstituted families have higher risks. The risks are linked to a combination of factors, such as unemployment and low level of education of parents. Swedish studies show similar results (Batljan, 2004; Socialstyrelsen, 2009). In general, social inequality is a part of the problem of poverty, but not the only factor

Active labour market policies are a Nordic invention and have a long-established role in combating entrenched labour market exclusion (Taylor-Gooby, 2005; Timonen, 2005). In international comparisons the competitiveness of the Nordic economy has been rated among the best. All the Nordic countries seem to have been able to combine good eco-

conomic competitiveness with an extensive public sector. The latest economic crisis has changed this situation. The statistics shown in our chapter indicate that some indicators of exclusion have been growing in the Nordic countries.

Although the educational level of young people has been increasing in all European countries, their position in the labour market has weakened. Atypical and low-paid work has become more common in many countries. The youth unemployment rate has increased in recent years and the amount of young people without vocational training has increased. Those with a low level of education face difficulties in entering the labour market. The most serious situation is among those who have dropped out from the basic education system. International studies suggest that dropouts are more likely to become unemployed, stay unemployed for a longer period, have lower earnings and have a bigger risk of poverty.

Young people's chances in the labour market are connected to their success at school. Youth unemployment is a social problem in all OECD countries including the Nordic countries. In particular, Sweden and in Finland have youth unemployment rates above the OECD average. Youth unemployment is usually gender-related so that men face unemployment more often than women.

There have been public discussions in all Nordic countries about the increasing risk of marginalisation among young people. There seem to be growing number of children and young people who are not doing well in society. Many OECD countries have established youth unemployment plans to prevent the increasing risks of social exclusion. For example, Finland introduced a youth guarantee programme in 2013 (Youth Guarantee 2013). By means of a youth guarantee each young person under 25 and recently graduated people under 30 will be offered a job, on the job training, a study place, or rehabilitation within three months of becoming unemployed. Finland has been following the implementation of measures in other Nordic countries, and the actions of Denmark in particular. Denmark introduced the 'Ungepakke 2' programme in 2009. It comprises a total of 38 initiatives aimed at encouraging young people aged 15-17 to commence studies or enter the labour market. In Denmark the pilot project concerning employment measures for young people (aged 18-29) was implemented in 2009-2010. The results showed that there was more success in finding employment for those young people who already had some post-basic qualification, while

the trend was negative for those without one. The results prove that strengthening the measures of employment offices can help boost the employment opportunities of young people (Youth Quarantee 2013).

According to the latest UNICEF report (2013) "Child well-being in economically rich countries" there have been positive changes in child well-being in most of the 29 countries over the last 10 years. For example, the low family affluence rate, the infant mortality rate and the percentage of young people who smoke cigarettes have fallen in almost every single country. All Nordic countries except Denmark rate in the top percentage (just after the Netherlands). Denmark, however, has gone down in the rankings. In the early 2000s Denmark was ranked 4th, and ten years later this ranking was 11th. On dimensions of health and safety, the ranking of Denmark is 23, which is a long way behind the other Nordic countries. The poverty gap shows the distance between the poverty threshold and the median incomes of those below the poverty threshold, and the UNICEF report finds that the poverty gap among Danish children is clearly higher than in other Nordic countries – almost 30 per cent. This indicates that although the relative poverty rate in Denmark is only 6.3 per cent, those who live in poverty fall further below than in most other countries. The indicators in the new report are not all directly comparable to earlier reports and, thus, the overall ranking is not comparable. But this is a still a noteworthy result that calls for further investigation.

In the chapter, we have documented some worrying facts related to health issues, such as drinking and obesity. The main future challenges in the Nordic countries, however, appear to be related to youth employment policies, education policies and the situation of immigrant children. There is a need for new policy measures that more effectively support young people and enable all of them to complete their basic education and vocational training and make it easier for them to enter the labour market. Because of the lower educational level and higher unemployment rate among young people with immigrant background, more attention should be given to policy measures that effect otherwise increasing trends of segregation and exclusion.

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# CARING FAMILIES: POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN NORDIC COUNTRIES

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## INTRODUCTION

The chapter examines care policies for children and the elderly in the Nordic countries from a comparative perspective, and from the perspective of how such policies may support the family. The Nordic countries are known for their extensive universal social services of high quality, for both children and the elderly (Rostgaard & Fridberg, 1998; Sipilä, 1997). The aim of the chapter is to critically examine and reassess how the Nordic welfare states provide support and services in relation to care. The chapter examines what services and support are provided for children and the elderly. It questions whether the division of labour between the state/municipalities, market and the families is characterised by re-familisation or if the public sector still plays an important role regarding care of both children and the elderly. Finally, there is a discussion on whether the Nordic care policies are still universal in character.

The chapter will be organised in following manner: the first section will focus on the main characteristics of schemes for paid parental leave, and the second discusses policies on early education and care for pre-school children. The welfare state support to families with sick and disabled children is compared and discussed in a third section. Lastly, a section investigates how families are supported in caring for their elderly.

All the Nordic countries share the policy goal that the elderly shall be ensured the rights to live at home as long as possible, regardless of their need for assistance in daily life. In order to fulfill that goal, public home care services have been developed, but the marketisation of these services has been seen to strain the resources of families.

The data used in the chapter is both primary data such as Nordic statistics, law texts, parliamentary documents and secondary data, including research reports and published research.

## CARE FOR INFANTS: PARENTAL LEAVE SCHEMES

In the Nordic countries there is a long historical tradition of public support to mothers allowing them to take leave of absence from paid work to care for their newborn children. With the exception of Iceland, the Nordic countries have since the immediate post-war period addressed the need for providing leave and compensation for lost income for mothers prior to and following the birth of a child (Gauthier, 1996; Rostgaard & Fridberg, 1998).

In addition to the maternity leave, the Nordic countries were among the first in the world to introduce parental leave schemes, i.e. leave that could be shared between parents. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, all the Nordic countries implemented laws on paid parental leave, which extended the period of leave and made it possible for parents themselves to decide how to divide parts of the entitlements between them (Duvander & Lammi-Taskula, 2011; Kamerman & Moss, 2009).

Sweden was the first country to develop schemes of paid parental leave. As of 1974 all Swedish parents became entitled to a total of six months of leave, with a wage replacement percentage at 90 per cent of former wages. Over time, the neighbouring Nordic countries implemented similar laws, and also during the period 1974-1987 all except for Iceland introduced 2 weeks of paternity leave for the father, to be taken immediately after birth (Brandth & Kvande, 2009; Cronholm, 2009; Eydal & Gíslason, 2008; Lammi-Taskula & Takala, 2009; Rostgaard, 2002) (See Table 5.1).

The introduction of shared rights to parental leave did however not result in the desired effect of increasing fathers' take up of parental leave. This – and a growing recognition of the important role of fathers



as caregivers – gave impetus to attempting to encourage fathers to take up leave by other means. In 1993 Norway was the first country to introduce a so-called "use it or lose it" entitlement, one month of non-assignable parental leave with payment reserved for the father<sup>24</sup>, also known as a father's quota (Brandth & Kvande, 2003).

In 1996 Sweden introduced a similar right to one month of father's quota, and in 2003 Finland introduced a two-week bonus leave for fathers, which was technically not a father's quota, but a strengthened entitlement for the father, allowing those who use at least two weeks of the parental leave period two extra weeks of paid leave (Duvander, Ferrarini & Thalberg 2006; Rhantaliho, 2009). In 2000 Iceland went further and introduced equal rights of leave time for mothers and fathers, with three months of maternity leave, three months of paternity leave and three months parental leave (Eydal & Gíslason, 2008). Denmark introduced a use-it-or-lose-it father's quota in the parental leave in 1997, only to abolish it again in 2001. This has left Denmark as the only Nordic country presently without a father's quota (Haas & Rostgaard, 2011; Rostgaard, 2002) (see Table 5.1).

TABLE 5.1  
Development of leave schemes, Nordic countries.

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Parental leave	1984	1985	1987	1978	1974
Father's quota	1997 *	2003 **	2000	1993	1995

Source: Lammi-Taskula, 2007. \* Abolished in 2002. \*\* Bonus weeks.

Since then, both Norway and Sweden have gradually extended the father's quota with Norway by 2013 offering 14 weeks, (See Table 5. 2). In 2002 fathers in Sweden gained an extra month of father's quota, having now in all two months; very importantly, this time was an extension to the total leave period, so that the strengthening of fathers' rights was an add-on and not something that limited the mother's time with the child. Also in 2008 a gender equality bonus was introduced, so that parents who share the parental leave benefit equally from a tax credit (Duvander & Johansson, 2010). Finland enacted 9 weeks fathers' quota in 2013.

24. Or the person not taking the main part of the leave.

At present, Sweden offers the longest leave period of 16 months, during which a flat-rate benefit is paid for three months. The longest leave period is thus available in Sweden (69 weeks) and the shortest is in Iceland (39 weeks) (See Table 5.2). For parents active in the labour market who are eligible (have been working for a certain period of time etc.), the payment is a percentage of previous income, but all the countries except Finland have a ceiling on the amount, and according to Duvander and Lammi-Taskula (2011) this was highest in Norway and lowest in Denmark in the year 2010. If the parents have not been active in labour market they are entitled to a flat rate benefit during the parental leave (NOSOSCO, 2012).

TABLE 5.2

Parental leave in Nordic countries, percentage of income and weeks of entitlement July 2013.

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Per cent of income	100	70	80	100/80	80
Total weeks	50-64	48	39	52/59	69
- only mother	18	18	13	14	8
- only father	0	9	13	14	8
- father with mother	2	3	0	2	2

Source: Moss, 2013.

Except perhaps for Denmark, where the gendered division of leave is seen to be a private family matter (Borchorst, 2006; Rostgaard, 2002), policies in all the other Nordic countries have thus aimed at increasing the usage and rights of fathers to paid parental leave. However, these aims have been fulfilled in different ways and with different outcomes. As is evident from Table 5.3 below, the take-up rates by fathers, as measured in per cent of total benefit days used, are still not on par with those of the mothers. However, there is considerable variation across the countries. According to the figures produced by the Nordic Statistical Committee, the Icelandic fathers used the largest share of the days in 2010, 32 per cent, followed by fathers in Sweden with 24 per cent and Norway 15 per cent. The fathers in Finland and Denmark used the lowest proportion, 7-8 per cent (NOSOSCO, 2012).

As Table 5.3 suggests, the real increase in fathers' take up of parental leave took place in Iceland around the time of the introduction of the father's quota, and likewise in Norway. Sweden initially saw stagnation

in fathers' take-up of parental leave after the introduction of the father's quota, but since then the rate has continued to increase. The table also suggests that the total leave length is probably important for the sharing of it between men and women, i.e. with parental leave extending beyond the first 6 months of breastfeeding it is more likely that men will take it up, but a long allowance does not necessarily favour fathers taking it up on its own. It needs to be combined with policy measures such as the father's quota (Duvander & Lammi-Taskula, 2011; Haas & Rostgaard, 2011). The support of a public discourse of active and involved fathers also seems to be important for encouraging fathers to make use of their leave rights. In public discourses both Iceland and Sweden have also emphasised the importance of active fatherhood, for the sake of both the child and the father (Klinth & Johanson, 2012; Eydal & Gíslason, 2008).

TABLE 5.3

Nordic countries, per cent of total benefit days used by fathers 2000, 2005 and 2010.

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
2000	5.5	4.1	3.3	7.2	13.7
2005	5.9	5.5	32.7	9.3	20.5
2010	7.7	7.1	31.7	14.7	23.9

Source: NOSOSCO, 2002, p. 48; 2007, p. 50; 2012, p. 45.

In addition to entitlements to paid parental leave, some of the Nordic countries also ensure parents of young children entitlements to part-time work until the child reaches a certain age. According to the Act on paid parental leave in Sweden, parents can reduce their work to 25 per cent during paid parental leave and to 75 per cent when not receiving benefits until the child reaches the age of 8 (Föräldraledighetslag nr. 584/1995). In Finland parents are entitled to reduced working hours: the maximum number can total 30 per week to care for the child (Kela, n.d.,d). In Norway parents can also apply for shorter working hours for up to three years, and a nursing mother is entitled to up to one hour a day for breastfeeding (Working Environment Act nr. 83/2009). No such legislation exists in Denmark and Iceland.

## CARE FOR CHILDREN IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The Nordic Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) shares common goals: the integration of care and education, the predominance of (decentralised) services instead of (centralised) cash benefits, the tax-based financing of services, low user fees and a universal approach in coverage, and predominance of public provision of services (Sipilä, 1997; Wagner, 2006).

The Nordic countries stand out with their legal entitlement to day care for the young children under three years of age, which all Nordic countries, except for Iceland, have implemented (Eydal & Rostgaard, 2011a). Part of the reason for this is the common historical Nordic emphasis on creating equal opportunities for children. Participation in day care is seen not only as a care provision but as an opportunity to positively shape the life chances of the individual child by ensuring that he/she experiences a good social and educational environment before starting school (Brandth & Gíslason, 2011; Leira, 1992; Ploug, 2012). Creating equal opportunities for children's participation therefore entails that day care is both affordable, accessible and of a high standard in order to provide a real alternative to parental care.

An important reason for the introduction of the entitlement to day care was, however, also that such services are expected to facilitate the dual-income family model where both father and mother work full-time. The right to day care therefore indicates to parents not only when they are able to return to the labour market, but also when this is desirable. The political agenda of facilitating parental labour force participation has been especially pronounced in Denmark and Sweden, where the goal of gender equality in work life has received broad political backing to a great degree, and has influenced the day care policies in the provision of full-time places, prioritising provision for children of parents in work (Eydal & Rostgaard, 2011b). In Finland, Iceland and Norway, part-time care was prioritised until the 1990s and the policies did not emphasise the dual earner/dual career model to the same extent as Denmark and Sweden did (Broddadottir et al., 1997; Ellingsæter & Guldbrandsen, 2007; Lammi-Taskula & Takala, 2009; Leira, 2002).

However, in the last decades the gap between the provisions of day care volumes between the countries has narrowed and in all of them pre-school or kindergarten provision is now the most usual form of day

care for children from the age of 2, except for Finland where the children start pre-school later than the children in the other Nordic countries (see Table 5.4).

TABEL 5.4

Take-up of day care, percentage of different age groups, 1995, 2000, 2010

	Age groups	1995	2000	2010
Denmark	< 1 years	-	15	17
	1-2 years	48	77	90
	3-5 years	83	92	98
Finland	< 1 years	-	2	1
	1-2 years	18	35	41
	3-5 years	55	72	73
Iceland	< 1 years	-	7	7
	1-2 years	37	59	80
	3-5 years	64	92	95
Norway	< 1 years	-	2	4
	1-2 years	22	37	79
	3-5 years	61	78	96
Sweden	< 1 years	-	0	0
	1-2 years	37	60	70
	3-5 years	74	86	97

Note: Day care includes both family day-care which is usually used for the youngest children and day care in preschools.  
Source: NOSOSCO 2007-8, 2009; NOSOSCO 2009-10, 2011.

This positions the Nordic countries as having a relatively high take-up of day care, especially for children under the age of three (Eydal & Rostgaard, 2011a). In recent years the take-up of day care for young children in the Nordic countries has been well above the EU average of 20 per cent of the age group 0-2 years, although the timing of the start of use of it can differ extensively. Denmark has been in the lead over the years with the provision of day care, and this not only for the young children under one year, but also for the 1-2 year olds, of whom 48 per cent were attending day care in Denmark by the mid-1995s, compared to 18-37 per cent in other Nordic countries. By 2010 nine in ten Danish children aged two to three were in day care, while Finland in particular lagged behind, providing for 41 per cent of children in this age group (see Table 5.4). Part of the explanation is, however, the variation in length of parental leave across the Nordic countries and in the cash-for-care schemes (see below on cash-for-care). As regards the older children aged three to school age, the Nordic countries do not share the leading position in comparison to other European countries, as take-up rates have been more similar to the EU average in recent years. In 2010 all

Nordic countries, except Finland, provided day care for between 95 per cent or more of the age group and thus above the EU Lisbon target of 90 per cent.

All Nordic countries emphasise full-time care, and part-time care is becoming very unusual (Eydal & Rostgaard, 2011c). However, most day care institutions are open during daytime only, often making it hard for families working shift patterns or unsociable hours. A recent Swedish research report (Lorentzi, 2011), conducted among employers in municipalities and regions, shows that day care centres usually open between 6.00 and 7.00, but one out of five opens later. They usually close between 17.30-18.00; one out of ten remains open after 18.00, but one out of five closes before 17.30. Thus the report confirms that the aim of the law to provide care in accordance with the working hours of parents is not attained. Parents themselves indicate that they find it hard to organise care; 30 per cent of parents in a recent survey stated that the opening hours make it impossible for them to work full-time. Björk, Björnberg and Ekstram (2013) point out the lack of day care for parents working atypical hours, as well as raising the possibility that public subsidising of privately provided child-minding services that have been made possible by a new law on domestic services might lead to an increase in private solutions. The lack of flexible opening hours has even been referred to as a possible 'boomerang effect of the Nordic family-friendly schemes' by Gupta, Smith & Verner (2006).

The national curriculums for pre-school and day care institutions in the Nordic region have emphasised free play (i.e. the children play for the sake of the play), but they are also expected to learn through this and make their own discoveries (Hakkarienen, 2006; Kjörholt, 2011). Outdoor play and the opportunity to investigate nature is of high importance in the Nordic day care settings (Einarsdóttir, 2006; Nilsen, 2005). For example, in the Norwegian legislation it is stated that children should be encouraged to explore, create and wander on their own (Lov om barnehager nr. 64/17. juni 2005). Despite this emphasis on free play across the countries it is, however, also apparent that the trend toward incorporating more teaching in the day care centres is also evident in the Nordic countries. Today it is normal practice to offer structured and formal learning as part of the day care activities, e.g. organised as learning the alphabet as is the practice in the Danish kindergartens. Another tendency is to establish cooperation between the day care centre and the primary school in order to integrate

and smooth the transition between the two systems for the child (e.g. Gulløv, 2011; Kjørholt & Seland, 2011).

The trend to what some would term ‘schoolification’ has been met with some criticism, particularly among practitioners in social pedagogy who point out that the emphasis on education might result in less time for free play and fewer contacts between the teachers and other staff members, who have to allocate more time for preparation and evaluation instead of direct contact with the children (Kjørholt & Qvortrup, 2011). Kjørholt and Qvortrup (2011, p. 272) point out that it remains to be seen if “an emphasis on children as coming adults or human beings is irreconcilable with a recognition of children as competent human beings ‘here and now’”.

Another trend that has influenced the day care, as well as other social services in the Nordic countries, is the emphasis on New Public Management that has brought market-oriented approaches and ideas that have influenced both policy and practice (Forsberg & Kröger, 2010). In the child care policies, these trends can be identified in the political discourses that have stressed both the emphasis on measurable outcomes, exemplified in the obligation to document children’s developmental outcomes and competence and the setting of targets, as well as the importance of need for choice, i.e. that parents should have choices in how to care for their children; these have resulted in cash-for-care schemes.

The goals of the schemes differ considerably between the countries. In Denmark, Finland and Sweden, it is first and foremost the goal to offer parents the possibility of choosing between different forms of support and care for their children. In Norway, parental choice is indeed emphasised, but so is creating equality between parents who make use of subsidised day care and those who do not (Eydal & Rostgaard, 2011b).

The benefits can be paid out following the parental leave period and may last until the child has been enrolled full-time in public day care (usually at the age of three) (Eydal & Rostgaard, 2011a; Rantalaiho, 2009; Repo, 2010; Sipila, Repo & Rissanen, 2010). As Table 5.5 shows, the schemes follow similar logic to some extent, but there are also important differences: for example, in both Denmark and Sweden the schemes are organised at municipality level and a decision can be made as to whether or not to provide cash-for-care. Furthermore, the Danish scheme differs from that in the other countries since the caring parent cannot be active

in the labour market at the same time and has to fulfill other requirements as well.

TABLE 5.5

Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden rules for eligibility for cash-for-care and benefit amount as proportion of AW 2009.

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Age of the child?	6 mths-3 years	1-3 years	1-3 years***	250 days -3 years
Part time day care + partial payments of cash-for-care?	No	No	Yes	Yes
Can be used to pay others for care?	No, but other schemes for that	Yes	Yes	Yes
Universal, for all parents regardless of type of income?	No	Yes	Yes	No
Paid by state or municipality	Municipality	State	State	Municipality
Cash-for-care benefits 2009 as per cent of AW 2007	24.8	10.8	9.4	10.7

Note: \*AW constructed average wage earner 2007 is calculated by NOSOSCO (NOSOSCO 2008, 2009, p. 212-213). For further information on NOSOSCO AW calculations please see <http://nososco-eng.nom-nos.dk/file/publikationer/tabeller/desrtyp07.pdf>.

\*\*Basic amount for one child; the benefit can be higher if the family is a low income family and receives the income-related state supplementary benefits and/or the municipality pays additional benefits. See discussion below.

\*\*\*From 1 August 2012 only paid for 1-2 year olds.

Source: Eydal & Rostgaard, 2011a.

These benefits thus provide the parents the opportunity – and usually it is the mother who takes this up – to extend the period away from the labour market in order to be at home with the child. The cash-for-care schemes have accordingly been criticised for working against the main political goals of the Nordic policies on gender equality in work and caring, and in contributing to longer absences of mothers from the labour market (Drange & Rege, 2012; Ellingsæter & Leira, 2006; Rantalaiho, 2009; Salmi, 2006). Also, criticism has been voiced that the cash-for-care schemes work against the idea of providing children with equal rights to participate in day care which may otherwise benefit them as beings and becomings (Brandth & Gíslason, 2011). Also, there is concern – and some evidence – that the take up rates of parents of children that are in special need for day care, such as migrant children with a need to learn the native language, are higher than those for parents born in the country in question, and in Norway two white papers have concluded that cash-for-care should therefore be abolished (NOU, 2011a; NOU, 2011b; Statistics Norway, 2010).



Despite the common development of the schemes, the importance of them however varies to a great extent across the countries, partly due to the maturity of the system, but also the culture. Finland thus has a long tradition for offering the cash-for-care and here it has come to constitute an important component of the child care policies; in 2010 57.6 per cent of all children under the age of three received cash-for-care (Kela, n.d.). But also in Norway, where the scheme has now been in place for a little more than a decade, it gained a relatively high importance, mainly because there were no real day care alternatives. With the gradual development of the Norwegian day care provision, the cash option has become a less favoured choice in recent years, and surveys show that Norwegian mothers instead prefer longer parental leaves and shorter working hours (Ellingsæter & Leira, 2006; Lauritzen, 2005). The number of children with cash-for-care has decreased by 58 per cent in the last ten years from 85,623 in 2003 to 35,964 in 2012 (NAV, n.d.). Statistics Sweden reports that the take-up of the new scheme of cash-for-care has been very low; in the first half of the year 2010, 1.1 per cent of all children under the age of two were cared for by parents that received such benefits (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2011). In Denmark the cash-for-care benefits were used by 764 children in the 46 municipalities that offered this scheme in 2008 (FOA, 2008).

Looking across the various dimensions of child care policies in the Nordic countries and across services and cash for care, there are several elements which suggest the continued support for the dual earner/dual care model which the Nordic countries have become known for. This includes the relatively high provision and take-up of full-time day care services for the younger children in particular, the concern for the welfare and development of the child and the emphasis on creating equal opportunities for the child. We do, however, also note some variation in the goals behind the child care policies as they have developed since the late 1990s. The expansion and consequently the use of public day care differ remarkably across the countries. That four out of five countries today offer a cash alternative to the previously so service-intensive day care system is also an indication of new or recent agendas, such as promoting flexibility for local authorities in their provision of day care and providing equality and choice for parents. We also note some country variation in the opinions about what constitutes the best interest of the child, most noticeably in the development of the cash-for-care benefit

systems that emphasise the benefits of parental care over public day care. Overall, this seems to highlight care solutions where women are more in charge of the provision of care for the young child, but also some which to a greater extent reflect the socio-economic background of the parents. At least in Finland and Norway we are witnessing different care solutions for children of low-, middle- and high-income families, thus working against both the notions of universalism and of the day care service centre as the core of coherence and solidarity.

Thus the Nordic countries have chosen quite different paths regarding care for the youngest children as Table 5.6, which depicts an overview of care according to age, clearly illustrates. Different views on familialism also seem to accommodate different ideals about when it is best for the child to start in day care. In Denmark, day care services can be used from the time the child is 6 months old, but are often used following paid parental leave when the child is around one year old. Children in this country thus start day care earlier than those in any other Nordic country (See Table 5.6).

TABLE 5.6  
Care support according to age of children, Nordic countries 2010.

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
0-1 year	Paid parental leave (50-64 weeks) Day care services (17 per cent)	Paid parental leave (44 weeks) Day care services (1 per cent)	Paid parental leave (39 weeks) Day care services (7 per cent)	Paid parental leave (*42-52 weeks) Day care services (4 per cent)	Paid parental leave (69 weeks) Day care services (-)
1-2 years	Day care services (90 per cent) (Cash-for-care)	Cash-for-care Day care services (41 per cent)	Care gap – private solutions Municipal schemes of cash-for-care Day care services (80 per cent)	Cash-for-care Day care services (79 per cent)	Paid parental leave Municipal schemes of cash-for-care Day care services (70 per cent)
3-5 years	Day care services (98 per cent)	Day care services (73 per cent)	Day care services (95 per cent)	Day care services (96 per cent)	Day care services (97 per cent)

Source: NOSOSCO, 2009. \*In 2010 42-52 weeks.

Due to the long paid parental leave in Sweden, children start day care later, and this is also the case in Norway. Thus the lower figures for take-up of day care for children under the age of two in Norway can to some degree be explained on one hand by the time account scheme that allows

the parents to choose a longer period of paid parental leave with lower compensation, and on the other by the cash-for-care scheme. In Iceland, there is a care gap between paid parental leave and day care, but there has been an increase in volumes of day care for children under the age of two during the last decade and extension of the paid parental leave to one year is, despite the economic crisis, under consideration (Gíslason, 2012). Finland has a special place due to the strong position of the cash-for-care scheme, and can be claimed to represent an example of re-familialisation that is in sharp contrast to the policies in the other countries that are characterised by de-familialisation. Once the child has reached the age of three years, all the countries emphasise day care services, although the Finnish figures for this age group are also considerably lower than the other Nordic countries.

Children start primary school at the age of 6-7 in all the Nordic countries. In all of them, the municipalities provide after school care for the younger children (NOSOSCO, 2010). In addition, municipalities provide organised leisure activities for children, often organised by the third sector (sports clubs, the scout movement etc.) with financial support and regulation from municipalities (Hiilamo, 2008).

While all Nordic countries provide publicly-funded education for all children, there are also private schools. However, the provision of primary schools is quite different, with Denmark having the highest share of private school provision, as Table 5.7 shows.

TABLE 5.7

Pupils in public and private schools, primary and lower secondary level, 2009, per cent.

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
<i>Primary schools</i>					
Public	86.5	98.6	98.1	97.7	92.4
Private	13.5	1.4	1.9	2.3	7.6
<i>Lower secondary school</i>					
Public	74.2	95.6	99.2	96.9	89.7
Private	25.8	4.4	0.8	3.1	10.3

Source: Nordic Council of Ministers, 2012.

There has been very little increase in private primary schools since the 1990s, except in the case of Sweden, where it was 3 per cent in 1990 and slowly increased to 7.6 per cent in 2009. In Denmark it was above 10 per

cent already in 1990 but there was a slow increase up to 13.5 per cent in 2009.

## CARE FOR SICK AND DISABLED CHILDREN

The Nordic health care systems offer universal services that are free of charge for children who are temporarily ill (Hiilamo, 2008; NOMESCO, 2011). There are however great differences between the countries regarding the entitlements of parents to stay home from work and care for their children in cases of short-term illness. In Norway and Sweden these entitlements have been enacted into law but in Denmark, Finland and Iceland they depend on the labour market agreements (Hiilamo, 2008).

In all the countries the social security systems provide support for parents who have chronically ill or disabled children. Such support is obviously vital for these families but there are no recent comparative studies on this, nor has it been an issue in the disability studies that have been a growing field in the Nordic countries

As pointed out above, the rights of parents to care for their temporarily ill children are quite different among the countries, since the parents are only ensured legal rights for paid sick leave to care for their children in Norway and Sweden. In Norway parents caring for their temporarily ill children until the age of 12 are entitled to 10 days of care benefits (*omsorgspengar*) per year, but in the case of lone parents they are entitled to 20 days. If they have more than two children the parents are entitled to 15 days (and lone parents 30 days). If the parents do not live together the days should be shared in accordance with the access agreement. The social security system reimburses 100 per cent of the income loss for the period in question (NAV, n.d.,b). Furthermore, during the time that the parent cares for a child under the age of six, he or she can be eligible for pension rights (NAV, n.d.,a). The benefit amount is the same as sickness insurance: a certain proportion of previous pay (paid up to a ceiling of 437. 286 NOK for the year 2012).

If the child is chronically ill or disabled and the parent is unable to participate in the labour market due to the child's care needs, parents in Norway can apply for attendance benefit (*pleiepenger*) (NAV, n.d.,c). The benefit period is estimated in each case and it is the care needs of the child that are the defining factor; it is possible to receive part-time

benefits if the child is cared for part-time in an institution or by others. The benefit amount is the same as sickness benefits. Furthermore, if the parent has received the benefit for three years or more and the child dies, the parent is entitled to the benefits for three more months: this is seen as a transitional period for the parent. It is also possible to receive higher rate attendance benefit in cases where the need for a great deal of care and supervision is necessary so that the child can live at home. The higher benefits are paid when the total workload is estimated to be unusually high for the parent (NAV, n.d.,d).

In Sweden the law ensures temporary parental benefit (*tillfällig föräldrapenning*) for 120 days per child per year, until the child is 12 years old, and this can be used by the parents or another person entrusted with the care of the temporarily ill child. The benefit amount is 80 per cent of previous pay up to a certain ceiling. The parents can divide the benefit between them if they consider that part-time absence/care for the child is best (Försäkringskassan, n.d.). If the child is ill for more than six months or is disabled and needs special care or the parents have extra expenses due to the child's illness/disability, they can apply for a benefit called child care allowance (*vårdbidrag*). When children have long-term illnesses or are disabled the parents are entitled to the same payments as in the case of sick children until the child reaches the age of 16, and if the child care needs are in accordance with the law on support for disabled (LSS Lag og stöd og service till vissa funktionshindrade) they can apply for benefits until the child is 23 years old. Furthermore, these children can hire their own assistants if their care needs are estimated to be more than 20 hours per week (Försäkringskassan, n.d.)

In Denmark, parents with children under the age of 18 are entitled to take a minimum of 1 day off from work in relation to the first day the child is ill, but entitlement to wage compensation depends on the labour market agreement. The possibility for parents staying at home depends on local or sector agreements and as it is not a statutory right – and in many cases it only entitles parents to one day – this was one of the main criticisms made by the Family and Work Life Commission in 2007, in addition to advocating that other family members besides parents should be entitled to take a day off to care for a temporarily ill child, including grandparents (Borger, n.d.).

For children who are seriously ill and need care at home or hospital treatment for more than 12 days, parents have a statutory right to

receive sickness benefit under the same rules of entitlement as unemployment benefit, and some labour market agreements ensure parents full wages in such periods. Single parents have the right to receive the benefit even if the period is less than 12 days. However, there is no statutory right to take time off from work: it depends on the labour market agreement or requires agreement with the employer (Borger, n.d.).

In Finland parents can take temporary leave of absence from work for a maximum of four days if their ill children are under the age of 10. In addition, their agreements with their employees might include entitlement to salaries for additional days (Kela, n.d.,c). Parents can also apply for special care allowances if they take part in treatment or rehabilitation of their child and cannot participate in labour market. Usually the care allowance is paid for up to 60 working days, but in special cases it can be extended to 90 days. For working parents the amount is the same as sickness benefit, but for parents who are not participating in the labour market a minimum rate is paid (22.04 Euros per day 2012) (Kela, n.d.,a). In the case of chronically ill or disabled children, disability allowances is paid to support care of children under the age of 16 at home. The allowance is tax-free and is based on the need for care, payable at three rates depending on the needs of the child (Kela, n.d.,b).

Parents in Iceland have no legal rights to pay in the case of short-term care of a sick child. The labour market agreements usually cover the rights of parents to full pay to care for their sick children under the age of 13 (Hiilamo, 2008). As an example, public servants are entitled to 12 days with full pay to care for their sick child. The number of days is for each parent and no consideration is given either to the number of children in the family or to whether the parents share custody or not (Fjármálaráðuneyti, n.d.). If the child is sick for a longer period (or if there are many children in the family who are ill) then the parent can in many cases apply for an extended period of leave to the special sick fund of his/her labour market union. This also applies for the sickness insurances which are usually paid by the employer for a certain period, and then the employees can apply for an extension to the sick fund in his/her union. It is only those who are not participating in the labour market who are entitled to sickness benefits paid by social security (T.R., n.d.). If the parent has used up his/her rights in the union sick-fund and is unable to participate in labour market due to caring for the sick child, it is possible to be entitled to benefits that are paid in accordance with previous salaries for a maximum peri-

od of six months (T.R., n.d.,a). Social security may pay a home care allowance to people who support disabled and chronically ill children who live at home or in a hospital (T.R., n.d.,b).

## FAMILIES' CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

As is the case for the other central welfare areas, there is also a Nordic trait in the way that countries within this geographical region have traditionally responded to the need for care in old age. Again, principles such as universalism, individualism and all-encompassing public welfare provision are characteristics often used to pinpoint this special approach to social care. Differences are, however, also apparent in the general approach to care for the elderly and particularly in the changes in home help which is one of the central care benefits for older people.

In general, the Nordic countries – as most other Western European countries – face the challenge of an increasingly older population with increasing longevity and larger cohorts of 65+, with Sweden and Finland presently having the oldest populations (NOSOSCO, 2011). These demographic changes will shape the supply of care, i.e. there will be fewer people in the work force to be employed in the formal care sector, but they also imply changing family structures that may affect the informal care resources. Multi-generational families are thus and will continue to be a more common aspect of family life, and this may increase the care burden within the family when there is more than one generation of older people in it. There are trends that point in the direction of improved health and functional ability for all but in the last years of life, which may indicate that the ageing of societies may not lead to proportionally the same increases in the strain on both the formal and informal care sectors. But overall, the ageing of the population and the greater longevity will most likely lead to increasing numbers of people at older ages with severe disabilities and needing long-term care (Lafortune & Balestat, 2007).

Nevertheless, across Europe there is a growing concern that current and future increases in public expenditure will occur due to the demographic changes, with some projections suggesting that expenditure on long-term care could easily double over the next 40 years (Martins & de la Maisonnevire, 2006). Consequently, there is an increasing interest

in how to find new ways of providing more cost-efficient care, and this includes the interest in maintaining and to some degree also enhancing the lower-cost informal care provision.

The adjustments and reforms in the care policies in the Nordic countries reflect these considerations and concerns. However, although the countries share some common cultural and institutional traits as mentioned above, they have come from different starting points and considerations. Country differences are reflected in the overall approach to social care for the elderly and especially in the changes in home help which have taken place since the 1980s-2000s, and which we will concentrate on in the following account.

Norway started out later and maintained a relatively low provision of help in the home throughout the 1990s, providing home care for around 15 per cent of those aged 65+ and 30 per cent of the 80+ (Daatland, Platz & Sundström, 1997; Statistisk Sentral Byrå, 2003). In comparison, in Sweden the expansion of home help lasted until the early 1980s when 21 per cent of the 65+ and 45 per cent of the 80+ received it. Since then coverage has declined steadily, to cover only 8 per cent of the 65+ and 19 per cent of the 80+ in 2000 (Sosialdepartementet, 2002). In Denmark, provision of home help became even more generous during the 1990s than it was in the early 1980s, with 24 per cent of those aged 65+ covered and 51 per cent of the 80+ in 2002 (Danmarks Statistik, 2003).

The variations in home help provision among the three countries did not reflect any overall differences in provision of service housing and institutional care. In 2000, 9 per cent of the 65+ lived in sheltered accommodation or nursing homes in Sweden and Denmark, and 12 per cent in Norway. Among the 80+, 21 per cent in Sweden, 20 per cent in Denmark, and 26 per cent in Norway lived in such housing (NOSOSCO, 2002).

Since then the three countries have in fact moved nearer each other in the coverage of home help provision. Figure 5.2 provides an overview of the changes since the early 2000s, and this time it is possible also to compare with Finland and Iceland. As is evident, Sweden has increased the provision slightly in recent years, whereas Norway has reduced it, with it now covering 10.6 per cent of 65+ in Norway and 12 per cent in Sweden (2009 or 2010). Due to statistical problems, the development in the Danish home help provision cannot be followed over time, but as of 2010, 16.5 per cent of 65+ received home help. In com-



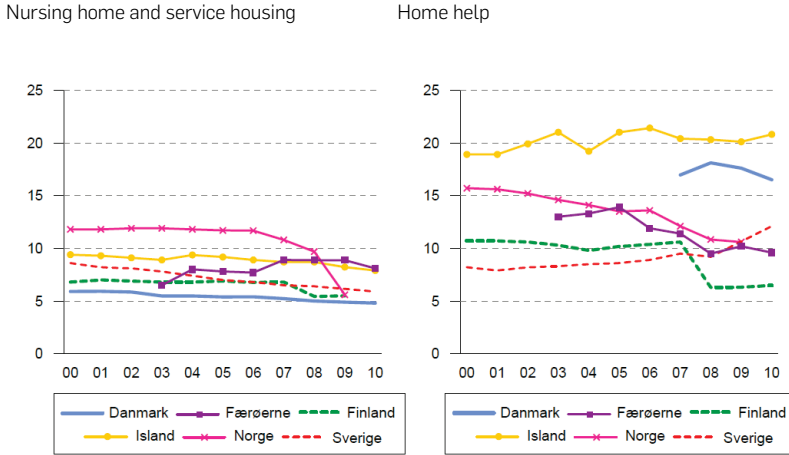
parison, home help provision is in fact considerably higher in Iceland, 20.8 per cent of 65+, but considerably lower in Finland, 6.5 per cent of 65+.

As is also evident from the graph, there is no major difference in the take-up of institutional care among the Nordic countries, i.e. the use of nursing home care and sheltered housing is relatively similar across the countries.

However, the graph does not give evidence of the proportion of elderly people living in either nursing homes or sheltered housing, and it is important to be aware of the considerable differences in the services associated with the two forms of residential care. Whereas service housing may provide easy access via lifts etc., often no major services are supplied. In comparison, nursing homes cater for the most frail elderly people, and often those with dementia who would otherwise not be able to live independently and whom it would be difficult for informal carers to provide care for.

FIGURE 5.1

Persons living in nursing home or service housing, and those receiving home help, per cent of elderly 65+ or elderly, 2000-2010.



Source: NOSOSCO, 2011.

While coverage rates have thus fluctuated somewhat in the last decades, a considerable change in the home care policies has also seen the introduction of fees, which are in use in Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. In contrast, home help is still free of charge in Denmark. In the case of Iceland the user fees have been low and income-tested in order to ensure that all can afford the services (Eydal & Guðmundsson, 2012). User fees were initially considerable in both Norway and Sweden. In Sweden, it was estimated that approximately every tenth elderly person in Sweden declined to apply (Szebehely, 1999a), despite the parliamentary resolution of 1998 stipulating that care for the elderly should "be available according to need, not affordability" (Trydegård, 2003). Also in Norway, a high entry fee seemed to deter elderly people with fewer care needs from applying for services (NOU, 1997). Consequently, elderly people with low incomes had to turn to other sources for help with shopping, cleaning etc.

Since then, Norway and Sweden have both introduced a cap on user fees in order not to discourage low income earners from taking up home help. For example, in Sweden, a 'max-fee' reform was introduced

in January 2002, aimed at lowering the fees for approximately 50 per cent of present recipients, and also at leveling out variations between municipalities. Around one third of recipients became exempt from paying fees, from the previous one in six (Trydegård, 2003). The maximum monthly fee was 168.72 EUR in 2003. In relation to the reform, a number of municipalities, however, raised the minimum payment. As a consequence an (unknown) number of elderly people therefore pay more today (Szebehely, 2004).

Another change which has taken place is that home help hours have decreased over time in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Home help services are thus today more targeted on those with the greatest need of help. Whether this reflects a deliberate policy (as it has in Finland) or not, the effect has been a major shift in the balance between formal home care and informal care. Home help services have retreated less from personal tasks than from household chores, i.e. fewer hours – if any – are today allocated to domestic chores such as cleaning. Users, who are less frail, have been encouraged to find help elsewhere (Helset, 1998; Kröger, 2010; Olsen, 1995). This trend towards personal care has also been evident in Denmark (Rostgaard & Fridberg, 1998), but home help provision still also covers domestic chores, although it has thinned out considerably, with many municipalities only providing cleaning every third week. And still the countries differ markedly in how care provision is allocated. For example, today in Denmark, 11 per cent of the older population receive two hours of home care per week or less, compared to 3.6 per cent in Sweden (Rostgaard & Szebehely, 2012).

A more general trend visible across the countries has been the organisational changes introduced in the home help system, inspired by New Public Management. This has often made it less attractive for elderly people in general to make use of these services. Measures have been introduced to rationalise home care, such as the introduction of more mass-produced services like contracting out shopping to larger supermarkets, and cleaning to laundries, rather than letting the home helper spend time on those tasks (Daatland et al., 1997; Lewinter, 2004; Szebehely, 1999b). Other aspects of New Public Management have included the introduction of quality control, the separation of the purchasing and provider functions, customer choice and competitive tendering, all of which Denmark seems to have gone the furthest with, in comparison to its Nordic counterparts (Kröger, 2011).

As mentioned in the introduction, more choices for the user of services have been emphasised, especially through the introduction of market mechanisms. In both Sweden and Denmark, a number of private-for-profit companies offering services paid out-of-pocket are now operating in parallel to the public home care system, encouraged amongst other things through the introduction of tax deduction schemes whereby users can deduct a percentage of their expenses. In these two countries, as well as in Norway and Finland, municipalities today buy a large part of their home help services from private-for-profit providers, often through means of competitive tendering. In Denmark, as the country that has gone furthest with the marketisation of home help, it is obligatory for municipalities to ensure that private-for-profit providers offer their services alongside the public providers, and the users must choose between providers. In the other countries it is up to the municipalities, and there is great variation between municipalities and regions (Anttonen & Häikö, 2011; Fersch & Jensen, 2011; Rostgaard, 2011; Vabø, 2011).

Another way of supporting more choice for users is to provide cash-for-care benefits. These are also seen as a way of supporting informal care by (only partly) compensating for the lost earnings of the informal care provider. Such benefits may be paid out to the older person or, less commonly, directly to the informal care provider. Apart from offering support and also an acknowledgement of the informal care which is taking place, these benefits also support elements of individualisation and consumerism in allowing the older person alternatives to publicly provided care, and thus add to the personalisation of provision, whereby care is shaped to fit the circumstances and preferences of the individual. The Nordic countries have very varied experience with such benefits, Finland being the country where it is most widely used (Rostgaard, 2004).

How might the policy changes in the latter years have affected the need for family members to provide care for their older relatives? And are there any visible trends in the role that family members play in the provision of care? First of all we know that – as in other countries – informal care constitutes a significant source of support for older people (Rostgaard, 2004), although this differs markedly between the countries. In Denmark, 5.7 per cent of the working population thus report helping an older relative at least once a week, while this is the case for 9.3 per

cent in Sweden and 13.4 per cent in Finland (EU27 = 12.7 per cent; Eurofound, 2005). Despite the relative generous provision of public social care services, informal care thus constitutes an important source of support; even so, the Nordic countries may quite rightly be said to have been so charmed by their abundant public care provision that the importance of informal care has been ignored (Kröger, 2005).

Nevertheless, there seems to be a common cultural backing for public provisions of care. Public preference and support for the formal care system is high in the Nordic countries. When asking older people themselves, they state that they prefer to rely on the public home care system rather than the family and the market (e.g. Daatland & Lowenstein, 2005; Eurobarometer, 2007). Among the population in general, there is also high support for public solutions, although it varies across the countries. In a recent Eurobarometer survey Danes and Swedes were the least likely to prefer family care as the ideal form of support for an older and frail parent: 80 per cent of Swedes and 72 per cent of Danes would prefer formal care, compared to 64 per cent in Finland and the EU27 average of 37 per cent (Eurobarometer 2007, p. 67). Norway and Iceland were not included the study, but similar preferences have previously been found for both those countries (Daatland & Lowenstein, 2005; Sigurðardóttir, 2011).

We also know that the allocation of home help takes into account the availability of informal carers, but this is mainly in regards to whether there is a spouse or partner, whereas the availability of adult children is of less importance. Analysis of informal and formal care provisions thus shows that the use of home help is strongly related to the availability of informal care, and especially spousal/partner care, meaning that the better the informal care resources, the less likely one is to receive home help. The relationship between the allocation of home help and family resources within the household did however prove to be stronger in Norway and Sweden. This indicates that the care burden is divided differently in the three countries (Rostgaard, 2004), but also that the cuts in recent years are most likely to have had consequences for informal carers. A relatively generous care provision which reaches a high proportion of the elderly, as is the case in Denmark, seems to imply that frail elderly people have to rely on family care provision to a lesser degree (Rostgaard & Szebehely, 2012). To exemplify this, 70 per cent of Swedes in a recent European survey agreed that dependent people had to rely

too much on relatives, on a par with the EU27 average of 71 per cent. In comparison, only 41 per cent of Danish respondents agreed with this statement (Eurobarometer, 2007).

And finally, the targeting of resources as is taking place in Sweden furthermore tends to create social class inequalities in access to care. In Sweden, older people with a lower educational background more often make use of informal care provision than do older people with higher education, who on the other hand more often rely on market-provided care. Previous studies have confirmed that there are no class-based preferences in regard to family vs. market care, so this seems to be a matter of necessity rather than choice. The selectivity approach which is the current practice in Sweden thus seems to have some implications regarding both the informalisation of care universalism in the care system (Rostgaard & Szebehely, 2012).

## CONCLUSION AND CHALLENGES

The chapter examines care policies for children and the elderly in the Nordic countries from a comparative perspective, and from the perspective of how such policies may support the family. The Nordic countries are known for their extensive universal social services of high quality, for both children and the elderly (Rostgaard & Fridberg, 1998; Sipilä, 1997). But is this still the case? The aim of the chapter has been to critically examine and reassess how the Nordic welfare states have provided support and services in relation to care in the last decades. Has the division of labour between the state/municipalities, market and the families changed? Are the Nordic care policies still universal and are services still of high quality, meeting needs of an increasingly diversified and individualised population?

First of all, we can note an increasing public concern for and public involvement in the care of in particular the younger children. This is exemplified in the changes in the parental leave, which in all countries have been expanded in length, benefit and in the rights for parents to take such leave. Sweden at present offers the longest leave and Iceland the shortest, with a considerable span of 30 weeks in between them. Thus some variation in leave length is evident, but countries are moving towards reforming this policy, with Iceland currently considering increasing leave length to one year. The political concerns cover both the inter-

ests of the young child as well as the mother, in regards to the nurturing of the child and protection of the mother. For a number of decades now, the bonding and development of the relationship between child and father has also been a growing concern, and all countries except Denmark have as of late 2012 introduced various incentives for the father to take leave, most commonly earmarking a certain number of non-transferable weeks to mothers and fathers, which are lost if not used. The variation in the policy to encourage fathers to take leave is also evident in the outcomes. Icelandic fathers far exceed their Nordic counterparts in using around one third of all leave days, with fathers in both Finland and Denmark only using around 10 per cent. Not only the gender equality incentives, but also the leave length seem to encourage and make it more feasible for fathers to take leave; in countries where parental leave stretches well beyond the first six months of the child's life, it is more likely that the father will take leave, presumably because the family wants to reserve the first months of parental leave for the mother, not least because of breastfeeding. However, there is strong evidence that a long parental leave does not necessarily favour fathers' take up of leave on its own. It needs to be combined with policy measures such as the father's quota.

As the entitlements to paid parental leave have gradually been increased for both men and women, there are no signs of erosion of the policies. On the contrary, as already indicated, there is a growing involvement of the state in the development of such schemes, which allow both mother and father to stay at home and care for the child for longer periods of time. Does this imply a return to re-familisation? Hardly, as the day care provision has also increased in the last decades as a way of supporting the dual-earner model, to create equal opportunities for children and not least as a consequence of the increasing interest in investing in the young child so that children overall are more ready for school when that time comes. In their early childhood more and more children are thus experiencing being cared for in an institution or in family day care, especially after the age of two. Only in Denmark is the take up of day care for children under the age of one considerable, with nearly one in five children in this age group being cared for outside the home. Yet, in parallel to this development of the day care system, there is also evidence of the growing importance of the cash-for-care systems, which are often low-rate benefits paid out to the parents in order for them to organise care. This system is particularly important in Finland, and also to

some degree in Norway, although fewer and fewer parents make use of it in the latter country. The other Nordic countries have, however, also introduced such schemes, either from the desire to increase parental choice or to introduce flexibility for the municipalities, and such systems are a step towards increased re-familisation.

But overall, the Nordic countries stand out in comparison to most other European countries with their legal entitlement to day care for young children under three years of age, thus supporting the principle of universalism. The user fees are moderate and low-income families can get support if needed. In the last decades, the gap between the provisions of day care volumes between the countries has narrowed, and in all of them pre-school or kindergarten provision is now the most usual form of day care for children from the age of two, except for Finland, not least due to the extensive use of the cash-for-care benefit as mentioned above, and where the children start pre-school considerably later than do the children in the other Nordic countries.

Other changes may, however, have affected the quality and direction of the services. Across the countries we find common trends of incorporating more teaching in the day care centres, a trend to what some would term 'schoolification' and which has been met with some criticism, particular among practitioners in social pedagogy. Another visible trend is the increasing emphasis on New Public Management principles, which are also evident in other policy areas. This has meant the introduction of market-oriented approaches and ideas, and within child care policies these trends can also be identified in the political discourses that have stressed both the emphasis on measurable outcomes and that parents should have choices in how to care for their children, as mentioned above.

Where we do find significant changes is in the provision of care for the elderly? Again, principles of universalism, individualism and all-encompassing public welfare provision continue to characterise these services, but there is considerable variation in the national approaches, especially in regards to home help. Whereas the provision of care in either nursing homes or sheltered housing at least in the proportion of elderly living in these facilities does not differ considerably, it is a different case in regards to home help. In general, countries have more and more focused on the provision of help with personal care and less on help with practical tasks such as cleaning. This is a common trend, but in



Denmark a considerable proportion of the elderly are still receiving help with such tasks, although the help that is provided is more and more infrequent and of fewer and fewer minutes weekly. Still, in Denmark – as well as in Iceland – a relatively high proportion of elderly people receive help, between one in six among the 65+ in Denmark and one in five in Iceland. In Finland in particular, the proportion of home help users has declined, with the present 7 per cent of the 65+. Home help is still free in Denmark and fees in Iceland are low and income-tested.

Another important change in this policy area is – as was the case for children’s day care– the introduction of New Public Management principles. This has led to policy changes emphasising more choice for the user, especially through the introduction of market mechanisms. In all countries, private providers are active, and especially within the home care sector. Another way of supporting more choice for users is to provide cash-for-care benefits. The Nordic countries have very varied experience with such benefits, with Finland being the country where it is most widely used, both in the care for children and the elderly.

Although the Nordic countries have thus seen changes in the provision of home help, it is nevertheless important to stress the relatively high involvement of the public sector in either organising, funding or providing care for the elderly. This is evident when comparing with countries outside the Nordic region. Nevertheless, it would also be a mistake to dismiss the enormous importance that the informal carers play. Again, in all Nordic countries, there seems to be a common cultural backing for the public provision of care. Public preference and support for the formal care system is high in these countries. The need for informal carers to be actively involved in providing care also seems to reflect the level of provision of public care, i.e. informal carers substitute to some degree for the formal care, which has especially been cut back in some countries such as Finland and Sweden. And informal carers consider the care burden to be strenuous and to affect their careers. Informal carers thus seem to be gaining a new role as public services are cut down. Also, we see a new role for the market and voluntary organisations.

This chapter also addressed the care support available to parents of sick and long-term ill children. That this field of support has not been a topic in comparative care research is surprising, since support for these families is of vital importance, not at least in the Nordic countries where the socio-economic systems are based on both parents being active in the

labour market. Furthermore, while research on child care policies for younger children is extensive, it is difficult to find work that provides a holistic picture of care policies, labour market regulations that provide parents with entitlements due to care, and an analysis of the implications for social rights (pension rights etc.) the choice of care options has for the parents. There is also a lack of research on care services for children above the age of six; or example, it is difficult to find comparative Nordic statistics and research on children's after-school activities and care.

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# FLEXIBILITY IN WORK-FAMILY RELATIONS. ALLOCATION OF TIME

THOMAS P. BOJE & ANDERS EJRNÆS

## INTRODUCTION

There has been intensive debate about whether or not women freely choose between full-time or part-time work and housework or whether their choices of working time are institutionally constrained (see e.g. Boje & Ejrnæs, 2011; Crompton & Lyonette, 2006; Hakim, 2000, 1996; Kangas & Rostgaard, 2007; O'Reilly & Fagan, 1998). Some authors argue that women's gender role associated attitudes and lifestyle preferences explain the high proportion of women who prefer part-time jobs or, in some countries, take up full-time care in significant numbers (e.g. Hakim, 2000). Others take a more critical view on the reasons for women's choice of labour market involvement. They claim that part-time jobs or full-time caring are structurally determined by the incompatibility of full-time employment and family responsibilities. According to this perspective, the proportion of mothers working part-time or in other types of non-standard work varies with the cultural and institutional framework for motherhood and wage labour (for example Crompton, Lewis & Lyonette, 2007; Gornick & Meyers, 2003; Wallace, 2002).

The aim of this chapter is to examine how widespread different types of flexibility are in the Nordic countries, how care responsibilities influence women's choices in reducing working time, and to what extent

women are forced to be less involved in the labour market than they actually desire. Clarifying the conditions under which women's and men's choices of working time are structurally constrained is crucial in this context because of the incompatibility between demands from work organisations and/or family responsibilities.

The present chapter describes how variations in labour market regulation and flexibility in the Nordic countries affect women's working time patterns and their possibilities of combining paid work with unpaid housework and spending time on the care of children and other relatives. The analysis is focused on the Nordic countries, but we will also compare these countries with different working-time regimes prevailing in other European countries to provide a broader context. Lack of data availability concerning Iceland has meant that some comparisons cannot be made in full. For example, the European Social Survey does not cover Iceland. We have compensated where possible, but nonetheless there are some unavoidable gaps.

## **TRENDS IN LABOUR FLEXIBILISATION OF THE LABOUR MARKET**

Flexibility and working time regimes have generated an immense literature. Many of these studies focus on women's access to the labour market, working hours, gender ideology and welfare policies (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006; Lewis, 2002, 2001; Strandh & Nordenmark, 2006). On the one hand, researchers find a correspondence between high rates of female employment and the expansion of flexible working schedules such as part-time, flexi-time, and temporary contracts. It is argued that these flexible forms of working time arrangements may help women to reconcile work and family and often provide a bridge into more permanent full-time work. On the other hand, contingent forms of employment which typically characterise the flexible work schedules may also contribute to a segregation of women into the low-skilled/low-paid parts of the labour market. Theories on labour market segregation have underlined that women in non-standard jobs are channelled into the low-skilled sector characterised by low pay and few training and promotion opportunities. Substantial research has found that workers on flexible non-standard work schedules often have lower pay, reduced access to

unemployment benefit and pensions, and limited opportunities for career advancement (Crompton, Lewis & Lyonette, 2007; Dulk, 2001; Gornick & Meyers, 2009; O'Reilly & Fagan, 1998; O'Reilly, Cebrián & Lallement, 2000).

In the labour market literature, flexibility is generally defined as the capacity of firms and workers to adjust to changes (Dex & McCulloch, 1997; OECD, 1989: p. 13; O'Reilly, 2003; O'Reilly, Cebrián & Lallement, 2000). This general definition of flexibility does not specify the different types of flexibility and how to accomplish them or how they impact on the working conditions of the involved workers. Most theories on labour market flexibility distinguish between two main types of flexibility: numerical and functional (Atkinson, 1987: p. 90-92). This classification is also very general and has to be elaborated and extended by making a distinction between different forms of internal and external flexibility in relation to firms. By combining these two dimensions we might distinguish between, on the one hand, flexibility which is quantitative/numerical (change in number of worked hours) or qualitative/functional (change in the content of work). On the other hand, flexibility can take place inside the firm (change of working hours or job function for employees), or outside the firm (change in the number of employees). We have combined these two dimensions of flexibility in Table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1  
Forms of flexible labour.

	Internal flexibility	External flexibility
Quantitative flexibility	Working time flexibility	Contract, contingent employment, job agencies
Qualitative flexibility	Functional flexibility	Outsourcing, project team, consultancy

In this chapter we primarily want to focus on one aspect of the quantitative flexibility, working time flexibility, which refers to measures used by a firm to adapt the volume of labour to the demand for it by changing the number of working hours and the distribution of them during the day, week or year without modifying the number of employees (Boje & Grönlund, 2003; Sirianni & Negrey, 2000). Having analysed the type and level of working time flexibility in the Nordic countries, we focus on the

relationship between flexible working time arrangements and the division of labour in the family concerning paid work, housework and care work. The pattern of work schedules becomes still more variable for both men and women in all the Nordic countries, a situation which is similar to developments in the post-industrial labour markets more generally.

Sennett (Sennett, 1998) describes how trends in post-industrial society have transformed work and thereby influence societal cohesion. The rapid changes in the organisation of production and the global restructuring are based on information technologies, but also on the changing principles for organising production (e.g. just-in-time, outsourcing, supplier management, team-work). The traditional protection of working conditions is often seen as a barrier for implementing flexibility strategies, and collective agreements on working time and work organisation have been abandoned in many industries. A growing number of employees are working on individualistic time schedules such as flexi-time, distance work etc. and the pattern of work schedules has become more diverse with more employees working long or short hours and a decline in the number of employees working normal weekly hours (see Burchell et al., 2009; Plantenga & Remery, 2010).

Flexibility in the work organisation and in working time schedule is often considered as an opportunity for both women and men to handle the conflicts between work, care and family responsibilities, but this seems only to be the case if flexibility is controlled by the employees. However, most types of non-standard work are imposed on them by the employers or the schedule in the organisation of the production. Seen from the employer's perspective, the introduction of labour flexibility is thus a convenient instrument for helping firms to cope with the growing uncertainty in the labour market and in allowing the employers the possibility of transferring this uncertainty to their employees. Seen from the perspective of the employees, flexibility becomes primarily an issue of control over their work schedule and working hours. For the employees, the introduction of flexible working time arrangements is thus more dubious. On the one hand, it might release them from the most rigid forms of organising the work process and thereby allow them greater possibilities of combining work and family responsibilities. If this is the case, flexible working time can be used in reconciling those work and family responsibilities. On the other hand, flexibility typically also means more insecurity and irregularity in employment contracts and consequently



greater vulnerability regarding the employee's position in the labour market. The increased demand for flexibility has thus put more pressure on the individual and the family. Much research has found that variable working time arrangements and the lack of clear borders between work and family life are creating pressure and stress (Steiber & Haas, 2012; Van der Lippe & Peters, 2007).

Both men and women are exposed to flexibility, but in different ways. The typical form of flexibility for males is contractual work, overtime work or shift work, which is better compensated than forms of flexibility for females that typically concern part-time, temporary job, or work at home (Bettio & Rosenberg, 1999: p. 277; Boje & Grönlund, 2003: p. 190). When asking employees who it is who are making the decisions on the number of hours they work, we find that, in most countries, a larger proportion of men than women decide themselves on the length of working hours and how they are scheduled (Wallace, 2003: p. 190-91). Research also shows that it is male-dominated types of flexibility which are controlled by the employees, whereas this is not the case with female-dominated types of flexibility such as part-time work or temporary jobs (Grönlund, 2004).

In many European countries, welfare policies have inadequately followed the changes in women's entry into the labour market, resulting in new social risks. The contingent position in the labour market of women with heavy care responsibilities has in many cases led to an increased risk of low income and poverty. In the Nordic countries, the welfare state policies have been more adaptable to the needs of working women than elsewhere in Europe, and they have achieved a better position in the labour market as well as in the family. However, in this chapter we will show that women are still the main care providers for dependent children and this has clear consequences for their careers in the labour market and position in society (Lewis, 2002; Taylor-Gooby, 2004).

Flexibility and family-friendly policies directed towards the conciliation of work and care responsibilities can, if introduced, enable both parents to participate in paid work appropriately (Häusermann, 2006). But this is only the case if the flexibility is organised in an employee-friendly way, meaning that the work schedule is coordinated with the opening hours of child care institutions. Furthermore, it means that both the paid and unpaid care work of parents is considered on equal terms when time schedules are organised. Flexibility becomes a matter of social

control in the labour market and of organisational control in the labour management relations inside the firms. There is a great deal of literature concerning flexibilisation due to the intensified global competition and the implementation of new technologies (Atkinson, 1987; Bettio & Rosenberg, 1999; Wood, 1989). Similarly, a significant number of studies have described developments in time-use among individuals and households (see Bonke, 2012, 2002; Gershuny, 2000; Grönlund, 2004).

The relationship between flexibility in the work organisation and its impact on the individuals and consequences for the living conditions of the employees – family relations, social reproduction etc. – has received less attention. Recent years have seen a growth in this research topic, which is partly a consequence of the growing number of dual-earner households resulting in an intensification of the conflicts between work and care responsibilities. We can thus register a growing number of comparative studies analysing the relationship between flexible working arrangements and household strategies in managing work and family responsibilities (Dulk, van Doorne-Huiskes & Schippers, 1999; Crompton & Lyonette, 2006; Edlund, 2007; Plantenga & Remery, 2010, 2005).

## **FLEXIBILITY AND LABOUR MARKET REGULATION**

Despite similarities in welfare structure and a relatively high level of gender equality in all Nordic countries compared with other European countries, the regulation of the labour market is different. Consequently, we also find different types of working time flexibility in the individual countries and variation in the conditions for individuals to reconcile between work and family responsibilities. Time-related policies (flexible and part-time working arrangements) depend on both the general labour market policy and the industrial bargaining outcome. In understanding flexibility and working time arrangements in a comparative context, we have thus to take into consideration how the labour market is structured and regulated. Here we shall give a short description of the labour market regulation in the individual Nordic countries and how it influences flexible working time arrangements. Both flexibility and labour market regulation are also influenced by the system of social security, i.e. the social benefits, the parental leave system etc. These issues are analysed in

greater detail in Chapter 5 'Caring family – Policies and Practices in the Nordic countries'.

#### FLEXICURITY – DENMARK

The 'flexicurity' strategy assumes an adult worker family model and aims at promoting both flexibility in the labour market and security for workers (Lewis & Plomien, 2009). The Danish 'flexicurity' system is characterised by, on the one hand, low protection against dismissals and decisions on flexibility in working time schedules which are primarily made at the individual workplaces. On the other hand, a universal welfare state, which provides social protection, grants rights to paid parental leave and access to child care facilities making it possible for parents to combine work and family responsibilities. Compared with other Nordic countries, Denmark has the least regulated and most flexible labour market. It is easier to dismiss employees than in any of the other Nordic countries. However, when it comes to active labour market policy, the Danish system is tougher and more restrictive than it is in the other Nordic countries about the inclusion of non-employed people in gainful employment (Madsen, 2006; Sarfati & Bonoli, 2002; Wallace, 2002). The percentage of women in part-time employment is similar to Sweden and Norway, but in Denmark most women in part-time work are young, and a significant number of mothers return to the labour market on a full-time basis after the one-year, fully-paid parental leave. After that, institutional child care is available for nearly all children.

#### PARTIALLY REGULATED FLEXIBILITY – FINLAND

Finland has a labour market system that is more similar to the Central European system than to the Nordic one. The main characteristics of it are relatively high job protection, passive policy measures and less focus on activation and reintegration of the unemployed than we find, at least, in Denmark and Sweden. On the other hand, the compensation paid to an unemployed person is lower than in the other Nordic countries. Finland has for a long period had high rates of unemployment and the labour market policy has been highly focused on job creation and education. The role of part-time work has traditionally been low and mostly concentrated among young people and mothers on parental leave, who supplement leave with child care allowance. Finland is characterised by having a long period of parental leave, which is relatively well-paid.

There is a real choice between family care compensated by a family allowance and public child care. Most Finnish mothers take extended parental leave for three years per child. In this respect the Finnish family policy system and the behaviour of mothers are thus more similar to the system in the Central European countries.

#### REGULATED FLEXIBILITY – SWEDEN

Flexibility in Sweden is mainly employee-led and described in the literature as a ‘regulated flexibility’ regime. This means that the flexibility is regulated by the labour market organisations with high employment protection of the employees and a comprehensive adult vocational training system. Part-time work is widespread among women, but often entails more than 30 hours per week and it is often combined with leave (Wallace, 2003). The decision on working time flexibility is to a large extent made by the employees and controlled by them. The legislation on flexible working hours focuses primarily on working parents. The aim of this is to give parents better opportunities for reconciling the demands of work and family. In Sweden, legislation encourages parents to reduce working hours in general and allows parents to reduce working hours by up to 25 per cent until their children are 8 years old. Furthermore, an employee has the right to return to full-time work in the same position as before. Employees do not lose their social rights by working part-time and a part-time job can be combined with paid parental leave, which is not the case in, for example, Denmark. Parental leave totals 16 months, of which two months are reserved for the fathers, but often they take more than this. The total period of parental leave can be extended if it is taken on a part-time basis combined with part-time employment. Furthermore, each Swedish parent has a right to 30 days leave per year to care for sick children. The relatively long period of parental leave also means that very few children attend child care institutions before they are about two years old.

#### REGULATED FLEXIBILITY – NORWAY

The Norwegian labour market system is characterised by a relatively high level of employment protection combined with a strong emphasis on the inclusion of marginalised groups in gainful employment and relatively high unemployment benefits. During the last decade the flexibilisation of the Norwegian labour market has increased, but as in Sweden it is regu-

lated by the labour market organisations with relatively strict rules for hiring and firing. As in Sweden, the Norwegian labour market system is also strongly committed to gender equality in employment, career and reconciliation of the work-family balance. The female rate of employment is also high for women with children aged 0-2 and the gender gap has diminished markedly during the last 20 years. The part-time working rate for women in Norway is one of the highest in Europe. A comprehensive package of family policy measures is in place and contributes to the high female rate of employment. The main elements of these comprise one year of parental leave with a high level of compensation, of which 4 weeks are reserved for the fathers. Parents can stay home with sick children with full wage compensation, a high coverage of institutional child care, and fathers have the right to 12 weeks of paternal leave in addition to the mother's quota.

#### PARTIAL REGULATED FLEXIBILITY – ICELAND

The Icelandic labour market is probably the least regulated among the Nordic countries when it comes to working hours. A large proportion of the labour force have two or more jobs and working irregular working hours seems more widespread there than elsewhere among the Nordic countries (Table 6.3). Iceland is also the Nordic country with the longest working hours. On the other hand, it has the most equalised system of parental leave. The total amount of parental leave is 9 months, which is divided into 3 months maternity leave for the mother and 3 months parental leave for the mother and 3 months of paternity leave for the father (see Chapter 5 for more details).

### FLEXIBILITY IN WORKING TIME ARRANGEMENTS

Before presenting data on the Nordic working time arrangements, we will illustrate different types of working time flexibility both in general and in relation to family care responsibilities. First we will give an overview of the different types of working time flexibility followed by some empirical information about the level of working time flexibility among Nordic men and women in the age groups between 25-49 years – those with most care responsibilities (see Table 6.2).

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TABLE 6.2

Variable hours	Flexitime Annualised hours Home working Staggered hours Working time bank
Restructured hours	Compressed working week
Reduced hours	Part-time Job-share
Leave options	Maternity/paternity leave Sabbatical leave Career break

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Source: Adapted from Flexibility.co.uk (2010).

Here we distinguish between four different types of working time arrangements. Some are more flexible than others and for several of them the relationship to the firm is highly contingent and the workers' affiliation to the firm very loose. The options for leave among the employees with caring obligations will not be considered here but will be dealt with in Chapter 5 of this book.

#### FLEXI-TIME

Flexi-time allows the employee to choose, within some limits, when to start and end the working day. There might be a core period during the day when one has to be at work, but the employee has the possibility of flexibility over when to start and finish each day. The employee may also be able to carry over any surplus or deficit in the number of hours she/he may have accumulated. The time balance could be regulated by taking days off or by working extra hours in a period.

#### ANNUALISED HOURS

Annualised hours average out the working time across the year so that the employee works an agreed number of hours per year rather than per week/month. Normally, the employees working annualised hours split the working time into core hours that are worked each week/month and unallocated hours that can be used for peaks in demand. Annualised hours mean that the length of the working week will vary from week to week or season to season, according to the needs of primarily the company. This is typically a working time arrangement which we find among employees in knowledge-led work organisations such as education and research.

## HOME WORKING / DISTANCE WORK

Home working is when the employee works all or part of the contracted hours from home. It allows her/him to spend the major part of the working week at home or at a location other than the workplace. Today an increasing number of service jobs are computer-based and this means that the employee does not have to be in the office every day. This type of work schedule is used in both unskilled and highly skilled jobs. Working at home may reduce the conflict between work and family obligations but can create problems in determining the border between work and family.

## STAGGERED HOURS

Staggered hours are characterised by workplaces where the employees have different schedules as to when to start and finish the working day/week, but not necessarily by flexibility in the working time schedule. This arrangement allows the employer to cover longer opening hours. In this respect it is a kind of permanent shift work system. The pattern of working hours will normally be the same from day to day and week to week, but the individual employee starts and finishes at different times. Staggered working hours are often combined with part-time work.

## WORKING TIME BANK

Under this system the employee agrees to work longer hours during periods of peak activity or demand. These extra hours are recorded and she/he can then take the time off – paid – at times of the year, which is less busy. Typically, there are limits on the number of hours which can build up over the year and the employer usually determines when the employee takes time off. This system is similar to both flexi-time and annualised hours, but it indicates a more flexible working time regulation than flexi-time and a more restricted organisation of the working hours than under annualised hours.

## COMPRESSED HOURS

Compressed hours are where the employee works the agreed hours over fewer days in the week. For example, instead of working a 37/40 hours week over five days, she/he could be asked to work the same number of hours over three/four days. Normally, the overall number of hours

worked each week remains the same. This arrangement has the advantage of allowing the employees to have days off each week.

#### PART-TIME WORK

Part-time work is the most common type of non-standard working time schedule. It means that the employee is contracted to work less than the normal full-time hours. She/he agrees with the employer on the amount of hours to work during the week. Flexibility is restricted for many part-time jobs. The working time schedule is determined by the employer to deal with a specific workload in the organisation during the day. There are a wide range of part-time working arrangements in the labour market, but most Nordic women in part-time jobs work long hours (30+), while such jobs in the UK and the Netherlands, for example, typically comprise shorter hours (less than 20).

#### JOB-SHARES

Job-sharing is where the employee works part time – either during day, week or year – and shares the duties and responsibilities of a full-time position with another part-time worker. Typically there is an agreement between the employer and employees about how to share the hours and how to share the workload, decision-making etc.

### **WORKING TIME ARRANGEMENTS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES: FLEXIBILITY AND NON-STANDARD WORK BY GENDER**

We now turn to an overview of the different working time arrangements among the Nordic countries, the level of flexibility among employees, who is controlling the working time, and the implications each type of working time arrangement have for the gender division in the labour market. In Table 6.3 we have illustrated how widespread the different forms of flexible working time schedules are among Nordic women and men in the age group 25-49. It has not been possible to obtain statistical estimates for all types of flexible working time mentioned in Table 6.2.



TABLE 6.3

Flexible hours for employees from the age of 25-49 in the Nordic countries in 2007. Percentage of the total employment for men and women.

	Denmark	Finland	Sweden	Norway	Iceland
<i>Overall flexibility</i>					
Male	62.7	53.7	60.0	53.5	26.9
Female	61.3	47.0	62.6	47.2	21.3
<i>Part-time</i>					
Male	6.2	3.8	6.9	7.9	3.9
Female	29.0	12.9	36.1	37.1	30.8
<i>Working overtime</i>					
Male	5.6	13.8	17.7	6.3	52.0
Female	3.6	9.5	10.7	2.8	23.6
<i>Working long hours</i>					
Male	11.0	6.6	1.7	4.5	47.3
Female	3.9	2.5	0.4	0.8	8.0
<i>Flexitime arrangements</i>					
Male	37.1	16.0	9.5	13.5	0.7
Female	34.3	9.8	5.7	13.6	0.4
<i>Working Time Bank</i>					
Male	21.6	25.2	22.6	32.0	4.9
Female	21.5	25.6	22.3	26.8	13.7
<i>Working evening</i>					
Male	17.2	25.0	15.2	11.1	24.5
Female	12.4	22.7	14.1	10.7	12.8

Source: Plantenga & Remery, 2010.

Part-time working is a widespread form of a flexible work schedule for women in all the Nordic countries except in Finland, although that is not the only one. A working time bank is also a frequently used type of flexibility for both men and women in all countries except Iceland. Here, it is working overtime and long hours that are the most frequent forms of 'flexibility' and this is more the case among men than women. In all the Nordic countries women dominate part-time work while men dominate overtime work and long hours.

We find marked differences between the countries reflecting the availability of the different types of non-standard jobs in the labour market, the possibilities of combining work and caring responsibilities and the type of regulation of non-standard employment. Focusing on part-time employment, Sweden and Norway are characterised by a relatively high proportion of women aged 25-49 working part-time, and these women primarily work long hours. Part-time employment in Denmark and Iceland is a bit lower and these two countries are placed in the mid-

dle concerning the proportion of women working part-time as well as the number of hours they are working part-time (Eurostat, 2010). In both countries, part-time employment is more widespread among young women before they have established their families or had children. This is different from Sweden, where most part-timers are women with small children who combine work and parental leave. Finland has traditionally had a low proportion of the labour force working on a part-time basis, and that is still the case. Furthermore, the Finnish part-timers work shorter hours than in the other Nordic countries (Eurostat, 2010).

Looking at the overall level of flexibility in working time among Nordic employees we find (see Table 6.3) that this is especially high in Denmark and Sweden but that it has a different structure. In Denmark the principal type of flexibility seems to be flexi-time arrangements, which are used by more than one-third of the labour force, while in Sweden it is part-time working for women and overtime for men which are highest. In both countries, working time banks seem to be widespread and used by more than one-fifth of the labour force. The two labour markets are thus flexible in different ways. More Swedish employees are able to decide when to start and finish work than their Danish counterparts, which might indicate higher flexibility (see Table 6.4). On the other hand, when it comes to working evening and night shifts, which might be very inconvenient for parents and children, the frequency is nearly doubled among Swedish workers compared to Danish employees (see Table 6.5).

Finland and Norway take a middle position in overall working time flexibility, while Iceland has a much lower overall flexibility than the other Nordic countries. In all three countries, more men than women are employed in flexible working time arrangements. About one quarter of both Finnish men and women have working time bank arrangements and are working on evening schedules while they have the lowest part-time rates among the Nordic countries. In Norway, on the other hand, we find the highest part-time rates and also the highest proportion of employees working on time bank arrangements for both men and women. Thus, Norway seems to have more employees in convenient types of flexibility – working time bank and flexi-time – from a work-family balance perspective than both Finland and Iceland, where the inconvenient time arrangements – overtime, long hours or evening work – are more widespread.

Only about one quarter of the employees in Iceland are engaged in the some kind of flexible time schedule. The typical non-standard working time in Iceland comprises overtime and working long hours. About half of the male employees in Iceland work overtime or long hours and one quarter work evening shifts. All three types of working time arrangements are most widespread among men and none of them can be considered as flexible from an employee's viewpoint. For women, the figures for all three types of non-standard work are significantly lower, instead they are working part-time in great numbers. When it comes to the use of non-standard working time arrangements, the Icelandic labour market seems thus more gender segregated and less flexible than any of the other Nordic labour markets.

When evaluating flexible working time in relation to the work-family balance, it is crucial to see who is determining the schedule of working time. As already mentioned, flexible working time schedules are only useful in reconciling the demands from workplace, household and relatives if it is the employee who is able to decide the working time schedule. Among the different types of flexibility mentioned in Table 6.3, working time bank and flexi-time are the arrangements which give the employees the best opportunities for determining their working time. Both these types of non-standard working arrangements are frequently used in the Nordic countries, except in Iceland. In the European Social Survey (ESS) 2010 the interviewed person is asked if she/he can decide what time to start and finish work. Table 6.4 shows the figures for men and women with and without children living at home.

According to Table 6.4, markedly more men than women are able to decide and plan their working day themselves. For Denmark, Finland and Norway there is a significant difference between men and women. This gender difference is, however, is more pronounced for people living together with children than for those without children at home, except for Finland, where we find a significant gender difference for people both with and without children at home. Looking at the differences between the Nordic countries in the proportion of employees who have control over their working day schedule, we find no significant differences either for people with or without children living at home.

TABEL 6.4

Percentages of employed men and women in Nordic countries who state that they can decide when to start and finish work during the day and week. Divided into men and women with and without children living in the household in 2010.

	Men		Women	
	Per cent	Total	Per cent	Total
<i>Person living together with children</i>				
Denmark	40	147	26	154 **
Finland	48	114	31	122 **
Norway	53	155	27	148 ***
Sweden	40	124	35	138
Total	45	540	29	562
<i>Person living without children</i>				
Denmark	41	96	36	73
Finland	43	77	22	92 **
Norway	39	110	28	81
Sweden	39	67	28	98
Total	40	350	28	344

Note: Significant gender difference: \*\*\*  $p < 0,001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0,01$ ; \*  $p < 0,05$ .

Source: European Social Survey, 2010.

The most rigid forms of non-standard working time arrangements seem to be working overtime, working long hours and working the evening or night shifts. These types of working time schedules are especially frequent in Iceland and to some extent also in Finland (see Table 6.3). The European Social Survey (ESS) 2010 has asked employees how often they work evening and night shifts (see Table 6.5).

According to Table 6.5, about one third of female employees with children work evening or night shifts every week in Finland, Norway and Sweden, while the figure is only 15 per cent of the Danish female employees. For women, we find a significant difference between the Nordic countries but none between women and men except for Denmark, where men with children at home work markedly more evening and night shifts than women. The main explanation for the high number of women working evenings or nights is that an overwhelming proportion of Nordic female employees work in the social services and health sectors where caring takes place 24 hours a day. We find relatively small differences for both men and women among those with and without children living at home.

TABLE 6.5

Percentages of employed men and women in Nordic countries who state that they working evenings or night shifts once a week or more. Divided into men and women with and without children living in the household in 2010.

	Men		Women	
	Per cent	Total	Per cent	Total
<i>Person living together with children</i>				
Denmark	25	178	15	173 ***1
Finland	29	151	30	141
Norway	25	175	30	158
Sweden	34	155	36	158
Total	28	659	27 ***2	630
<i>Person living without children</i>				
Denmark	20	351	17	113
Finland	29	292	26	103
Norway	27	333	34	123
Sweden	35	313	37	90
Total	28	1289	30 **	429

Note 1: Significant gender difference: \*\*\* p < 0,001; \*\* p < 0,01; \* p < 0,05.

Note 2: Significant country difference: \*\*\* p < 0,001; \*\* p < 0,01; \* p < 0,05.

Source: European Social Survey, 2010.

Denmark is an outlier concerning work in the evenings and at night, with only 15 per cent of women with children working evenings and nights and more than half of female employees never working in these types of jobs. Possible explanations for this disparity might be that Denmark, until recently, had a stricter regulation of opening hours for shops, and also that the Danish labour market has a lower level of shift work, working evenings etc. than the other Nordic countries (see Table 6.3).

## WORK TO FAMILY CONFLICTS: WORK AS A BARRIER FOR FAMILY LIFE

In the next two sections we will discuss the work-family balance. In this section we will focus on ‘work to family conflicts’ and in the following one a ‘family to work conflicts’ perspective will be scrutinised. A more detailed picture of the problems Nordic women and men have in balancing the demands from work with time available for being together with the family can be obtained from the European Social Survey 2010. Here, the individuals were asked if their job prevents them from giving time to their family or partner (see Table 6.6). The figures confirm the previous

result: that in the Nordic countries relatively few individuals consider that their job prevents them from fulfilling their family responsibilities in relation to caring for family members or relatives. Slightly more men than women consider that their work responsibilities often/always prevent them from giving time to the family. This is primarily the case for men with children, but we do not find any significant differences between women and men in this respect.

TABLE 6.6

Percentages of employed men and women in Nordic countries who state that "My job often/always prevents me from giving time to my family/partner" for Nordic men and women with and without children in 2010.

	Men		Women	
	Per cent	Total	Per cent	Total
<i>Person living together with children</i>				
Denmark	25	178	19	173
Finland	24	150	26	141
Norway	13	175	10	158
Sweden	26	155	24	158
Total	22 **	658	20 ***	630
<i>Person living without children</i>				
Denmark	12	113	13	75
Finland	14	101	23	99
Norway	7	122	13	83
Sweden	19	91	16	110
Total	12	427	17	367

Note: Significant country difference: \*\*\*  $p < 0,001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0,01$ ; \*  $p < 0,05$ .

Source: European Social Survey, 2010.

There are on the other hand (Table 6.6) significant differences between the Nordic countries for both women and men with children at home, not between those without children. This is a slightly different picture than we found previously for decisions on working time schedules and working evenings and nights. Norwegian men and women seem to have the least problems in reconciling time for family with the demands from their employment. During the last decade comprehensive family-friendly policies have been implemented in Norway and these have obviously eased the potential conflicts between work and family responsibilities. Both Finnish and Swedish women with children at home, on the other hand, seem to have major problems in combining work and family responsibilities.

Another measure indicating that work commitments can prevent individuals from having enough time for other activities – household

work, care and leisure activities – might be a discrepancy between the actual and preferred working time. Based on data from ESS 2010 we have, in Table 6.7, compared the actual and preferred working time for men and women living in dual-earner families with children. The respondents have been asked both about actual working hours in their main jobs including overtime, and which working hours they would prefer. In all four countries included in the ESS-survey – Iceland is not covered – the employees would like markedly lower working time per week than they actually have. This includes both men and women and employees with and without children. We find for men the highest discrepancy between actual and preferred working time indicating that they work long hours and also experience significant problems reconciling work and family responsibilities. Men prefer a weekly working time more or less similar to that which women actually have today in the Nordic countries (see Table 6.7).

Comparing the working time in the four Nordic countries for men and women, respectively, we find that they would prefer to have nearly the same working hours. In Norway there seems to be less difference between the actual and preferred working time than in the other Nordic countries. For men, the actual working time is about 42-45 hours per week; it is slightly higher for male employees with children. For women, the working time is lower but also similar in the four countries at about 34-37 hours per week, and for them there is no difference in weekly working hours with and without children, except for Norway. This pattern indicates that children do not seem to have a pronounced influence on labour market involvement for those Nordic women who are in employment and who have children living with them. . The differences in the female rates of employment among mothers and non-mothers are thus very small for Denmark, Norway and Sweden (see EUROSTAT, 2012).

TABLE 6.7

Actual and preferred working time for employed men and women living in dual-earner households in the Nordic Countries with and without children, calculated for all employees in 2010.

	Respondent			Partner of respondent		
	Hours normally work per week in main job	Hours you would like to work per week	Difference between actual and preferred	Hours you would like your partner to work per week	Difference between actual and preferred	Total household
<i>Men living with children in the household</i>						
Denmark	44	37	7 ***	36	32	4 ***
Finland	45	39	6 ***	40	36	4 ***
Norway	42	39	3 ***	35	35	0
Sweden	44	37	7 ***	38	34	4 ***
<i>Women living with children in the household</i>						
Denmark	36	31	5 ***	43	36	7 ***
Finland	37	34	3 ***	43	39	4 ***
Norway	36	34	2 ***	40	38	2 ***
Sweden	37	33	4 ***	43	37	6 ***
<i>Men living without children in the household</i>						
Denmark	42	35	7 ***	36	31	5 ***
Finland	43	39	4 ***	39	35	4 ***
Norway	42	38	4 ***	34	34	0
Sweden	41	37	4 ***	38	34	4 ***
<i>Women living without children in the household</i>						
Denmark	36	30	6 ***	38	34	4 *
Finland	37	34	3 **	42	37	5 ***
Norway	34	32	2 *	41	36	5 ***
Sweden	37	34	3 **	43	38	5 ***

Source: European Social Survey, 2010.



In all the Nordic countries, the preferred working time is lower than hours actually worked per week. The difference between actual and preferred working time is significant for all categories except for Norwegian women when the working time is estimated by their partner, but not when it is declared by themselves. The difference is especially pronounced for men with children. This is an indication that men want to have more time with their families but are prevented from reducing their working time because of the demands put on them by the work organisation. Comparing the four countries, we find that the differences between actual and preferred working time seems lowest in Norway and highest in Denmark. Today, Norway seems to have a more family-friendly labour market than the other Nordic countries, with more employee-led flexibility (see Table 6.3) and less discrepancy between actual and preferred working time.

The respondents were also asked about their partner's actual and preferred working hours. Here, we find a relatively high correspondence between the actual and estimated working time for the partner. However, women seem to estimate their partner's working time as slightly lower than it actually is, while men seem more accurate in estimating their female partner's working time, except for Finland, where men estimate their partner having worked 3-4 hours more per week than they actually do.

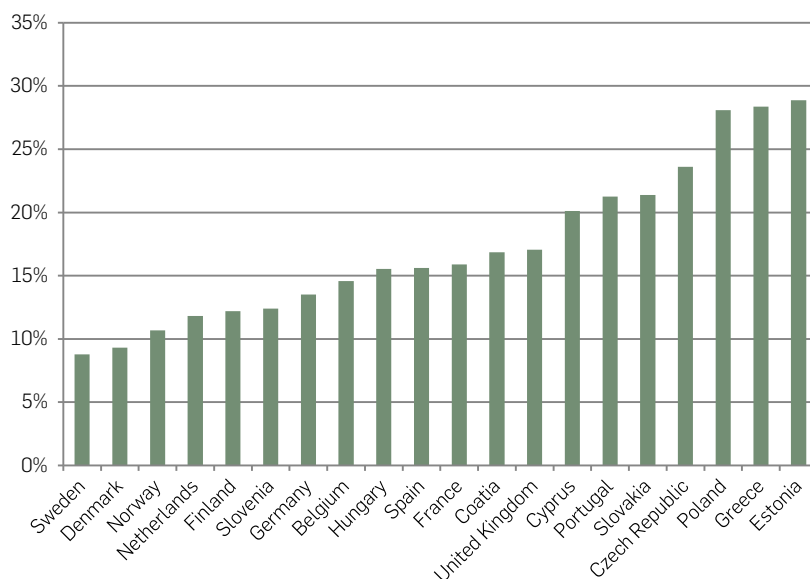
## **FAMILY TO WORK CONFLICTS – FAMILY OBLIGATIONS AS A BARRIER FOR WORK**

In the Nordic countries characterised by family-friendly policies, we argue that the barriers preventing women with care responsibilities from entering the labour market and being in full-time work have been removed, while this is not the case for women in the rest of Europe. It is argued that investments in different family policy measures have solved or at least minimised the conflicts between family responsibilities and labour market involvement for women. Women want to be in the labour market and to have an active working life, but they also want reduced working time of about 30-34 hours per week – that is 3-4 hours per week less than the actual working hours, as we found in Table 6.7. This means that they want only a slight reduction in working time and want to have a proper labour market career in combination with time for the family.

The European Social Survey 2008 indicates the extent to which caring responsibilities are a barrier for women in realising their career aspirations. In this survey, the female respondents were asked about the impact of care responsibilities on their work commitment. Figure 6.1 shows the proportion of women who believe it is likely *that over the next 12 months they will have to spend less time on paid work than they would wish because of care responsibilities for family members or relatives*.

FIGURE 6.1

Proportions of women in the European countries who believe it is likely that over the next 12 months they will have to spend less time on paid work than they would wish because of care obligations for family members or relatives.



Source: European Social Survey, 2008.

According to Figure 6.1, fewer Nordic women have experienced a risk of being forced to work less because of care responsibilities than women in most other European countries. From other studies we know that care responsibilities only have a marginal impact on female employment in the Nordic countries, and for men becoming a father even increases their rates of employment (see Table 6.7; Ejrnæs, 2011; Plantenga & Remery,

2005). The high female employment rates among Nordic women with children and the small proportion who consider care responsibilities as a barrier to paid labour reflect the opportunities for woman returning to work after about a year because of adequate child care coverage for small children and appropriate public support for fragile elderly relatives. Furthermore, it also indicates that they are able to work as much as they wish, whether on a full- or part-time basis.

TABLE 6.8

Risk of spending less time in paid work among employed women and men living in two-earner households as a result of small children or other care obligations in the Nordic countries in 2008.

	Female		Male	
	Spending less time on paid work because of care	Total	Spending less time on paid work because of care	Total
<i>Denmark</i>				
Children 0- 3	29	59	14	71
Children above 3 year living in the household	7	180	2	138
No children living in the household	11	117	5	158
Total	12	356	6	367
Chi-square test	***1		**	
<i>Sweden</i>				
Children 0-3	21	84	15	89
Children above 3 year living in the household	6	180	5	184
No children living in the household	7	167	5	203
Total	9	431	7	476
Chi-square test	***		**	
<i>Finland</i>				
Children 0-3	37	102	7	76
Children above 3 year living in the household	13	213	7	191
No children living in the household	6	246	5	320
Total	14	561	6	587
Chi-square test	***		Not significant	
<i>Norway</i>				
Children 0- 3	28	85	24	78
Children above 3 year living in the household	11	189	9	162
No children living in the household	8	168	8	239
Total	13	442	11	479
Chi-square test	***		***	

Note 1: \*\*\* p < 0,001; \*\* p < 0,01; \* p < 0,05.

Source: European Social Survey, 2008.

This result can be elaborated by analysing the extent to which small children or other care responsibilities in the household comprise barriers to women's entry into the labour market. Table 6.8 shows that in all the Nordic countries, women with dependent children have a significantly higher risk of spending less time on paid work than they want because of family-related care responsibilities. In all countries, the care responsibilities for small children at the age of 0-3 have most impact on their labour market involvement. The impact of caring for small children is highest in Finland and lowest in Sweden. This result fits well with what we found in the previous table. Finnish women rank highest and Swedish women lowest among the Nordic countries in the proportion of women who experienced being prevented from working as much as they want.

Women with small children aged 0-3 have in all four countries a significantly higher risk of spending less time on paid work because of care than the risk of spending less time on paid work when having care responsibilities for older children or for other family members. On the other hand, from another study we know that the level of perceived risk of losing one's job/income among Nordic mothers is smaller than in any other European countries (Ejrnæs & Boje, 2012). In the Nordic countries, a comprehensive family policy has established institutions and services which are sufficiently able to provide affordable care for both children and older relatives, which reduces the risk of spending less time on paid work.

Among men in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, the care of small children below the age of three also significantly increases their risk of being forced to reduce paid work more than desired. In Norway the impact of small children on men's work involvement seems to be higher than in the other countries, but it is similar to the situation for women. This might be another indication of greater gender equality in child caring among Norwegian parents. It could also indicate that the extended paternity leave introduced in Norway might have a detrimental impact on a man's career, just as leave arrangements always have had for women. In Finland, caring responsibilities do not seem to have any impact on men's work involvement, but they have a tremendous effect on women's opportunities for paid work. The explanation for this might be that the long parental leave taken by the Finnish mothers leads to difficulties for them in getting back to work – often after more than three years of maternity leave. By that time, the women have typically lost their labour

market networks and their qualifications might have become outdated. On the other hand, the long maternity leave frees the fathers from taking on care responsibilities for small children as shown in Table 6.8 (see also Boje & Ejrnæs, 2012).

## PART-TIME: PROVIDING WORK-FAMILY BALANCE?

Part-time work is the most frequently used type of ‘flexible’ working time arrangement among women in the Nordic countries. Part-time work is conventionally considered the solution for women in managing the work-family constraints, but it might not be always the desired solution to solving work and care conflicts. The employees may not be in a position to take advantage of the options for reduced working hours, either because they are not able to support themselves economically by taking up part-time jobs, or the employers are reluctant to accept such a contract, or because of the possibly inconvenient hours related to such work.

Based on figures from the EUROSTAT Labour Force Survey 2011, we have analysed the reasons mentioned by women for choosing to work part-time. According to Table 6.9, a part-time job is chosen for three major reasons, namely because they cannot find a full-time job, they are in education and for family reasons.

TABLE 6.9

Reasons indicated by Nordic women in part-time employment for choosing fewer hours – percentage of all women who are working part-time in 2011.

	Denmark	Finland	Sweden	Iceland	Norway
Could not find a full-time job	17	30	27	25	20
Own illness or disability	8	9	10	5	13
Other family or personal responsibilities	33	23	16	9	12
Looking after children or incapacitated adults	4	14	21	14	17
In education or training	31	25	1	31	21
Other reasons	8	-	16	16	17

Source: EUROSTAT: Labour Force Survey, 2011. Last updated 25.04.12; Extracted on 21.06.12.

If we count both looking after children and other family responsibilities together, the group of women who mention ‘family reasons’ for choosing part time work is the same in Sweden, Finland and Denmark – 36-37

per cent – and is the most important reason. In Norway and Iceland this reason counts less. When considering the different reasons for choosing part-time work among women, it is important to combine these figures with the total proportion of women who are in part-time employment. Sweden and Norway have large groups of mothers engaged in part-time work. In both countries a large number of part-time jobs are available in the service sector and the working time arrangement seems employee-friendly. The opposite situation is the case in Finland, as the proportion of Finnish women is relatively small and few part-time jobs are available. The reason why few Danish women mention looking after children as the reason for part-time work might be a combination of easy access to public child care and a higher concentration of part-time work among young women before they have children, compared to Sweden and Norway. On the other hand, the large proportion of Danish women who say that they work part-time due to family or personal responsibilities might indicate that they want to have more time with their family than would be possible with a full-time job.

We find a high proportion of involuntary part-time workers among women in Finland and Sweden. This, however, is for different structural reasons. In Sweden a large majority of female part-timers are employed in the public sector where part-time jobs are created as a supplement to the core staff's work and are undertaken outside the usual working hours. These types of jobs are often not available on a full-time basis. In Finland part-time work has traditionally not been used by the firms and is therefore not available to a large degree outside restricted parts of the service sector.

The European Social Survey 2004 asks employed women if they have been in part-time employment and how long they have been so because of caring responsibilities for children; see Table 6.10.

Among Swedish and Icelandic mothers, the large majority have been working part-time due to child care responsibilities, while this is the case for only about one third of their counterparts in Denmark and Norway and even less in Finland. In Iceland relatively few women have been forced to take up part-time work due to family reasons – 23 per cent according to Table 6.9 – but when mothers work part-time they do so for a longer period. In Sweden part-time employment is frequently used by women with family responsibilities – about 37 per cent according to Table 6.9 – and a large group of these women have been in part-

time jobs for more than 10 years (Table 6.10), which in reality means that they have taken up a part-time career. In Denmark, Norway and especially in Finland we find a completely different pattern among the mothers taking up part-time work. Here, relatively few mothers are in part-time employment for an extended period. In Denmark and Norway about 16 per cent of mothers are in part-time work for more than four years – compared to 38 per cent in Sweden and Iceland. Most Danish, Norwegian and Finnish mothers continue in full-time employment after about one year. In Denmark and Norway, most mothers return quickly to full-time employment after about one year of parental leave, while in Finland a large group of mothers do not return to the labour market for three years or more, and then only a few take up part-timework.

TABLE 6.10

How much time have women in employment in the Nordic countries spent in part-time rather than full-time work because they have to care for children in 2004.

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
No time part time rather than full time	64	78	22	63	33
Up to 6 months	4	4	9	5	5
More than 6 months, up to 12 months	4	5	10	4	7
More than 1 year, up to 2 years	6	5	8	4	8
More than 2 years, up to 4 years	7	5	13	7	9
More than 4 years, up to 10 years	8	2	22	9	20
More than 10 years	8	2	16	9	17
Total	100	100	100	100	100
N	258	330	136	674	326

Source: European Social Survey, 2004.

## TIME SPENT ON PAID WORK AND HOUSEWORK.

One further aspect of the gender division of labour in the Nordic countries will be analysed in this chapter: the hours spent on paid work and housework in families where both man and woman are in gainful employment. Here, we also rely on figures from the European Social Survey (ESS) 2010. The respondents are asked about hours spent on unpaid housework but not about hours spent on care work. Here, we have to rely on other sources, which are less comparable (OECD, 2011; Pantenga & Remery, 2010).

TABLE 6.11

Hours spent on paid work and housework (excl. care work) among men and women living in dual-earner households with and without children in the Nordic countries, calculated for all employees in 2010.

	Respondent			Partner of respondent		
	Hours normally work per week in main job	Hours spend on housework per week	Total work load per week	Hours normally work per week in main job	Hours spend on housework per week	Total work load per week
<i>Men living with children in the household</i>						
Denmark	44	7	52	36	13	49
Finland	45	8	53	40	11	51
Norway	42	8	50	35	13	48
Sweden	44	10	54	38	13	51
<i>Women living with children in the household</i>						
Denmark	36	15	51	42	8	50
Finland	37	14	51	43	7	50
Norway	36	13	49	40	7	47
Sweden	37	15	52	43	9	52
<i>Men living without children in the household</i>						
Denmark	42	7	49	36	11	47
Finland	43	7	50	39	10	49
Norway	42	7	49	34	11	46
Sweden	41	10	51	38	12	51
<i>Women living without children in the household</i>						
Denmark	36	12	48	38	7	45
Finland	37	10	47	42	7	48
Norway	34	11	45	41	6	47
Sweden	37	12	49	43	8	51

Source: European Social Survey, 2010.

According to Table 6.11 the total amount of hours worked by men and women with children – paid work and housework – are nearly the same, and only a few hours longer than their counterparts without children. The gender differences appear when looking at the division between paid work and unpaid housework for men and women. As we saw in Table 6.7, men in paid work with children work 6-8 hours more than women with children per week, but nearly the opposite is true when we consider unpaid housework. Here, women work 35-40 per cent more than their male counterparts and in total the workload is nearly the same. The difference is that men work in the public sphere and are rewarded for their work, and women work in the private sphere unpaid with consequences for their life earnings and career. Children do not seem to have much impact on the amount of unpaid housework that men are doing, while they increase the hours spent on housework by women.



Again, the respondents have been asked to estimate the amount of hours spent on unpaid housework by the partner. Here, men in families with children tend to underestimate the unpaid work done by their partners, while women by and large give a correct estimate according to the figures given by their male counterparts.

The differences in the amount of worked hours – paid as well as unpaid – among the Nordic countries are surprisingly small. Norwegian women with children tend to work slightly less than their sisters in the other Nordic countries, and Swedish men – both fathers and non-fathers – work slightly more. But the differences between the countries are small – 1-2 hours per week. In the ESS 2010 survey, as mentioned, we only have data for the amount of unpaid housework, excluding care for children. To obtain a more complete picture of the gender differences in family responsibilities we need to have information about the unpaid care work. We can gather some of this from the OECD family-database (2008) about the amount of care work done by all full-time working men and women (OECD, 2011). Among the Nordic countries, Norwegian women spend the highest number of hours on caring for children – about 40 hours a week – while Norwegian men spend slightly more than half. This is a surprising result considering the high level of gender equality we have found in the Norwegian labour market. According to the OECD figures, the gender balance in caring for children among the Nordic parents seems more equal than in the other OECD countries. Among the Nordic countries Finnish men and women spend the lowest amount of time on caring: 18 and 15 hours for women and men, respectively. Taken together with the gender imbalance in housework, these figures tell us that gender equality in unpaid work is still a long way away, despite some recent improvements.

## **CONCLUSION: FLEXIBILITY AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE?**

Flexibility in the allocation of work time is seen as an important dimension of the European employment strategy. For the employer, flexibility in allocation of the working time, in the size of the labour force, and in the work organisation are considered necessary in a highly competitive globalised business market. For the employee there is also a growing need for more flexibility in the allocation of time over the life course,

especially in order to cope with the work-family demands during specific periods. In particular, the appearance of dual-earner families, which in the Nordic countries have become the standard type, has intensified the need for a flexible allocation of time to reconcile the demands of work with family responsibilities.

Women's increasing labour force participation has been caused by several factors. First, among women, the rapidly rising educational level only has relevance if it is being actively exploited through paid work. Second, the growing instability of family relationships due to an increased risk of divorce and a growing number of single parent families made it necessary for women to have their own income. Third, the reality is that for the majority of families in all European countries, it is necessary to have two incomes for a family with children to maintain a satisfactory standard of living.

According to the European studies referred to in this chapter, the Nordic countries have the highest level of working time flexibility among the EU Member States. In particular, Denmark and Sweden have a high level of overall working time flexibility, but the other countries are also characterised by high flexibility. Flexibility takes many different forms and several of them are more employer-friendly than employee-friendly. From an employee perspective flexi-time, working time bank and annualised hours seem to be some of the most family-friendly types of flexibility if the time schedule is determined by the employee or jointly between employer and employee. In contrast to this we have other forms of flexible working time, which are employer-friendly, but highly constraining for the employee in balancing work-family responsibilities. These forms are overtime, long hours, working evenings or nights etc.

Part-time is the most popular form of flexible working time arrangement in the Nordic countries among women except in Finland, which has had a long tradition of reluctance towards part-time employment. Conventionally, part-time work is considered as an employee-friendly arrangement, especially for women with care responsibilities. We saw in Table 6.9 that the most important reason for undertaking part-time work among women is responsibility for children and other family members. Working part-time might be an advantage for women with care responsibilities if the time allocation fits with the opening hours of the child care institutions, but part-time jobs are often used by the employers to address special supply demands outside the normal working

hours – shops with long opening hours, services during early or late hours in the public sector etc. – and then the part-time schedule is highly inflexible for the employees.

Other and more gender-balanced types of flexible working time, which are widespread among the Nordic countries except Iceland, are flexi-time and working time banks. These are similar and potentially employee-friendly if the employees can control the working time schedule. Iceland has the lowest level of overall flexibility among the Nordic countries. The types of ‘flexibility’, which are most often used among men in Iceland, comprise working overtime, long hours and evening work. These are all types of non-standard work, which are not employee-friendly. Icelandic women are less employed in flexible working time arrangements than their Nordic sisters except when it comes to part-time employment.

From a work-family perspective, working time flexibility is only useful if the employee can decide the time schedule. Here, we find marked gender differences. According to our data, about half of the employed mothers are not able to decide when to start and finish work, while 25 per cent of fathers are. Another indication of stressful working time can be seen in the use of evening or night work. This type of working time is used frequently by about 25 per cent of both men and women with children in the Nordic countries.

It is obvious that working conditions more than the family responsibilities create the work-family conflicts. This can be illustrated by the high discrepancy between the actual and preferred working time between both men and women in all the Nordic countries. A large share of Nordic employees want to have shorter working hours per week than they actually have, but on the other hand, we also know that many women in part-time jobs want longer hours in order to be able to support themselves. In most families there are care responsibilities both in relation to children and older family members, but our results show clearly that it is caring for small children aged 0-3 which is most demanding and primarily prevents women from realising their preferred involvement in paid work. Increasingly, men’s labour market careers are affected by caring responsibilities in the family. Here, Finland is an exception. Finnish men seem only to be mildly affected in their careers by care responsibilities; see Table 6.8.

A major issue related to the interface between workplace flexibility and household strategies in combining work and care concerns the difficulties of parenting in the context of new forms of work and the increasing diversity of working time. When flexibility is demanded with both parents being employed on highly variable and especially unpredictable working hours, it can be very stressful coping with it in dual-earner families. Policies to promote the reconciliation of work and family life, such as child care provision and parental leave schemes, are in place in all the Nordic countries. Typically, these family policy measures are, however, mainly implemented with the aim of facilitating and increasing women's labour market participation. These policy measures are less clear in strengthening a more equal gender balance in the families by an equal gender division of both paid work and care work. In this chapter we have shown that there are still marked gender differences in the adaptability of the working time to the responsibilities in the family and in the division of the unpaid work in the family in particular: housework and care work. In this respect it can be argued that it must be up to the individual family to decide how to divide the care responsibilities between women and men. This is more or less the situation in Denmark and Finland, which are the two countries with the lowest involvement of fathers in caring for children. As we have documented in the chapter, dependent children in the family and an unequal gender division of labour in care work have severe consequences for the labour market position of women but nearly no effect on men's careers. Gender equality in both paid and unpaid work is still far from being accomplished and here we need proper and effective policy measures aimed at modifying the inequality in division of primarily the unpaid work.

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# GENDER EQUALITY AND NORDIC FAMILY POLICY

ULLA BJÖRNBERG

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter will look at challenges for family policies from a gender perspective. The aim is to provide an overview of the accomplishments that have so far been reached in combating unequal gender relations in families and to highlight challenges for gender equality. Previous chapters have pointed at aspects on gender differences in fertility, family diversities, income inequalities, care and work. Data from these chapters will be drawn together and some other data will be added in order to discuss the trends and developments reached. A special section will be devoted to violence against women and children in intimate relations. I will argue that this particular violence should be an issue for family policy. Like in previous chapters, Nordic data will be referred to, but the Swedish case will be highlighted more.

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

In the Nordic family policy model, one of the strategic priorities for achieving gender equality has been the goal of establishing a dual earner/dual carer model of the family. Care policies including parental leave

and public child care, individual taxation and intergenerational independence are generally regarded as crucial family policy measures to achieve the model (defamilisation). A snapshot on the extent to which the model is embraced can be given by studying some indicators from the European Value Survey on family values.<sup>25</sup> Data from the study presents a fairly consistent Nordic profile regarding attitudes to the equal sharing of child care and the joint responsibility to contribute to household income and domestic work. However, the dual earner model is equally highly valued compared to other European countries. Eighty to 90 per cent of respondents agree that men should take the same responsibility for home and children and fathers are as well-suited to look after children as mothers (European Value Studies, 2008).

All Nordic countries differ from the European average by disagreeing (about 80 per cent disagree) with the statement that pre-school children suffer by having working mothers (in particular Denmark). They also (about 90 per cent) agree or strongly agree to a statement that working mothers have no problems with developing a warm relationship with their child. When evaluating these high levels of acceptance of a modern woman's role (compared to other countries), we should remember to take into account that the Nordic day care system is in general of high quality.

Drawing on the results from the value study, Iceland and Finland tend to embrace more traditional values, and to a lower extent express the views that women should contribute to the household income and to a higher extent that being a housewife is as fulfilling as having a job. The belief that the independence of women is linked to having a job and earning an income is therefore less supported by Finnish and Icelandic women.

## FAMILY DIVERSITIES AND GENDER

In Chapter 2 we saw different developments regarding fertility for women and men in the Nordic countries. Both men and women postpone having children, but despite this development most women today have at least one child, although later in life, and fewer women remain childless. A part of the trend can be linked to the growth in assisted reproduction technology which makes births later in life possible for those who might

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25. The reader can view figures at this link: <http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu>.

otherwise remain childless. Men also postpone having children and more men tend to remain childless to a larger extent. The reason why men postpone becoming fathers was interpreted as a reflection of them tending to prefer being established in the labour market before becoming fathers. Linked to a general high level of divorce and separation of couples with children, this probably means a growth in social fatherhood – men living in families with children born to other men. After divorce and/or separation, both men and women enter into new family relationships, but the main responsibilities for the children remain with the biological parents. The law emphasises joint parental custody, but the main responsibility for the child's welfare and well-being rests with the mother, since an overwhelming majority of the children live with the mother. However, a trend in all the Nordic countries is that more and more children stay in contact with their biological fathers and more and more children live with 50/50 living arrangements. Together with the fact that more fathers are taking parental leave for more days than in earlier decades, it is possible to conclude that policies for promoting the caring role of fathers have been successful. This means that gender equality in parenthood is moving in a positive direction.

However, the regulations and practices regarding custody and care have met with tensions both between parents and between parents and children, where the rights of the children to make decisions in accordance with their own well-being can pose challenges to those of either parent (see Chapter 2). Post-divorce/separation regulations bring post-patriarchal beliefs and values to the surface. Underlying value structures regarding gender and children, motherhood and fatherhood are complicated matters to be managed in shaping the regulations of the parent-child relationships post-divorce and separation. They become visible in connection with negotiations on how to deal with joint custody, visitation rights and other social matters regarding the life and well-being of the children. In practice, it is often the mothers who are obliged to guard the rights (or the obligation) of the child to socialise with the other parent, while the same is no more than optional for the fathers (Bergman & Hobson, 2002; Eriksson, 2003).

Chapter 4 looked at poverty or exposure to economic precariousness among children. Data from the chapter shows that in the Nordic countries about 20 per cent in this category are lone parent families. We know that the majority of these families are single mothers. For example,

among single mothers with children from 0-18 years in Sweden, 22.4 per cent were poor (60 per cent of median income) in 2003-2007 compared to almost 11 per cent of single fathers. Single mothers have a weaker position in the labour market and remain in poverty for longer periods (Socialstyrelsen, 2010). Single mothers among immigrant women are even worse off (Rädda Barnen, 2012). The relative financial precariousness of single mothers has been a persistent problem for family policies for many years, although there have been fluctuations in numbers over time. These figures reflect what was stated in Chapter 2: women are 'punished' by having a child. Women tend to work part-time (30-37 per cent but less so in Finland), whereas this is the case for 4-7 per cent men (see Chapter 6). Nordic statistics show that, since 2000, the share of part-time workers among women has increased in all countries of the region (Nordic Statistical Yearbook, 2012). Part-time work and single motherhood are still important reasons behind mothers losing out economically when they have children, while men do not.

## GENDER ORDER IN PRACTICE

Women are nowadays better educated than men. Recent figures show that in all Nordic countries the majority of graduates at tertiary level are women. Men constitute less than 40 per cent of those graduating (Nordic Statistical Yearbook, 2012, Table 7.2). There is however a segregated pattern in higher education in all the Nordic countries, where women dominate within fields such as health and social services, and men dominate in fields such as engineering, manufacturing and construction.

Notwithstanding the fact that some women today earn more than their husbands and partners, the pay gap between women and men remains significant at all levels of the workforce. In 2009, for example, Swedish women made 15 per cent less than Swedish men, thus faring only slightly better than their counterparts in the European Union, where the gap was at 17 per cent (Eurostat, 2013).<sup>26</sup>

Studies on the Swedish power elite have shown that women occupy no more than 26 per cent of the top positions in the country's economy, politics, and culture. The corresponding figures for Norway, Denmark, and Finland are 17, 12, and 13 per cent, respectively (Görans-

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26. Unverified estimates.

son, 2007). With the exception of politics, men continue to dominate all spheres of societal life. The fields where male domination is the strongest are business, science and culture. In the field of business, the share of women in top positions is currently five per cent, compared to 45 per cent in politics. While the representation of women in these positions has increased over the last twenty years, especially in politics, the overall situation has remained largely unchanged. The different fields follow their own logics of functioning, including their particular mechanisms of recruitment and exclusion (Göransson, 2007). These logics are linked to the ways in which competition for powerful positions within them operates. Within the field of business, for instance, the top positions are allocated on collegial grounds with social and family networks playing an important role, whereas in politics the recruitment processes are usually more transparent and based on general elections. The greater the openness of the recruitment process, the more opportunities are opened up for larger segments of society, including women (op.cit.).

As Göransson (2007) has shown, approximately 40 per cent of the women in elite positions in Sweden grew up in families where both the mother and the father held high-ranking positions or worked in high-prestige occupations, whereas their male colleagues predominantly came from male-breadwinner families. The women in question, in other words, had drawn on cultural capital transmitted by their mothers and fathers. The men in top positions were notably often married to women who were not pursuing a career but instead had assumed all responsibility for caring for the family and the children. While the men in the study did not take parental leave, all of the women had done so. The women who were married generally carried the main responsibility for the family and domestic chores; almost 33 per cent of the women participating in the study, however, were single mothers.

A persistence of the traditional gender order is reflected in the sharing of domestic work and child care. In Sweden, a comparison into how households allocated time to unpaid work in 1990 and in 2010 showed that women's share in unpaid domestic work each week decreased to 56 per cent from 62 per cent in 1990 (Statistics Sweden, 2013a). Looking more closely into the sharing of different chores, women spent most time on preparing food, cleaning, child care, doing the laundry and shopping, whereas men spent more time on maintenance. During the same period women spent more time in paid work and men

less. Time spent on child care was for women five hours and 24 minutes in 1990 and 4 hours and 18 minutes in 2012. Men increased their time on child care by 24 minutes from 2 hours and six minutes in 1990 to 2 hours and 30 minutes in 2010 (Statistics Sweden, 2012). At an aggregate level the sharing of domestic work has levelled out, but the sharing of chores according to the figures are quite gendered.

Various qualitative studies on how the division of caring and domestic work is negotiated in Nordic households (e.g., Björnberg & Kollind, 2005; Magnusson, 2006; Plantin, 2001) show that people have different perceptions of the meaning of gender equality as an ideal. The creation of togetherness and avoidance of conflicts and nagging characteristic of long and repeated discussions is one way of "doing gender" in this context. Couples tend to regard their "specific" situation as a combination of preferences and priorities. While the problem may then be a private one, it is nonetheless linked to the ways in which work life is set up and organised differently for men and women. For instance, fathers are not expected to work part-time: full-time work is a norm (Larsson, 2012).

These few examples are consistent with the findings of other studies, and they are in line with the theoretical explanations put forward by gender scholars working in the field. Risman (2004), for instance, has argued that while actions are a function of interests, the ability to choose is patterned by the social structure, including its built-in gender stratification system. Gender is a structure deeply embedded in society, one that is reflected in institutions and cultural rules and norms and makes itself manifest, for example, in the tendency of individuals to identify themselves by their gender to meet interactional expectations in social encounters. Categorisation by sex is almost always intersected with the hierarchical order underlying male dominance and sustaining male privileges over the female gender.

## **NEW AND PERSISTENT CHALLENGES FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN FAMILY POLICY**

A 2005 special report commissioned by the then Social Democratic government in Sweden suggested that any policy aimed at reducing gender inequality be pursued on two separate tracks. Firstly, it was seen as necessary to restructure the country's parental leave system and improve the

working conditions of women. The report's authors argued that the great flexibility that the current scheme allowed, in terms of how the parental leave period could be divided between the parents and the option it gave for the mothers to use up almost all of the leave days allotted to the couple, had sent the wrong message that child care was optional for men but an obligation for women, in the sense that mothers have the main responsibility for the care of children. Long parental leave was now seen as an obstacle in the efforts to improve women's position in the labour market. Together with part-time work, it was argued, it served to cement women into their traditional role as caregivers and providers of domestic work, helping to reproduce the prevailing attitudes that portray them as more committed to family than work. Full-time employment, the report claimed, was firmly established as a symbol for work commitment, and it was primarily associated with masculinity and regarded as a normative standard. The report's authors concluded that through a reconstructed parental leave system a message could be sent that men, too, have a parental responsibility and even an obligation to provide care; and there should be no free choice allowed to fathers as to whether to take parental leave or let the mother use up all the leave days allotted to the couple. This was a message that needed to reach all the parties involved: the mothers, the fathers and the employers. Parental leave, the report proposed, therefore had to be individualised in the sense that it should be more evenly divided between the two parents without simply leaving it to the partners to decide how to dispose of their allotted days (SOU, 2005). For this purpose, it was suggested that a sharper incentive for the more equal sharing of the leave ought to be implemented.

Regarding domestic work, the Swedish government introduced subsidies for the purchase of private services for the household<sup>27</sup>, with three main motives behind the measure: to encourage women to pursue a career, to create work opportunities for immigrants (mostly women) and young, less educated individuals experiencing difficulties in entering the labour market, and to legalise the 'shadow' market for household work. The introduction of this tax reduction was highly contested in political debates in the country. While it may certainly be viewed as beneficial to some individuals and families, it can equally well be seen as merely passing the problem on to another group of women. It also strengthens

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27. Denmark had a benefits scheme for the purchase of domestic services until recently, only for people above 65 years, but the home service scheme has now been abolished.

the existing gender patterns among social classes, as it is primarily the better-off women who can afford to purchase private services to begin with (Sköld, 2009). Moreover, the reform can hardly be proposed as a solution for gender equality more broadly, given that the privately contracted work will be performed by other women at low cost, which ensures that the maintenance of the domestic sphere will continue to be assigned low value, perhaps even lower than at present. In other words, it is likely to only reproduce and reinforce a gendered labour market. At the same time, however, the reform is also of importance, in that it shifts the focus towards more long-standing situations for families past the early period when they still have small children to care for. Yet, given that practices in households develop over time, greater emphasis needs to be placed on other measures as well.

Another contested area in family and care policy concerns the child home care allowance. Introduced in Norway, Finland, and Sweden<sup>28</sup> as an alternative to enable parents to choose between institutional and home-based care for their children, it has been criticised for doing little to address gender and class inequality, since the option is targeted mainly at women with low-income jobs. Arguments in favour of it, on the other hand, have used ‘freedom of choice’ as a catchphrase to portray the new arrangement as serving the best interests of the family and/or the child.

In the years to come, there will be a great need for a qualified labour force, and women today are especially well educated. Given the strong emphasis on incentives for work in social policies, it is, however, necessary to analyse how working conditions are developing for women. The standard of living of single mothers has not improved since the 1980s. Women are also more likely to work in temporary and non-voluntary part-time jobs, receiving uniformly lower pay. In all Nordic countries women with and without children tend to work on temporary contracts to a higher extent than men. Part-time work is more frequent among single mothers (Berglund et al., 2010). The public sector has been generally more family-friendly, although salaries are typically low, with the discrepancy between private and public sector workers having only widened due to efforts to curtail public expenses. Organisational reforms aim-

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28. It was briefly introduced also in Denmark before being abolished (Borchorst, 2006).



ing at further privatisation of service work have partly improved the salaries for some categories of women, but not for those with the lowest pay.

Family and care policy has thus far targeted the two-generation family of parents and their dependent children. However, the extended family is more and more coming into focus, especially with the increasing care needs of an aging population. While in the Nordic model, the responsibility for care of the elderly rests with the municipalities, reductions in public support for the elderly have made assistance from close kin grow in significance, at least in Sweden (see Chapter 5). So far, the trend has not been recognised by policy-makers as an issue of work and family life balance. The development towards greater participation of families in care of the elderly, however, has obvious consequences for gender equality, given that it is mostly women who take on the additional responsibilities, with repercussions for their work situation (Szebehely & Ulmanen, 2012). In consequence, care policies can be expected to increasingly become arenas where urgent societal issues are thematised and tackled in the coming years.

The political landscapes of the Nordic countries have begun to change, and the consequences of these changes have already affected the pace of the reform process towards greater gender equality. In Sweden in the 1970s it was proposed that gender equality should be integrated within an overarching goal of social justice and social equality. However, following the economic crises during the 1990s and the 2000s, gender equality has been regarded as separate from an overarching policy for social and economic equality. During this period increased emphasis has been placed on individual achievements and acceptance of widening income dispersal through the individualised setting of wages (Tollin, 2012).

An overall liberal turn in the political landscape has given priority for individual responsibilities and social inequality as prerequisites for competition and efficiency within various economic activities. Emphasis is placed on individuals to improve their living circumstances by their own efforts, paralleled by the fact that conditions on a collective level have become tougher, through harder practices in the labour market, insecure work contracts and overall flexibility. The developments call attention to the gendered effects that the changes to the institutional regulation of entitlements within the respective social security systems may have.

Gender mainstreaming has been launched at EU levels and adopted by all Nordic countries with the aim of preventing gender ine-

qualities through integrating a gender perspective in policy proposals over a wide range of activities. The extent to which gender mainstreaming has proved successful in implementation has, however, been cast in doubt by critical academic studies<sup>29</sup> (Bacchi, 2003; Calvo, 2013; Tollin, 2012). A critical view is that gender mainstreaming is rather a matter of technicalities with less focus on integration with policy goals for the achievement of gender equality in general. Central governance should as far as possible be replaced by the institutionalisation of administrative practices at local levels.

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN INTIMATE RELATIONS: AN ISSUE FOR FAMILY POLICY**

Another challenge for family policy and gender is violence. Violence in intimate relationships such as in families is in general not regarded as a problem for family policy. But considering that family policy has the objective of protecting the welfare and well-being of children and parents, we regard violence within families – heterosexual or same sex units – as a challenge for family policy; however, at the same time we are well aware that there are several other contexts, for instance work organisations, schools and public places, where violence takes place. A large share of violence takes place in the private sphere of the home and the perpetrators are to a very great extent husbands/partners, ex-partners and parents – mostly fathers or stepfathers. It is now widely recognised that male violence has to be examined in a broader structural context of male power and the subordination of women included within a patriarchal power structure (Björktomta, 2012; Enander, 2008; Kirkwood, 1993; Walby, 1990). Patriarchy is about gender and age relations based on power (Kelly, 1988). It is also of relevance in connection with the Convention of the Rights of the Child, in particular article 19, which states that children should be protected against all forms of physical and psychological violence, and physical and sexual abuse while remaining in the care of their parents. At a discursive level, families within the Nordic countries are framed within a gender equality ideal, removed from patriarchal relationships sustained by the law. However, a number of studies have provided

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29. An overview of critical debates on gender mainstreaming in a doctoral thesis by Dolores Calvo, Department of Sociology and Work Science, University of Gothenburg (2013).

substantial evidence that power relations based on male supremacy within families still prevail, although with varying strength (SOU, 2005).

Since the mid-1990s violence in intimate relationships has been a prioritised problem in the Nordic countries, as in many other countries, with the UN declaration to abolish violence against women. In all Nordic countries over the last decades violence against women and children has been included in strategy plans for gender policy. The Nordic Council of Ministers funded a five-year (2000-2005) research programme on gender and violence (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2005). This aimed at connecting researchers on violence in the Nordic countries and at enabling comparative perspectives on the problems raised in research. Nordic research and practices regarding children and their experiences of violence were presented in research showing that Nordic attention to the issue of violence in intimate relations has grown steadily over the last decades (Eriksson, 2007).

Physical and psychological violence pose great threats to the well-being and welfare of women and children in both a short- and a long-term perspective. Men's violence against women and children is now publicly recognised as a societal problem with severe implications for all those involved. It is of great concern within public health since it hits the health of women and children, their well-being and life in destructive and long-term ways. It has been attended to in public discourses and campaigns against men's violence and crisis centres and shelters for women and children who need special housing and protection have been developed. However, many women and children in the Nordic countries are still victims of violence in their homes (Berglund, 2010). In Sweden recent figures reveal that 28,000 cases of violence towards women above the age of 18 were reported to the police; more than 85 per cent of the suspects were men, and more than 25 per cent of the reported cases had a close relationship with the perpetrator (Brottsförebyggande Rådet (BRÅ), 2012). Swedish statistics also show that 13 per cent of single mothers with children are exposed to violence, usually by former partners (compared to 1 per cent of women with partners). Men's violence against women is also connected with violence against children, psychological as well as physical. Children can suffer psychological harm through witnessing the violence of fathers against their mothers. Many of these children are also exposed to violence or sexual abuse (Hester et al., 2006).

Since 2000 the number of reports to the police on child abuse has increased in Sweden. Inquiries into parents comparing the 1980s, 2000 and 2006 indicate that the long-term decrease in parental violence against children has stopped and even reversed. Attitudes towards using physical punishment have become more tolerant (Jansson, 2012).

With the expansion of research and attention to violence in intimate relationships, the complexity of the issues connected with reasons for, effects of, and practices to deal with it has grown. Despite an increased attention to the problems, resources are still lacking: for instance, special housing and institutionalised competence within social institutions which share responsibilities for dealing with violence in family contexts. Due to its complexity, it is a multi-agency task involving police, child protection social workers, health and social care workers and schools. Different authorities need to cooperate in order to coordinate practices that might pull in different directions (Eriksson, Bruno & Näsman, 2013; Hester, 2011).

In the Nordic countries several initiatives have been taken with the aim of supporting women and children who have been the subjects of violence and/or sexual assaults (Eriksson, 2007). The results of the studies presented in the book show a great variety in ways of understanding violence and in dealing with the effects. Not least, the problem is connected with how various public authorities (police, health care institutions, family law social workers (Familjerätten), schools) construct their own responsibilities and their co-operation within the various parts of the process of handling the problems of the victims (Eriksson, 2011, 2006, 2003). It is necessary to combine different perspectives on violent acts, such as the lack of welfare resources, low income and health problems and other kinds of deprivation. Understanding and finding effective prevention as well as intervention demand knowledge to be developed within a broad spectrum of disciplines (Johansson, 2012; SOU, 2005).

Violence in intimate relationships is regarded as a challenge for family policy for a number of complex reasons. It is happening within a private sphere, thus hiding it and making it difficult for those involved to tackle. The privacy of the violence has various implications: women and children who have been the subject of abuse do not talk about it spontaneously. It is also a matter of normalisation: the abused woman or child starts to internalise the attitudes of the perpetrator and starts to regard herself in the same way that he regards her (Lundgren, 2004). Violent men

also tend to normalise their behaviour as a part of male authority and power, or patriarchal logics, and regard it as their right (Hearn, 1998; Johansson, 2012). But for violent men, it is also a matter of avoiding a stigmatisation linked to a male identity of being a violent man (Gottzén, 2012).

Liz Kelly uses the term 'sexual violence as a continuum' in order to grasp the different kinds of behaviour that women experience as abusive (Kelly, 1988). This includes threats of violence, domestic violence, sexual abuse, incest, rapes and other kinds of coercive or intimidating acts. An important point about this understanding is that within the home or in public places, various acts within the continuum can be used with the aim of exercising gendered power. The various kinds of acts can be regarded as more or less serious by both perpetrators (men) and victims (women and children). However, when viewed over time and within the home, the various acts create fear, limit the scope of action, diminish self-esteem and violate the integrity of the victims (Björktofta, 2012; Enander, 2008).

Shaming and silencing are powerful elements within the context of intimate violence. Studies provide evidence about the importance of the extent to which the surrounding society or community creates openness for the victim to talk about her own experiences (Carlsson, 2009; Enander, 2008). Silencing and the psychological mechanisms that sustain it are about fear of the perpetrator and threats about sanctions if the acts should be revealed: that more violence will be used and that the perpetrator or other people would also get very angry. In violent circumstances anger in itself creates an atmosphere of more or less constant fear. Shame is about revealing something that violates a norm or the value of the person. It is not only about a violation of a norm which should not happen, but also about revealing a low value of the self and of the victim as a part of the violence. Other people in the social network of the family might hold the perpetrator in high esteem and would not believe the allegations made against him. Similarly, the perpetrator wants to avoid to be identified as being a man who uses violence against women and children – an identity that does not fit well in a society that embraces gender equality and caring fathers. Various strategies are applied to redefine the violent acts as only quarrels, or to reduce its force and avoid talking about it so that the victims may avoid the shameful identification (Gottzén, 2012).

In cases of so called 'honour crimes' shaming is a powerful motivation for exercising power over women and boys to make them lead a

life that is in accordance with the patriarchal ideal. Restrictions in everyday life and violence that might escalate to murder are used as coercive means. They are legitimated by the perpetrators to avoid shaming of the family. The violence related to honour can include the extended family and other people. The urge to defend the honour of the family is linked to the transmission of the status of the family over generations. This shall be accomplished through control of the young, especially young women, but also boys and their sexuality. It occurs in situations of social change, where loss of social status is at stake and where the integrity of an ethnic status is under threat. Individual actions are regarded as collective and representing the family as a whole. The honour of the family is to be protected both locally within the context of a social network, but also on a transnational scale. The violence involves both physical and psychological acts, and control of the scope of action of the victim. The collective dimension involved in honour-related crime makes it especially complex, both for prevention and follow-up protection of the victim (Björktomt, 2012; Jensen et al., 2006).

## COUNTERACTING VIOLENCE

Since 1995 a high priority in Sweden has been given to addressing the problem of violence through national strategy plans. Education and debates have paved the way for raising public awareness about the scope and effects of violence. The programmes opened possibilities for local initiatives regarding the management of violence. At municipal and county levels, the main purpose of the programmes has been to educate social workers, police, doctors and nurses, judges, lawyers and prosecutors – people who in their daily work are in contact with the violence and abuse of women and children. Research has been financed about the dynamics behind family violence and so-called honour assaults and forced marriages which are practised by ethnic minorities from countries where these are seen.

In 2010 the programmes regarding the effects of the different projects that were carried out within the strategy plan were evaluated. The various activities have mainly focused on information and the education of professional people (health workers, midwives, police, social workers, lawyers and judges), who in their professions might confront

violence and abuse. Many programmes have concentrated on the attitudes involved and developed techniques for asking questions, and on how to be observant of the phenomenon. The evaluators established that the programmes have been successful so far. It was, however, also pointed out that the information and education must be institutionalised into the education of the professionals rather than remaining as single projects (BRÅ, 2010). The results of the evaluation in 2010 were similar to those already seen in 2004 in a governmental investigation (SOU, 2004). It has also been pointed out that there is a need for coordination of the various professional activities. To this aim, the government recently launched a programme for the coordination of various intervention authorities in health care, law, social work, and voluntary organisations. One problem that has been discussed is that social workers who are responsible for the care of children tend to avoid talking with children about their experience of violence in the home (Eriksson, 2003). Different intervention agents hold contrasting views on the problem of violence between men and women who are also parents by. When the issue is defined as men's violence against women, attention to the needs of children tend to be marginalised (Eriksson, 2007, 2003). There are also contradictions in cases of divorce and separation between parents, where joint custody is the norm, and where in the name of children's rights, children should have regular contact with both parents, even if the father has a record of violence. Through changes in the law from 2006 the level of safety of children has been raised. However, there are still challenges regarding the implementation of the law. These are linked to the extent to which different professional actors can agree on their understanding of the child as a victim, as witnesses and of pursuing independent agency. Children might be questioned about their testimony, but because of his/hers dependence and conflicting loyalties towards parents, (s)he might be regarded as susceptible to manipulation by either parent, or (s)he might be regarded as not sufficiently trustworthy, depending on age (Eriksson, 2011).

A comparative report on interventions in honour-related violence and on research into the problem has arrived at similar conclusions. On the basis of the studies undertaken within the project, many problems were detected and there is a lack of evaluations of various methods and their effectiveness. An overarching conclusion is that many actors in the field lack sufficient competence to deal with the complexity of the

problems. As a consequence, actors may not take the problems seriously and risk assessments are insufficient. According to the results, the problems of boys and homosexuals are not sufficiently acknowledged. Another overarching conclusion is that it seems fruitful to work not only with the family, but also with key people in the local community in order to raise awareness of attitudes and highlight risks of violent behaviour. Another useful approach is to combine individual and collective methods: to work with individual women and boys to strengthen their ability to identify their own needs and aspirations, and to confront local communities and key people to discuss with them how they can be supportive and reduce risks of violence (Jensen et al., 2006).

Within a context of family policy, preventive measures regarding violence against women and children in intimate relationships are of interest. Here, we want to point towards both universal measures directed at men in the population at large and selective measures directed at special categories of men. In an overview of preventive programmes, national and international projects were studied (Eriksson, Bruno & Näsman, 2013). The authors of the report concluded that in Sweden universal programmes (addressing the population at large) are uncommon. Most of them have been carried out by voluntary organisations like women's support centres. A few campaigns have also been carried out at municipal levels, but according to the evaluators, most preventive work on violence in Sweden has been undertaken by voluntary organisations in co-operation with, for instance, schools. The work on both universal and selective programmes is characterised by project initiatives and lacks evaluations of its effect. This lack of assessment is in general prevalent within the area of prevention, especially in the realm of universal prevention projects. The authors emphasise that prevention measures require competence, appropriate financing and time, which is hard to accomplish within voluntary organisations. Universal prevention directed at grown-up men and their violence against women is in general sparsely represented (Eriksson, Bruno & Näsman, 2013). Family counselling and mediation are measures applied in connection with divorce when issues of custody and visitation are on the agenda. Research has shown that the risk of physical violence increases during certain phases in the separation process and after divorce the risk of psychological violence increases (Ekbrand, 2006). In these situations instruments for estimation of risk of violence both against women and children are important (*ibid.*)



## **PUBLIC VISIBILITY OF VIOLENCE IN DISCOURSE AND POLICY**

Violence in intimate relationships is currently touched upon within the law on social services and policy on gender equality. We regard it as also important to include violence in intimate relationships as a part of family policy in general. One of the reasons for this is that there is a general need for a more institutionalised attention to violence in family settings. By highlighting the problems, more detailed statistics should be developed and more regular financing of preventive measures could be achieved. Knowledge on violence that has been accumulated so far has pointed at the importance of public attention to the issue. For instance, Carlsson (2009) shows how women who had experienced sexual abuse in their family by fathers during childhood and adolescence were able to break their silence about it when sexual abuse and incest were raised in public discourses from the 1970s. Since then, issues concerning violence like shelters, voluntary activities, public discourse and research have kept the public awareness alive, as is also visible in an increased number of reports to the police.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Despite institutional interventions to alter them, gender practices and structures seem highly resistant to change. This certainly does not mean that nothing has changed. Looking back on the structural and cultural levels since the 1970s, it can be seen that much today is different, with new ways of thinking about gender equality and new attitudes towards gender equality taking hold. Furthermore, the power of men over women in families is no longer protected by law. Yet the male power continues to be anchored in a gender order that grants men greater freedom to pursue their careers and make more money, while being taken care of in the household. At the same time as men have been relieved of the burden of having the sole responsibility for economic maintenance and key decisions, women have been confronted with the obligation to work without being relieved of their full responsibilities in caring for others and running the household at home.

Family policies have been regarded as the main vehicle for attaining gender equality. The future prospects of the "Nordic model" of gender equality more broadly also remain uncertain in the current political climate. The analysis of current trends in the region yields a mixed picture of backlash and progression that complicates the question of gender equality in both families and the labour market. As has been shown in previous chapters, family life and gender equality is strongly influenced by other policy areas, such as changes within labour markets and labour market policy, income policy, and care policies.

Regarding family policy in a narrow sense, fatherhood and the caring role of fathers has been the object of policies regarding parental leave in the Nordic countries, with the exception of Denmark. Much attention has been devoted to biological fatherhood, whereas social fatherhood has been less problematised in terms of rights and obligations to the children in reconstituted families. Iceland is however an exception, since step-parents take on parental obligations no matter whether the biological parent is alive and actively involved or not. The biological parent is also obliged to pay maintenance.

Single mothers in the Nordic countries enjoy a better situation than their counterparts in other European countries, but many lone mothers are still carrying a heavy burden when trying to cope with reconciling work and family, especially financially and in some cases regarding the management of joint legal and practical custody. In certain respects, family policy that used to be treated in neutral terms has moved into more specified policies towards fathers. On the basis of the developments described in the chapters, it might be relevant to discuss more specific measures directed at single mothers and mothers in specific life circumstances. We have highlighted the situation of mothers and children in the process of divorce and separation and of women and children exposed of violent acts by partners or ex-partners.

Regarding care and family, many women choose to work part-time at the expense of their income in both short- and long-term perspectives. To the extent that part-time work is systematically a female issue, we regard this as a target problem for family policy. Care is still mainly looked upon as a female issue, whereas the full time norm of work is primarily a male issue.

Gender equality is not only a matter of the fair division of labour and financial support to parents while on parental leave. Gender equality

in families is also about the elimination of patriarchal attitudes and relationships of male dominance over women and children. As pointed out by Eriksson (2007), the choice of perspective on violence is central for which questions are problematised and which are not. Openness and normalisation of talk about violence by men and fathers can serve as a way to reduce the privacy, silencing and shame that are important parts of the social/emotional aspects involved in the violence syndrome. By including violence as a self-evident part of family policy as an institution, the breadth of the problem can be publicly acknowledged. Several of the measures that could be developed have already been applied, but could be enhanced through, for instance, more institutionalised screenings and regular financing, and risk assessments in children's and mothers' centres and schools, and counselling at neighbourhood levels. Media attention to raise awareness of the depth of effects on violence could be an additional method: that has already been applied, but it must be repeated. More direct financial support to mothers who have to seek measures to avoid confrontation with a violent partner is also necessary.

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# IMMIGRATION, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

ULLA BJÖRNBJERG & AN-MAGRITT JENSEN

## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will highlight some issues of relevance for migrant children and families from countries outside the EU with a special focus on the Scandinavian countries.<sup>30</sup> We will look at immigrants with a background as asylum seekers, examine institutional aspects on migration in the Scandinavian countries, and explore transnational families, with examples from Norway and Denmark – an aspect which is seldom highlighted in discussions.

In contemporary societies immigration is an essential part of population composition and growth as well as variety in cultural heterogeneity and in family configurations. In general, regulations of social rights and entitlements to social benefits for immigrants vary between entry categories – Nordic immigrants, EU immigrants, labour migrants from non EU-countries, asylum seekers, refugees according to the Geneva Convention, unaccompanied children and undocumented immigrants. Immigrants with permanent residence permits are in general protected like citizens of the host country. However, immigrants with temporary residence permits are not. For instance, so called ‘circular migrants’ are labour migrants with temporary work contracts and most of

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30. Scandinavian countries are Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

them have left their families in their home country, but some of them also bring their children. These immigrants are not protected with similar conditions to those citizens or immigrants with permanent residence permits.

Due to globalisation and immigration, multiculturalism has become a growing issue in the Nordic countries in recent decades. This development reflects political divergence, as the Nordic countries differ in terms of flows of migrants and motives for immigration. For instance, Sweden gives residence permits to more than twice as many immigrants as the other Nordic countries (Eurostat, 2013).

Nordic migration is the largest entrance category in all Nordic countries due to agreements on free labour markets. Labour migration from other countries is a fairly new phenomenon (except for Norway). Comparisons of statistics between Scandinavian countries are difficult due to the statistical categorisations of immigrants' experiences being different. Drawing on calculations of national statistics presented by Bak and von Brömsen (2013), the share of persons with a foreign background in 2011 was 7 per cent in Denmark, 13 per cent in Norway and 19.1 per cent in Sweden. The share of children in the same year was 9 per cent in Norway and 18.2 per cent (20 per cent in 2013) in Sweden. Over the last two decades refugee immigration has increased (except in Denmark, where it has decreased), but the number of asylum applications also varies from year to year. According to Nordic statistics, Sweden receives most asylum applications – almost 30,000 in 2011 compared to about 3,500 in Denmark, 9,000 in Norway and 3,000 in Finland. About 9,000 people were granted asylum in Sweden in 2011 compared to 4,000 in Norway and 2,000 in Denmark. Unaccompanied children were more frequent in Sweden (2,650) and Norway (850) and just a few hundred in the other countries (Nordic Statistical Yearbook, 2012). Family reunification also comprises a fairly high share of immigration in the countries. Family immigration is the most common reason why immigrants outside Europe are granted residence permits in Sweden (Migrationsverket, 2013). This is the case also for Norway.

With the expansion of studies on childhood, there is a growing trend of published research on children and migration in general. However, comparative studies of children and families with a migrant background in the Nordic countries are unfortunately almost non-existent.



## CHILDREN AS ASYLUM SEEKERS IN SCANDINAVIA

All three countries have ratified the Convention of the Rights of Children (CRC), but only in Norway have laws been adapted to the Convention, which means that asylum-seeking children in principle are in a stronger position there. However, when it comes to the social rights of children, such as health care, education and schooling and the right to be treated as subjects in the asylum-seeking process, Sweden and Norway appear to have adopted a similar approach, whereas in Denmark the policies are more restrictive (Lundberg, 2013; Vitus & Lidén, 2013). One crucial difference between the countries is that children in Denmark are regarded as part of a family unit and not as individual subjects with their own rights. In Norway the aliens' law explicitly mentions that the specific persecution of children such as mutilation, assaults and honour-related control of young children should be regarded as grounds for a permanent residence permit. This is in contrast to the Danish rules, where border control has a higher priority than considerations of the universal rights of children according to the CRC (Vitus & Lidén, 2013).

In Norway and Sweden the rules within the processing of asylum applications state that children should be given the opportunity to be heard about their own reasons for obtaining residence permits as refugees under the Geneva Convention or for humanitarian reasons, whereas this is not the case in Denmark. However, in practice, the interrogations of children are applied ambivalently. For instance, officers refer to time pressure, to not wanting to provoke emotions linked to previous traumatic experiences, and to the fact that suspicions about parents put pressure on children to lie about their situation in order to support the applications of the parents (Lundberg, 2013). In Denmark children are not granted education on similar terms as in Norway and Sweden. Asylum-seeking children in Denmark go to schools that are only for asylum seekers and they are not granted certificates for their achievements in schools (Vitus & Lidén, 2013).

## SOCIAL RIGHTS OF IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN DENMARK AND SWEDEN

Comparative Nordic studies of the social rights of immigrants have not been undertaken except for Denmark and Sweden. This section will focus on a comparison between citizens and immigrants' social rights in Sweden and Denmark. The main source of the comparison is Sainsbury (2012)<sup>31</sup> and her analytical framework, where she links welfare state regimes with "incorporation regimes" in both countries. She primarily looks at conditions for making a living: work permits, unemployment insurance, family benefits, social assistance and eligibility rules attached to the various benefits. Incorporation refers to the extent to which immigrants' rights diverge from those of citizens with a perspective of inclusion and exclusion within the society. It also refers to governance measures applied for attainment of eligibility for social benefits. Another aspect of incorporation regimes comprises rights to family reunification, rules applied for obtaining permanent residence permits and citizenship.

To a large extent, migrants from the Nordic countries are entitled to the same rights as citizens in the host countries. Within a social democratic welfare regime, Sweden and Denmark might be regarded as somewhat divergent cases of governance of immigrants' rights, in particular since the 1990s. Sainsbury notes that basic attitudes to migrants in Sweden have since the 1960s a legacy of inclusion where migrants obtain the same rights as citizens. That is, residence (with permits to stay) is a sufficient condition for eligibility on equal terms as citizens. Basically, she argues, Sweden had already in 1960s applied a settlement policy, whereas Denmark regarded immigrant workers as temporary workers. However, in both countries in the early 1970s labour migration was stopped and since then both have had a large influx of asylum-seeking immigrants, followed by increased focus on restrictive elements. Since 2008 labour migration with temporary permits of residence has been re-adopted.

In Denmark, governance of immigrants' rights and of immigration by non-EU nationals has through the years been a contested area among the political parties, whereas in Sweden this has not been the case to the same extent. Political parties in both countries with highly critical attitudes to immigrants tend to be marginalised by other political parties (especially in Sweden), even though people and voters increasingly tend

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31. Sainsbury is the reference to the facts in this section, if nothing else is written.

to align with them. In Sweden, from the 1990s onwards, a contraction of immigrants' social rights was put on the agenda of the centre-right government with the aim of cutting costs within the asylum system, but also with the need to reduce the number of residence permits. Temporary permits have increased. In both countries, the changing balance of political forces for inclusion has also weakened as a consequence of EU harmonisation of immigration laws.

In Sweden, acquisition of permanent residence permits takes a shorter time (from six months up to two years or more depending on various procedures) but without other criteria once an application has been accepted. In Denmark, acquisition of a permanent residence permit is dependent on having stayed in the country for seven years, having no criminal record, two-and-a-half years of full employment, knowledge of Danish, no public debts and not having received social assistance benefits during the last three years.

Sainsbury argues that "... *the Danish and Swedish incorporation regimes have increasingly diverged on the ease or difficulty in acquiring citizenship and permanent residence status. They have also grown apart concerning family reunification and treatment of refugees*" (p. 97). Acquisition of citizenship is far more restricted in Denmark than in Sweden. Sweden also allows for dual citizenship. A similar difference between the countries is between acquisitions of permanent residence. Compared with Sweden, Denmark has linked permanent residence and acquisition of citizenship to the utilisation of social benefits, which is not the case in Sweden.

#### ECONOMIC SUPPORT

In both countries work-related schemes for social insurance against loss of income apply for workers as far as they meet eligibility regulations regarding the period of work, contributions to for instance unemployment insurance, pensions and parental insurance. However, since many newly arrived immigrants do not meet the requirements for the social insurances and the rate of unemployment is for some categories of immigrants high, social assistance is the only (or main) source of income in both countries.

In Denmark, the right to social assistance for more than one year is restricted for some immigrants and they could even be subject of expulsion if they do not intend to settle in Denmark and have lived more than

three years in the country. In Sweden no such limit is set, but registration at the Employment office is a requirement, as is active job seeking.

Denmark has more restrictions in access to various benefits, especially linked to length of stay. For instance, for lone mothers to receive extra benefits, three years of residence is required.

For asylum seekers in Sweden, social assistance benefit rates are below the minimum in standard of living, since it is expected that their residence is only to be temporary. The benefits in social assistance have not been raised since 1994 and the allowances are extremely low. Extra benefits, for instance for spectacles or warm clothes, can be given based on needs testing by the Migration Office. Since a fairly large share of immigrants have had or still have a status as asylum seekers, they are not eligible for work-related social insurance allowances and the rate of poverty among them is high (counted as 60 per cent below the median income).

Both Denmark and Sweden have established introduction programmes for newly arrived immigrants including language training, labour market training and information about the host societies. These programmes are linked to an allowance set at the same higher rate as social assistance in Sweden, but in Denmark it is the same as the general level for citizens.

Additionally, both countries have introduced more conditionality in access to social benefits, with sanctions such as cuts in the duration and levels of unemployment benefits and cuts in social assistance for refusal to take part in activation schemes or accept an offer of employment.

#### FAMILY BENEFITS

By the mid-1980s both countries were providing allowances for children residing in the host countries (after six months). Child care is available for children in both countries on equal terms as for citizens. Parental benefits are available in Sweden at a fairly low flat rate for those parents who do not meet the work requirement, but in Denmark benefits are entirely tied to work. In Sweden it means that parental benefits for many migrant mothers (parents) are at far lower levels than for citizens who mostly meet work requirements. Compared to Sweden, Danish benefit levels in general are flat-rate or close to it. Thus, there is less differentiation in benefit levels between immigrants and citizens.

## FAMILY REUNIFICATION

In Denmark, family reunification support obligations/income tests have been introduced, although exemptions were given for those immigrants who had lived in the country for four years. Exemptions were also given for families with children. Likewise, dependence on social assistance hinders family reunification. In Sweden, the basic rule is that the person resident in the country must be able to support him/herself and to have a sufficiently large place to live as a condition for granting a residence permit for a close relative (a wife, parent or an adult and unmarried child).

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION

As shown in Chapter 3 (Table 3.2) of this book, the share of immigrant children in poor families is about 50 per cent in Finland, Norway and Sweden, and 23 per cent in Denmark live in households below the poverty threshold.<sup>32</sup>

A study comparing Norway, Denmark and Sweden with a focus on the duration of child poverty and comparing native-born children with immigrants shows that poverty is much higher among immigrants from low- and middle income countries in all three countries, especially during the first years after immigration. Compared to native-born children, the duration in poverty levels is much longer. The studied period covers 1993-2001 and the data shows that about one third of children arriving in 1993 were still rated as poor eight years after arrival, whereas in Denmark the figure was three fifths. The low educational level of parents was one important reason behind the figures. Data from the study also indicates that immigrant children with similar observable characteristics as those who are native-born have a higher rate of spending multiple periods in poverty in Denmark than in Norway and Sweden (Galloway et al., 2009a, 2009b. Swedish data suggests that poverty is increasingly concentrated in foreign-born children and that the probability of having repeated spells of poverty episodes is higher among them (Jonsson, Mood & Bihagen, 2010). For children, long and or repeated spells of economic deprivation constitutes a risk of marginalisation. Housing segregation in deprived areas is also a significant element for those immi-

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32. Poverty measures in this text are calculated as 60 per cent below the median income, which is generally used in EU statistics.

grants living in long-term economic deprivation (Björnberg, 2010; Gustafsson & Österberg, 2010).

Qualitative studies of experiences of children in refugee families provide some insights into social-psychological aspects of social and economic deprivation (Alstam, 2013; Björnberg, 2012). The economic situation of the family does not allow for a life that most children consider as normal, such as buying clothes, spending free time with peers, attending sports or other leisure activities. Mostly the housing situation is poor and overcrowded and children do not want to or are not allowed by parents to bring friends home. Some children have had to move several times during the waiting period. The social situation of the children is in many cases quite solitary, except for during school hours when they are in a social environment (Björnberg, 2012; Svensson, 2012).

Keeping a low social profile functions as a resilience strategy, helping to reduce the risk of experiencing shame and humiliation in the straitened economic circumstances, and poor and overcrowded housing conditions typical of the situation of many asylum seekers upon arrival in the host country. Not cultivating social relationships, however, can also be looked upon as a matter of self-protection (Björnberg, 2012).

Both the children and the parents tend to keep a low social profile, expressing an attitude that, in their situation, this is "better" for them. This attitude can be interpreted as linked to a lack of a sense of trust and to the uncertainty they feel about their status, reflecting in turn their ambiguous situation as individuals caught in between statuses as from the past, as asylum seekers in the present and as one in an uncertain future (op.cit.). Children with a refugee background have many adversities to cope with, not least the insecurities left behind in the home countries and the uncertainty about a future residence permit.

Children tended to adapt to their social circumstances while waiting for permanent residence and relying on the hope that the future would result in a better situation for them. Obtaining a permanent residence permit does not however immediately change the situation, since for many of these children the economic and social deprivation can last for several years.

Dependency relations within the families tend to be quite strong under the circumstances. Family bonding can provide a strong source of resilience for both the parents and the children, in particular in families with many adversities to cope with. The family commitment of parents

to the children provides the children with emotional capital that they can draw upon in everyday life, translating into an atmosphere of protection and sustenance of a sense of safety and belonging. Building emotional capital within the family is a way of developing resources for coping with past insecurity and uncertainty about the future (op.cit.).

The high degree of dependency and reliance on the family as a source of resilience nevertheless puts new pressure on family members, given how keen they are to protect one another from their worries and how responsible they feel for the well-being of one another. Worries, psychologically-straining memories, and closure against the environment can then combine to create a vicious circle. While parents and children feel responsible for each other's well-being, the ambiguous interdependency that this sentiment gives rise to can be experienced as a burden by the children. They often feel a need to suppress their own needs of emotional support vis-à-vis their mothers or friends, thus compromising their own well-being. While giving emotional support might bring relief to both the support giver and the receiver, the reciprocity of it can also give rise to mutual dependencies that entail significant emotional costs. Under strained economic circumstances and with language problems and unemployment, parents are stripped of personal influence over their everyday life in issues such as housing, work, transportation connected to job-seeking, buying food and leisure activities. Where parents and children are given restricted possibilities of understanding and having an influence over the system in which they live this situation can lead to unnecessary passivity. This could counteract integration in the long run (op.cit.).

A tentative conclusion from the comparisons between conditions for immigrant children and their families that Danish children and parents face is a kind of institutional uncertainty economically and socially over longer periods than the Swedish. However, comparative research of consequences of the combination of welfare regime and incorporation regimes in the Nordic countries is needed.

## TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES

While immigrant children may have different backgrounds, this section will describe the global trend of transnational families in which women are the primary immigrants, and where their children may immigrate as a

consequence of family establishment with a 'native' person. This trend is demonstrated primarily in the case of Norway and with supplementary information from Denmark.

Family immigration was the main category of immigration to Norway during 1990-2008 (Henriksen, 2010). This immigration takes three forms: family-reunification, family establishments with other immigrants and family establishments with Norwegians. The total number of family immigrants increased four times from 1990 to 2008. Family reunions can be wives and/or children of men who originally immigrated for work or came as refugees. It can be family establishments where, for example, a person born in Norway to immigrant parents marries a person from the home country, who in turn immigrates. It can also be women who have immigrated for marriage (such as from Thailand and Russia) to a Norwegian and who later may also have their children follow. Over the period, well over 50,000 children under the age of 18 were reunited with their families (mostly mothers).<sup>33</sup> Immigrants for family reasons are primarily women.

The clearly largest group of *immigrants for family establishments* over the period 1990-2007, and increasingly so over time, are women coming for marriage. An example of this is immigration from Thailand, the Philippines and Russia, where the majority are women who migrate to marry a Norwegian man (Daugstad, 2008). Immigration from Thailand is completely related to transnational marriages, at about 70 per cent. An additional 20 per cent were minors who immigrated to be reunited with the parent, probably children the woman had in the home country before marrying. Immigration for marriage from Thailand is very different from immigration from Pakistan where a more common pattern is family establishment with other immigrants. While family establishments from Thailand, the Philippines and Russia are typically women who marry a Norwegian man, family establishments from Pakistan may consist of both genders and they marry a first or second generation Pakistani living in Norway.

By 2004 close to one in three marriages contracted included one (20 per cent), or both (11 per cent) partners with a non-Norwegian background. Of the mixed marriages, 13 per cent were Norwegian men marrying an (often Asian) woman, while 7 per cent were Norwegian women marrying an (often western) man. The number of men marrying

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33. Family reunification can also encompass parents to unaccompanied children.



non-western women tripled between 1996 and 2001 (Daugstad, 2006). One in five newborns had at least one immigrant parent in the mid-2000s (Daugstad, 2006).

The increased immigration of women for marriage, here in the case of Norway, illustrates a global kind of 'hypermobility' where women from poor countries are part of a 'care chain' in which marriage with western men may be one of more means<sup>34</sup> to improve their life and ensure care for children and old parents in the home countries (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003). Similar trends are tracked in Denmark. Thus, Plambech (2005) has studied the immigration of Thai women marrying men in this country, a process marked by the importance of networks between the first and later arrivals. Plambech describes the Danish migration as part of a general trend where an estimated 150,000 Thai women were residing in Europe by 2005. Most of them were married to (or divorced from) European men, employed in low-paid work and supporting parents and children in Thailand (op.cit.). Plambech describes this kind of migration as a means of managing risks in a poor country where few alternatives to marriages abroad are available.

Transnational family formations and family relationships are, in a Nordic context, a fairly recent phenomenon. It is part of global mobility and of policy promotion of circular migration of a workforce where skilled or unskilled persons are expected to contribute to the demand for labour. Regardless of motives behind immigration patterns, transnational care is a complex reality for family policy to take into consideration (Baldassar & Merla, 2013). Transnational relations of care is one aspect which has been little researched, at least not in a Nordic context.

## CONCLUSIONS

The flows of immigration for various reasons are part of the encompassing globalisation of wealth and wealth inequalities and political responses to unrest and controversies. It is a movement of populations which will continue. In a Scandinavian and Nordic perspective, the ways in which the Nordic welfare states will respond to immigration have important implications for families and the well-being of children in a short and long term perspective. There is a mutual interdependency between im-

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34. In the USA, for instance, many immigrant women work as nannies in the private care sector.

migrants and the welfare states. For instance, in Sweden it is generally accepted that immigration is a necessary precondition for economic growth and future prosperity of the welfare state. Integration policy is dependent on welfare policy and family policy.

As has been shown in this chapter, many immigrants in the Scandinavian countries are experiencing long periods of economic deprivation. We have shown that both economic deprivation and also uncertainty about the future have social and psychological costs for children and their families. We have pointed at that the sense of solitude and of exclusion is an important part of the life of asylum-seeking children and families. These emotions and practices are prevalent in all incorporation regimes, but the more the regimes are striving for equal treatment of citizens and immigrants, the fewer exclusionary mechanisms are set in force. We can suppose that the restrictive conditions of the Danish incorporation regime and how it is connected with welfare support will result in that sense of exclusion enduring among Danish children and their families. A macro perspective on deterrence has micro political consequences of exclusion and a sense of otherness among immigrants. The construction of an identity of immigrants is related to general attitudes that are embedded in regulations and practices applied during the whole process of seeking asylum, being interrogated, supplied with housing, health care, education, waiting for permanent residence permits, and being able to control their living conditions. We have shown that family relations, be they local or transnational, are very important during the waiting period. For this reason, it is important that families can provide support and care and have an ability to control their life. This is why family reunification means a lot for families, even if in a short-term perspective it might be regarded as an economic risk by the host society. Social networking can be supportive both for resilience under tough circumstances. However, segregation and long duration of economic deprivation are counteracting resilience strategies and integration. Thus, immigration in its various forms poses new challenges for family policy.

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# CONCLUSIONS

ULLA BJÖRNBJERG & MAI HEIDE OTTOSEN

In the introduction to this book we stated our objective of analysing, in a Nordic perspective, the possible challenges for future family policies, taking into consideration emerging trends in conditions for family formation and family life. In this concluding chapter we will return to the questions that were posed regarding problems that are not sufficiently met, which rights should be defended, and which priorities tend to undermine previous objectives set up for family life. Each chapter in the book has a concluding section. In this final chapter we will highlight the most important conclusions regarding problems that, to our view, have not been sufficiently addressed.

We have found both positive and negative trends in the developments in family formations. There is a clear and continuous trend in the Nordic countries – as elsewhere – that formation of family relationships is something held in appreciation. But to maintain family relationships within family units in a traditional sense is not to be expected. Although nuclear and stable units make up the majority of family forms, there is a trend towards family diversification in family relationships. In family theory this pattern is recognised in concepts such as ‘family configurations’ (Widmer & Jallinoja, 2008), ‘circulation of care’ (Baldassar & Merla, 2013), and ‘family practices’ (Morgan, 1996). The basic understanding behind these terms is that families are not easily identified as

stable units; rather relationships are formed in various constellations and bring different sorts of meaning and support over time. Diversification of family relationships and network families (Bäck-Wiklund & Johansson, 2012) are the most signifying elements of contemporary families.

In Nordic family policy, defamilisation means that family responsibilities are shared in a context of institutional solidarity. As we have seen in the chapters of this book, conditions affecting family life are posing new challenges for everyday commitments. It is the diversifications in work hours and work contracts that in some cases bring unpredictability for care of dependent family members and for couple relationships. Diversification in family formations, the regulation of child care, education of children and care of the elderly are still highly relevant policy goals and people are dependent on families having the ability to share their responsibilities with institutions with acceptable quality.

Seen from a welfare perspective, expectations from the welfare state on family relations seem to have a more important role. On the one hand, the policy trends emphasising individual responsibilities for the creation of life chances promote individualisation, such as the capacity to focus on oneself, to be prepared for flexibility in work in terms of working hours or even locations. Family and care policy has thus far targeted the two-generation family of parents and their dependent children. However, the extended family with more generations is coming into focus more and more, especially with the increasing care needs of an ageing population. While in the Nordic model, the responsibility for care of the elderly mainly rests with the municipalities, reductions in public support have made assistance from close kin grow in significance, at least in Sweden. So far, the trend has not been recognised by policy-makers as an issue of work and family life balance. The development towards greater participation of families in the care of the elderly, however, has obvious consequences for gender equality, given that it is mostly women who take on the additional responsibilities, with repercussions for their working situation. As a consequence, care policies can be expected to become arenas for new policies in the years coming.

We also want to highlight the role of multigenerational families in family policy, especially in terms of financial independence between generations. We can expect increased vulnerability of the less educated, immigrants and young people. To the extent that state protection is reduced, people will have to rely on support from other sources – families and vol-

untary organisations. Although families in the Nordic systems are not obliged to support adult children and elderly parents, this is sometimes put forward as a "normal" expectation in political debates. However, intergenerational financial support is unequally distributed according to class and ethnicity (Björnberg & Ekbrand, 2008). For children, relationships with grandparents pose important and increasing significance regarding support in everyday life. We regard this development as a matter that should be the object of more research of relevance for family policy.

Transnational family relationships and family issues due to immigration from non EU and EU countries with high rates of unemployment and poverty have only sparsely been attended to in this book. However, we want to highlight the fact that immigration is one important aspect of diversification of family forms and family relations. Some immigrant children and their parents face severe economic and social deprivation for long and/or repeated periods which might contribute to marginalization and social exclusion. In this concluding chapter we want to emphasise that this is an area where more knowledge should be developed since it is highly relevant for family policy.

A major issue related to the interface between workplace flexibility and household strategies in combining work and care concerns the difficulties of parenting in the context of new forms of work and the increasing diversity of working time. Variable and especially unpredictable working hours can be very stressful to cope with in dual-earner families where flexibility is demanded for both parents, but even more so in single parent households. As suggested in Chapter 6, there are still marked gender differences in the adaptability of the working time to family responsibilities and in particular in the division of the unpaid work in the family – housework and care work. Women tend to meet the needs of the family with part-time work, whereas men do not. Gender equality in both paid and unpaid work is still to be accomplished and here we need proper and effective policy measures modifying the inequality in the division of the unpaid work. The flexibilisation of work regulations is a challenge for family relationships, gender equality and for those institutions which are responsible for the care of children and elderly. It is a matter of overall flexibility to match new demands.

Regarding fertility, recurrent worries about fertility levels being low due to postponement in having children do not seem to be sustained by statistics. The data presented shows that postponement is no longer

favoured by women to the same degree. This seems to be dependent to some extent on economic insecurity linked to the fact that stable integration into the labour market takes a longer time for young people. It is also a matter of individualisation and a cultural prolongation of a sense of being sufficiently adult to take on a stable relationship and parenthood. Research has been mainly targeting fertility as a female issue, but data indicates that it is also an issue for males and couples. The postponement brings a risk that couples or individuals will not be able to have the number of children that they want. Besides, the period during which couples have children risks being squeezed into a shorter and more stressful time during the life course. Further analysis should be done about appropriate measures to grapple with this development, for instance by enhancing entitlements to parental leave for couples in education. It is also a matter of informing young adults about the risks connected with postponement, such as health and of biological constraints.

Regarding birth rates, assisted reproduction technology including egg and sperm donation and surrogate motherhood has grown and will continue to do so in importance. This is linked to various trends, like growth in same sex partnerships and marriages, women and men having children later in life and problems with health. We regard it as an issue that will have to be targeted more in family policy, for instance regarding more financial and legal support to those women and men who need or want assisted reproduction of various forms, including surrogate motherhood.

The trend of divorce and separation seems to be stable over the years in the Nordic countries as it is elsewhere, although figures may fluctuate over time. Parental relationships are, however, lasting longer, and the positive trend is that sharing of custody and care of children by both parents has increased over the years. But there are also negative aspects that have not been sufficiently attended to in policies. Although many couples tend to establish cooperation regarding custody and care of their children after divorce and separation, some parents have problems and conflicts. Children do not fare well living in the shadow of parental conflicts, and according to research findings, solutions in courts do not seem to be the best way of dealing with these types of problems. Yet the prevalence of disputing divorced parents appears to be a relatively stable phenomenon, and there are no simple solutions for supporting the children involved. Nevertheless, it is a constant challenge for divorced parents as well as for the family law system not to confuse the



issues of parental rights or parents' claims for 'fair' solutions (in Solomon terms of equal shares) with the principle of what is in the best interest of the individual child.

Several chapters deal with aspects of children's well-being. Throughout the work in this book we have noted that even if the Nordic countries are known for providing high quality data via administrative population statistics, we have not succeeded in making genuine comparisons between the countries. This is mainly due to the lack of adequate data. On this basis, we will encourage researchers to establish new comparative studies on the well-being of Nordic children and family life. Likewise, we will encourage the statistical offices in all Nordic countries to use children as the unit of analysis in population statistics.

One persistent problem in all Nordic countries is the relative poverty in lone mother households, especially among those with an immigrant background. The problem requires both short- and long-term approaches. The long-term approach is about acquiring more knowledge about the reasons behind what seems to be a structural problem, and how long-lasting the poverty of single mother families persists. The short-term approach is about how to construct effective support measures to the benefit of the children via their single mothers, such as with sufficient levels of parental or public maintenance, or by introducing special tax reliefs.

The data presented in the chapter on child welfare suggests that single mother families might be more exposed to precarious living conditions linked to more strict regulations in social security systems like unemployment benefits and health insurance. In our studies we have not been able to prove such a connection, but data indicates that single mothers are more exposed to temporary contracts and unemployment. Altogether, the precarious living conditions of lone mothers in some instances imply serious deprivation for their children, with long-lasting consequences over the life course.

Family policy is not just a matter of creating welfare for children during early childhood. It is also a matter of creating conditions for the young adults to obtain a decent platform for establishment in the labour market. Youth unemployment and marginalisation is linked to many factors, but education is one of the most important. Family background, like lower education levels of parents and lack of support in school and in families contribute to early drop-out rates at school. In general, drawing on the data presented, we can establish that early education in pre-

schools is not only a matter of child care for children with employed parents, but also an important issue during the life course altogether. The quality of institutional care of small and older children should take into account not just the pedagogical environment for small children in early education at child care centres but also what is on offer for the teenagers. In the data we have seen that parents tend to devote more time to children, which is a positive trend. Employment with longer working hours and variable schemes might, however, undermine the capacity for some parents to spend sufficient time with their children. In our studies we have seen that in the Nordic countries parental leave is highly appreciated and used. Parental care has been extended for children and that more fathers are taking more days off for parental leave – a development pushed forward by institutional regulations in the Nordic countries. The positive development in this direction could serve as an encouragement for policy-makers to extend options for fathers to devote more time to their children, also when they are older.

Another challenge for family policy is violence. Violence in intimate relationships such as the families is in general not regarded as a problem for family policy. A large share of violence takes place in the private sphere of the home, and the perpetrators are to a very high extent husbands/partners, ex-partners and parents – mostly fathers and step-fathers. Research has given evidence that public attention to violence has a positive impact on the willingness to report on violence at home, both among women and children. Institutionalised and regular financing would contribute to more regular attention to the problems involved in violence in intimate relationships. More direct financial support to mothers who have to seek measures to avoid confrontation with a violent partner is also necessary.

Finally, we want to draw attention to children placed in foster care or institutional care out of home. These children do not fare well in many respects. Children who are in the care of society are mostly treated as a residual category, subtly noted. However, the share of children belonging to this category is almost unchanged during the latest decades, although new categories are added. Poverty is debated but these children tend to be treated as a residual category. There are many studies showing that the quality of life and life chances of children in out-of-home care are considerably reduced. If social policy should keep children in focus it is important that these children are not treated as a residual category and

that living conditions of families and the impact of demands from society on the life chances of children and parents are paid more attention. A challenge for the future would be to enclose all children within the realm of family policy. Maybe more selective kinds of policy measures would be necessary. The increased focus on "investment in children" stands in contradiction to the lack of wellbeing of children in this vulnerable situation. In family policy, special attention should be directed at children and teenagers in out-of-home care, in particular regarding maintaining their contacts with biological parents and siblings.

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# CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE FAMILY POLICIES IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

This anthology maps and analyses current trends within the area of family policy and outlines some possible challenges that the Nordic welfare states will soon be facing.

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The question remains how more recent trends such as New Public Management principles and increased focus on children's positions and rights affect family policies in the Nordic countries?

The authors, who come from all five Nordic countries, discuss the following topics: issues related to family demographics, children's position in society and the family, the children's well-being, care policies in relation to both children and the elderly, reconciliation of work and family life, and policies related to gender equality.

The anthology is one of several outputs from the recent Nordic research collaboration, Reassessing the Nordic Welfare Model, which began in 2007.