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The relationship between family and employment and the well-being of children

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Abstract

The reconciliation of family and employment is currently a popular theme in social sciences. It is mainly used in order to discuss how a coherent relationship between the responsibility of parents for childcare and the employment system could be developed and why this relationship is often incoherent in many European countries. The main focus of the debate is on problems of gender inequality and limitations for women to participate in the labour market. Much less emphasis is placed on the question what this means from the perspective of children and the well-being of children.

It is argued here that the concept of “reconciliation” is not an adequate academic concept to analyse the relationship between family and the employment system and the tensions and contradictions that might develop. Also, it is not an adequate concept to analyse the situation of children in this context. Moreover, the way it is used does not adequately take into account that what people perceive as an adequate relationship of family and employment and a good life situation of children, because of cultural differences, in part differs in a comparative perspective between societies.

It is suggested here to use instead a broader approach of the “arrangement of work and family” which is based on historical institutionalism. This approach conceptualises the ways in which the situation of mothers, fathers and children develops in the context of the specific institutional constellation and cultural context of family, employment system and social policies in a society and offers a theoretical framework for cross-national comparative analyses.

Keywords: arrangement of work and family, cultural approach, family models, welfare policies, family care

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***The relationship between family and employment
and the well-being of children***

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1. Introduction

How can the situation of mothers/parents and children between family and employment be analysed and explained? How can cross-national differences that exist in this respect be explained?

Currently, the concepts of ‘the ‘reconciliation of family and employment’ and of ‘family/life balance’ are popular concepts for analyses of the relationship between the family and the employment system and the tensions and contradictions that might develop. However, it is argued here that these concepts are often used inadequately in such analyses. It is suggested that analyses of the relationship between work and family should be embedded in the broader theoretical framework of the ‘arrangement of work and family’ which is based on historical institutionalism. This approach conceptualises the family in the ways it is connected to the employment system via the parents’ paid work on the one hand, and the way it is connected with care work and the forms in which it is organised in society on the other. Moreover, it provides an explanatory framework for analyses of the way in which the work/family relationship is developing and changing, and for cross-national analyses.

In the first part of the paper, the shortcomings of the common concepts of ‘the reconciliation of family and employment’ and the ‘family/life balance’ and the ways in which these are used will be discussed. In the second part, the ‘arrangement of work and family’ approach will be introduced and the way the situation of mothers/parents and children can be analysed and explained from a cross-national perspective within this framework will be demonstrated. Finally, the way different types of welfare state

policies are adequate for improving the situation of mothers/parents and their children in different societal contexts will be shown.

2. Problems with the concepts of the ‘reconciliation of work and family’ and ‘work/family balance’

The concept of ‘reconciliation of family and work’ and the concept of ‘work/life balance’ are often used to describe the problems that parents, and mainly mothers, have in relation to the connection between their participation in the employment system and the provision of childcare in the family. These concepts are also used in political debate and political programmes, such as those of the EU. However, I argue that because of the ways in which they are often applied, these concepts are unsatisfactory for providing adequate analyses of the relationship between work and family and the particular problems that exist in this context for care-providing parents.

The main problems concerning the use of these concepts include:

- The role of the societal context in the explanation of cross-national differences is often inadequately conceptualised.
- They are often based on a restricted, traditional definition of ‘work’.
- They are used in a normatively rather than analytically.
- Analyses mainly focus on the career possibilities of mothers in paid work; the well-being of children is not addressed as an issue.

In the following part, I will outline what I mean in more detail.

a) The missing conceptualisation of the societal context

It is often assumed that variations in the ways in which women participate in paid work reflect different (more or less women friendly) family policies, which hinder women to a different degree in the realisation of their ‘original’ aim to reconcile care responsibility and paid work on the basis of full-time employment. Family policies, and in part also employer’s labour policies, are seen as the main factors that have an impact on the degree to which mothers participate in full-time employment. What is neglected here is the notion that there are also cultural differences with regards to the ideal model of family, care work and paid work of parents, and accordingly also different ideas of

what a satisfactory form of reconciliation of care responsibility and paid work is in different societies.

b) The problem with the restricted concept of 'work'

According to relevant theoretical concepts and empirical knowledge that have been developed in the context of comparative social policy research, the ways in which family and employment are connected from the perspective of mothers/parents is strongly connected to the ways in which care work in relation to childcare is organised (Kröger 2003). In contrast, the use of the term 'work' in the concepts of the 'reconciliation of work and family' and 'work/life balance' is more or less restricted to paid work. 'Care' is often an implicit part of the concept, and in fact the analyses are often about the reconciliation of care work and formal employment of parents. However, care is often not systematically introduced as a basic element of the concept, and it is often not defined as 'work'. The same is true for the concept of 'work/life balance', where 'life' is an even broader and undefined term, but that, in fact, often means 'care work'. In this respect, both concepts fall behind the level of theorising that has already been developed: There are broadly developed theoretical approaches that have provided major insight into the nature of care provision as 'work' (Daly/Lewis 1998, 2000) and how useful an extended concept of work is for analysing the development of a working society (Anttonen/Sipilä 2005; Pfau-Effinger/Geissler 2005).

c) The problem with the implicit normative approach to the concepts

The main focus of the concepts is on the individual options available to parents, mainly the mothers of young children, to connect their care responsibility with their participation in paid work. However, it is not always clear under which circumstances a 'reconciliation' is possible or not, or whether the 'work/life balance' exists. The degree of participation of women and men in paid work is often used as the relevant measure in order to classify a specific type of reconciliation of family and employment, or work/life balance, and fulltime continuous participation of mothers in waged work is seen by researchers to be the ideal, together with continuous fulltime provision of public childcare. This is also the basic idea behind the concept of 'defamilialisation' which is often used to measure the degree to which childcare is transferred from the private household to public childcare institutions (e.g. Leira 2003).

Accordingly, both formal and informal care work are often interpreted as opposites, whereby the formalised type of ‘care’ is classified as modern and women-friendly because it relieves women of care work in the home, while informal childcare and the care of the elderly tend to suggest the backwardness and social exclusion of those who provide it (see also Cousins 1998). Hence, informal care work is linked to the traditional model of the housewife marriage and is essentially characterised by the fact that it is unpaid, takes place in the family household out of the public eye and leads to a marginalisation or exclusion of those who provide it, brought about by the core of social integration, paid work, which is also the key factor determining social recognition, the earning of income and the acquisition of prestige. It is also argued that this is the reason why women take the risk of marginalisation when they enter the labour market. That is why family policy instruments, which are intended to assist those who provide informal care work, also tend to be regarded as backward and as obstacles on the road towards the equality of the sexes (Hofaecker 1999; Leira 2003; Siim 2000).

However, this is a normative rather than analytical use of the approach. It does not consider that, in the population, specific cultural models of the ‘optimal’ way of connecting family and work exist, and that these can differ substantially in a cross-national context. Because of such cultural differences, it would be misleading to assume that the full-time provision of public childcare would generally be the adequate way to solve the problems that mothers/parents face in the Western European societies for connecting their participation in the employment system and the organisation of care work. Rather, in differing cultural contexts, different solutions are also adequate.

d) The missing conceptualising of the situation of children

Another problem is that the central focus of the concepts of the reconciliation of family and employment or of the work/life balance deals with the situation from the perspective of parents, usually of mothers. Gender equality is often at the heart of the issue. Accordingly, ‘women-friendly’ welfare states were identified that support the integration in the labour force of women to a high degree when they are mothers providing comprehensive public childcare (Siim 2000). However, such concepts do not provide a sufficient option to integrate the situation of children, or the way different types of childcare provision contribute to the wellbeing of children.

I conclude from the discussion of the problems involved in the ‘reconciliation of family and work’ and ‘work/life balance’ approach that a comprehensive and definitely analytical approach is needed in which analyses of the relationship between work and family can be embedded.

3. The ‘arrangement of work and family’ approach

In this section, I introduce a complex and more open analytical framework to analyse the situation of mothers/parents as well as children in the context of the relationship between family and work, the ‘arrangement of work and family’ in society approach ¹. The approach is more open and comprehensive in comparison to the approaches that were introduced and discussed above, in the following respects.

- The approach considers the societal context of the relationship between work and family in that it is argued that variations in the ways in which family and work are connected in time and space can be explained by the mutual (and sometimes contradictory and contested) interrelations between culture, institutions, structures, and constellations of actors.
- It is based on an extended concept of work, in which care work is included. According to this approach, the ways in which it is organised is interrelated with the degree and forms in which mothers/parents participate in the employment system.
- It is not normative, for it leaves space for cross-national variations in the ways such arrangements are shaped and in the ways in which a sufficient combination of care responsibility and participation in the employment system for mothers/parents is possible.
- It offers to analyse the well-being of children as a separate issue.

In the following section, the approach will be outlined more in detail.

¹ This is another variant of the societal ‘arrangement’ approach that I have developed as a theoretical approach for analyses of historical change and cross-national analyses in relation to ‘gender arrangements’ (Pfau-Effinger 1998; 2004), ‘care arrangements’ (Pfau-Effinger 2005a; Pfau-Effinger 2005c) and ‘arrangements of work and welfare’ (Pfau-Effinger 2006; 2008) in former research and publications.

Conceptualising the relationship between work and family

The approach is based on the assumption that the family is mainly linked in two different ways to the societal system of work, which are both interrelated:

- Link 1: There is a link with the employment system via the forms, amount and structures of paid work and the working hours of parents in employment.
- Link 2: The other link is between the family and the way childcare is organised in society²; whether it is provided within the family by parents, by others within the family or outside of the family by different kinds of organisations/institutions.

Both links are structured by gender in that women are usually connected in different ways to the employment system and care work than men. The participation in the labour force of parents, particularly of mothers, can be based on part-time employment or fulltime employment and can include shorter or longer periods of full-time parental leave. It is linked with the way childcare is organised in society and with the degree to which this is provided by mothers or parents, which also can vary considerably in time and space. The ways in which family and care are interrelated was subject to historical change and differs substantially in a comparative perspective between national societies and on a regional level (Anttonen/Sipilä 2005; Kröger 2001; Pfau-Effinger/Geissler 2005; Siim 2000)

Explanation of the development and variations in the relationship between work and family by differences of the ‘arrangement of work and family’

The approach is based on the assumption that historical change and cross-national differences in the ways in which family and work are related can be explained in the context of the respective specific arrangement of ‘family and work’ that exists in time and space. By ‘arrangement’ I mean a configuration that can be more or less coherent or contradictory in itself, in the relationship between institutions and cultural concepts as well as in the relationship between social groups of actors. It can be contested and the subject of conflict and negotiation by actors with different powers, and it can change

² In principle, this also includes care of the elderly, which is however not the issue in this paper.

under specific circumstances (Pfau-Effinger 2004; 2005a). The particular arrangement of work and family comprises the configuration of institutions, social structures, socio-economic factors and constellations of actors that are related to the relationship between family and work. Moreover, it is assumed that values and cultural models ('Leitbilder') regarding the relationship between family and work contribute to explaining the way in which the structural relationship between family and work and the actual practices of social actors in this context develop. The ideas and interests of the main actors refer on the one hand to cultural values and models and on the other to the institutional and socio-structural framework. It is particularly emphasized in this approach that the interaction between different factors in the specific societal context should be considered for an adequate explanation (Pfau-Effinger 2004a; 2005a).

With such an approach, the comparative analysis of arrangements of work and family is extended by an actor-centred perspective, and a systematic analysis of the influence of cultural factors is brought into play. 'Culture' is defined here as the 'system of collective constructions of meaning by which human beings define reality'. It includes stocks of knowledge, values and ideals – in short: ideas. Cultural values can be seen as 'switches' on the pathways along which interests influence the actions to be taken, as has also been argued by Lepsius (1990: 31).

This approach can be classified as being based on the thinking of historical institutionalism (Thelen 2005). In historical institutionalism, the role of institutional constellations in the historical processes is in the focus. Institutions are seen as being embedded in a societal framework that includes, among others, cultural values. While in rational choice approaches, institutions are defined as having a coordinating function and aimed at maintaining an equilibrium, in historical institutionalism, as Thelen (2005) argues, institutions are placed in a historical context in which the sequence and timing of the events matters and in which they can be contested and contradictory. A main aim is to analyse the relationship between institutional stability and institutional change.

The following parts will outline the way in which cultural values and welfare state policies, and the ways these interact, can influence the relationship between work and family. The focus of this paper is limited to these explanatory factors, due to limitations of space and because they can be considered the most relevant for the explanation of

cross-national differences. However, the role of labour market structures and constellations of actors should also be considered (see Pfau-Effinger 2004).³

Cultural values on which arrangements of work and family are based

Family values include cultural values and notions regarding the structure of the family, including the division of labour within the family, which is most often gendered. They also relate to the relationship between the different family members and the employment system, as well as to childcare and the upbringing of children and what a ‘good’ childhood is. Cultural values in relation to these differing dimensions together form ‘family models’ (Pfau-Effinger 1998; 1999; 2004a). These models can be characterized in terms of their central cultural ideas of the relationship between mothers and fathers and the employment system, the values concerning a ‘good childhood’ and the ways in which childcare should be organised. It is possible for one specific family model to be dominant in a society, or for different family models to co-exist or compete.

It is my argument that arrangements of family and work can be comparatively analysed and classified on the basis of the given cultural model of the family. It should be noted that the ways in which welfare states and other institutions refer to such cultural models can differ in the time-space context, and that the relationship can be orderly or can display discrepancies and delays. The ways in which new cultural models, having developed at a given time in the population, are dealt with is strongly influenced by the conflict and negotiation processes taking place in the arena of the social actors. In former publications I have developed a classification of different cultural models of the family and the way in which it is related to gender and care (Pfau-Effinger 1998; 2004a). Accordingly, at least two traditional 20th Century models and three more modern family models of contemporary post industrial societies in Western Europe can be distinguished (1) The family economy model; (2) the housewife model of the male breadwinner family; (2) the male breadwinner/female part-time carer model, (2) the dual breadwinner/external care model, which can appear in different versions in relation

³ The book ‘Culture, welfare state and women’s employment in European societies’ (Pfau-Effinger 2004) includes a comparative historical analysis of the interrelations between the development of family values, welfare state policies, labour market structures and policies of different types of social actors in explaining cross-national differences in labour force participation in Germany, The Netherlands and Finland.

to the dominant values concerning the adequate form of external care and (3) the dual breadwinner/dual carer model.

- the *family economy model*, which was based on the participation of all family members in agriculture on family farms or drafts craft families; and care was not well developed as a specific task, allocated to specific persons and needing specific skills,
- the *housewife model of the male breadwinner family* in which care was seen as the specific task of the housewife which did not need specific skills but was seen as being based on quasi natural skills and did not participate in paid work,
- the *male breadwinner/female part-time carer model* which is based on the idea that the family, and particularly women inside the family, should reduce their working hours in paid work during the period of ‘active motherhood’ and share the task of caring with other institutions outside of the family such as the welfare state, the market or the non-profit sector. This model is particularly constructed in an inherently contradictory manner, at least in societies where the male breadwinner/female part-time carer model is dominant. As it often presupposes the financial dependency of those who informally provide the care (mostly women) on others (mostly the husband) that, based on the principle of family subsidy, are seen as being responsible for maintenance. This concept fundamentally contradicts the model of personal autonomy that is central to post-industrial society.
- the *dual breadwinner/external care model* which is based on the assumption that care should mainly be provided by institutions outside of the family, such as the welfare state, the non-profit sector or the market,
- the *dual breadwinner/dual carer model* which is based on the assumption that women and men equally share the tasks of caring inside the family and should share this with other institutions outside of the family such as the welfare state, the market or the non-profit sector.

It should be considered that there can be one or several dominant family models within one arrangement of work and family. Also, it is important not to consider the classification to be static but to also consider the processes of change that take place within such an arrangement.

The classification can be used to analyze processes of change within work and family arrangements as well as for cross-national analyses of such arrangements. This requires an analysis of the direction of change and of the degree of social and cultural integration of the arrangement during the different stages of change.

Welfare state policies which influence the relationship between work and family

Welfare state policies are another relevant factor that is decisive for the explanation of the development of the relationship between family and work and cross-national differences. It is assumed here that the influence of the welfare state on the relationship between work and family is highly significant in modern societies. It is the state that provides the regulatory framework for the functioning of the other societal institutions, as Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999) has also argued, the way the labour market functions, the relationship between the labour market and family structures, and the status of the various institutions in the system of social production of welfare. A particularly important question in the context of this paper is how far the welfare state provides for the social tasks of the childcare and nursing of older people and to what extent and in which quality it supplies these services or delegates them to other social institutions such as the family or the market (see also Esping-Andersen 1999; Evers/Olk 2006). By affecting the distribution of social resources the state also exerts considerable influence on the structuring of social inequalities and gender inequality.

Welfare state policy is relevant for the relationship between work and family on several levels: The state contributes to the reproduction or transformation of cultural models of female employment, the division of labour within the family and between the family and the employment system, and of childcare. Moreover, by influencing the distribution of the main resources in society, the welfare state regulates the structures of the family, the gendered division of labour and the scope of social groups of mothers/parents for action. Also, on the basis of legal regulations and political control in labour market and employment policy, and of policies concerning care work, it shapes the framework for the employment behavior of parents and the structures of care work. Finally, the state itself is an employer and through this role can influence the participation in the labour force of mothers/parents. The welfare state therefore represents an important arena for social conflicts and negotiation processes with respect to the arrangement of work and family (cf. also Mósesdóttir 1996, 2001). In comparative social policy research, it was

outlined that welfare state policies concerning the connection of work and family differ in the context of different welfare systems. However, it appears that the welfare system's approach is insufficient to explain cross-national variations and a sufficient approach would require classifications that place family and care work in the centre (Lewis 1992; Lewis/Ostner 1994, Anttonen/Sipilä 2005; Daly/Lewis 2000; Pfau-Effinger 2005a).

Welfare state policies interact, not necessarily coherently, with the dominant values in the population. Social actors and discourses play an important role in mediating between both levels and for the transfer of new values between both levels (Pfau-Effinger 2005b).

4. The development of the work and family relationship in the context of cultural change and welfare state development

Moving away from traditional cultural models of family and changing family structures contributes decisively to explaining changes in the structures of care work. In the last decades of the 20th century, fundamental change processes took occurred that promoted changes in the relationship between formal and informal work. Family structures, but also the related cultural values, changed in such a way that the gainful employment of women is now generally acknowledged.

Cultural change, cross-national differences in family models, and the new meaning of childcare

In the 1950s and 1960s, the cultural family model of the housewife marriage provided the cultural foundation for the organisation of family and care in a series of European societies. The public sphere of gainful employment was predominantly considered the realm of the husband, while the wife was seen to be responsible for the private household and the tasks of caring for children and the elderly, which was financially secured through the income earned by her husband. Linked to this were certain ideas about what form a 'good childhood' should take. This was underpinned by the idea that care by parents/family members in the private household was the form of care work that ensured the best quality of care, as it was practised on the basis of love and moral duty and not in the interest of generating financial income. However, as mentioned above,

this applies to different European societies to a differing extent, and the specific family structures were often considerably more complex (Pfau-Effinger 2004b).

Due to the cultural change, this model was increasingly replaced by a new, modernised family model based on the idea of including both sexes in paid employment.

In the cultural meaning this context, informal care was partly freed from the context of the traditional housewife marriage and furnished with new meanings in contemporary post industrial society. Thus, the hours that parents spend with their own children and private childcare count less towards fulfilling their duty and more as a possibility for self-actualisation and self-realisation, and in this context gain their particular meaning. Moreover, spending time with and being cared for by loving mothers or parents is seen as a particularly valuable element of a 'good childhood' (Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Pfau-Effinger 2004a; Pfau-Effinger/Sakac-Magdalenic/Schuettpelez 2006). In this regard, family care work that is provided during parental leave or following this, across employment that is limited to part-time work, is embedded in a new cultural model of parenthood concerning a temporary phase in an adult life which is otherwise oriented towards paid work (Pfau-Effinger 2004a).

The fact that informal childcare is still important in a fair number of European countries can accordingly not only be explained by welfare state policies but also by the respective predominant cultural models regarding the contribution of children to the quality of life of their parents and a 'good childhood'. These have a specific relationship with general attitudes towards women's paid work, which is to a certain extent contradictory.

There are in part strong contradictions in the orientation of people towards gender equality on the one hand and the dominant values related to a 'good childhood' on the other. In a number of countries the majority of the population believe that children should be cared for by a parent at home, usually the mother, at least as long as they are of pre-school age. Table 1 indicates that according to a majority of the population in some European countries work-related absence of the mother from pre-school children does not benefit children's well-being. At the same time, however, the majority of the population everywhere is of the opinion that paid work by women is the main basis of their independence.

Table 1: Attitudes towards the well-being of pre-school children and paid work of mothers

	A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works (strongly agree/agree)	Work is best for women's independence (strongly agree/agree)
Austria	64.6	82.1
Switzerland	58.9	77.4
Poland	56.8	75.3
West Germany	55.6	77.7
Spain	52.2	80.4
France	42.4	80.7
Netherlands	39.8	56.8
Great Britain	38.4	55.3
East Germany	32.7	83.8
Denmark	31.4	80.2
Sweden	23.7	62.5

Source: ISSP 2002 Family and Changing Gender Roles III

However, there are considerable cross-national differences. In a first group of countries, which comprises Austria, Switzerland, Poland, West Germany, France and Spain, more than 40 per cent of respondents think that 'a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works' and in five out of six of these countries even a majority shares this opinion. This means that they think that the employment of mothers contradicts the wellbeing of their children. At the same time, a majority of the respondents in these countries believe that paid work 'is best for women's independence'.⁴ Clearly,

⁴ However, we do not know how the value of 'independence' is generally weighted in relation to values which stress social bonds. Independence might generally be of less importance as a value in societies where social integration is still strongly based on family networks and where individualisation is not so strongly developed, e.g. in Spain and Poland.

consideration of the wellbeing of children contradicts aspects of women's quality of life insofar as this is based on their participation in waged work.

On the other hand, there is a group of societies which includes East Germany, Denmark and Sweden⁵ where less than one third of the population believes that a pre-school child suffers when the mother is employed. Therefore, notions concerning the well-being of children are less contradicting of the assumption that paid work is the main basis of women's independence, which is also very strongly supported.⁶

What most people therefore expect in countries like Germany, Austria, Switzerland and The Netherlands is for a mother's behaviour to balance the needs of children with their tendencies towards paid work, as we know from empirical studies and country-specific attitude data, either by staying at home temporarily or working part-time, or combining the two. On the other hand, countries where such contradictions are comparatively few tend to provide a full-time model of paid work for mothers (Pfau-Effinger 2005a; 2007).⁷ Only in Poland is part-time work for mothers relatively rarely regarded to be a solution, which might be due to the relatively low average household incomes and the tradition of mothers being employed full-time (Surdej/Slezqk 2008).

There is an interesting group of countries that lie in between the two opposite groups in terms of the notion of children's wellbeing. It includes Great Britain and the Netherlands. In this group, the proportion of respondents who believe that a pre-school child suffers when his or her mother actively pursues paid work is lower than in the first group and higher than in the third group. However, this value does not conflict to the same degree with attitudes in relation to the well-being of mothers as it does in many other countries, since the proportion of those who think that paid work is particularly important for the independence of women (below 60 per cent) is lowest in this group.

⁵ East Germany is included here as a different type of society because it experienced a very different development with regard to the culture and structure of the family until the beginning of the 1990s (see Pfau-Effinger/Geissler 2002).

⁶ In Sweden, there is even less contradiction since the share of those who think that work is important for women's independence is considerably lower than in the other two countries (62 per cent in Sweden compared to 80.2 in Denmark and 83.8 in East Germany. This can be explained by the fact that parents who are temporary care providers in Sweden are often financially independent because parental leave schemes are connected with relatively high income substitutes.

⁷ Unfortunately, the questions in the ISSP are relatively vague concerning the time span for which people think that mothers of pre-school children should stay at home and/or work part-time. It can vary between two months after the birth of a child and five years in different countries. Such discrepancies are, however, particularly important when explaining cross-national differences in the labour market behaviour of women.

Cross-national differences in cultural models and attitudes to the connection between family and employment

What is reflected in such differences in attitudes is that there are also differences in the dominant family model/s between post industrial societies (Pfau-Effinger 2004a,5a).

- *Male breadwinner/female part-time care provider model*; this model predominates in countries such as West Germany and Great Britain.
- *Dual breadwinner/external care model*. This model predominates in countries such as Denmark, Finland, Sweden (where although part-time work for mothers plays a major role, the number of hours worked is only slightly less than full-time employment), France and post-socialist countries such as East Germany and Poland.
- *Dual breadwinner/dual care provider model*; this model predominates on a cultural level in the Netherlands (Plantenga 2003) and in Norway (Ellingsaeter 1998), even though in social practice a male breadwinner/female part-time care provider model predominates.

In countries where the male breadwinner/female part-time carer model or the dual breadwinner/dual care provider model predominate, the modernised model for the phase of ‘active motherhood’ provides a (more or less lengthy) interruption to employment, and after that only the part-time integration of mothers in employment because it is believed that a ‘good childhood’ is best guaranteed when it at least partially takes place on the basis of family childcare. However, even in countries with a dual breadwinner/external care provider model, more or less lengthy maternity leave can be regarded as being important for a ‘good’ childhood.

In all countries the predominant model more or less offers a combination of informal childcare by parents and external childcare provision, but in very different combinations and with different points of emphasis. For external childcare it is usually the welfare state that is regarded as being responsible for the provision of childcare, or at least for its financing. In contrast to this, in Great Britain the market is accorded a key role in the provision of care, and in South European and East European countries such as Spain and Poland it is the extended family networks that are mainly seen as being responsible (Baxendale/Meyer/Dedeoglu 2008; Flaquer/Escobedo 2008; Surdej/Slezak 2008).

In each case one or two of these models can predominate in a population. Nevertheless, there may be other models that are marginalised or common in certain parts of regions. For example, Switzerland is approximately divided between the German-speaking area in which a male breadwinner/female part-time care provider model predominates, and the French-speaking area in which a dual breadwinner/state care model predominates (Bühler 2001, Pfau-Effinger 2007); in Germany there is a split between the predominance of a male breadwinner/female part-time provider model in West Germany and a dual breadwinner/state care model in East Germany (Geissler/Pfau-Effinger 2002). Dale and Holdsworth (1997) have shown that in the United Kingdom that there are differences in care between the family models of different ethnic groups.

I have demonstrated through a historically comparative study that the discrepancies are not contingent. On the contrary, in Western Europe alone (not including the Mediterranean countries) there are two different paths of family development and cultural model of a 'good childhood', the different foundations of which go far back in history (Pfau-Effinger 2004b). In countries where there is a predominance of family models in which a childhood at least partially spent at home in the care of the mother is regarded as an important element of a 'good childhood' this partly goes far back in history, being associated with the cultural predominance of the housewife marriage model, which is most likely to guarantee this type of childhood, and the historical role of the urban bourgeoisie, which was the 'social carrier' (as Max Weber put it) of this cultural family model (Pfau-Effinger 2004b).

Change and variations in welfare state policies related to care

During the second half of the 20th Century, changes to the population's family values, on the one hand, and welfare state policies related to the family on the other, have interacted. Welfare state policies have reacted to the change in family values and family structures and in part contributed to shaping it. However, change was frequently marked by considerable contradictions and a lack of synchronicity, and changes to the welfare state often followed substantially later than cultural change and changes in family structures, particularly in conservative welfare state contexts (Pfau-Effinger 2004a). The change was particularly related to social care. In many Western European societies, the area of care work became largely subject to political steering by welfare state policies, which have also made a decisive contribution to its restructuring (Lewis/Daly 2000;

O'Connor et al. 1999; Ostner 2000; Sainsbury 2001). Western European welfare states have decisively shaped the restructuring of care work on the basis of its formalisation and the introduction of new schemes in relation to family childcare.

In this context, new social rights for parents and children have been established (Knijn/Kremer 1997; Leira 2003; Pfau-Effinger 2005b). The term 'social rights' originates from T. H. Marshall's (1992) theory on the historical development of citizenship. Here, the history of modern societies is seen as a process, in the course of which the basic rights of the citizens are extended in the following order: general civic rights, political rights and then social rights. Social rights, which were anchored in the expansion of the welfare states in the second half of the 20th century, were linked to gainful employment and provided social security for employees when they were not in employment ('decommodification', following Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999). New social rights, in contrast, are now not oriented to gainful employment but rather to care. In this regard, as Knijn and Kremer (1997) have argued, two new types of social rights in particular can be distinguished:

- Social rights to receive care
- Social rights for parents connected to providing family care

These formed the essential foundations for the formalisation of care work and the development of new, semi-formal forms. The basic principles can be described as follows:

Social rights to receive care

The concern here is, on the one hand, for the social rights of children or parents that exist in relation to the use of public or publicly financed childcare. Generally speaking, one perspective is a component of the 'European model' that childcare (as well as education) is part of the collective and is the responsibility of the welfare state or non-profit making organisations commissioned and financed by the welfare state (England 2004). A comprehensive offer of public childcare can be seen as a central prerequisite for enabling women or parents to be employed to the extent that they desire. In the only country that has previously extensively left childcare to the market, Great Britain, the state has recently also proceeded more strongly in the public financing of childcare. As long as the prices were determined by the market, a kindergarten place was at best

affordable by upper middle class families and a small number of low-income earners who received a subsidy for a kindergarten place (Baldock 2003).

It turned out that the public provision of childcare does not meet the needs of parents in many countries outside of the ‘social democratic’ welfare system in terms of Esping-Andersen’s (1990, 1999) typology. In these countries, the employment of nannies in the private household, often on the basis of undeclared work by immigrants, partly serves the function of helping to bridge the discrepancies between the time demands of the employment system on the one hand and the time structures of the public offers of childcare on the other, which are in part considerable. In contrast, this is not widespread in Scandinavian countries. The difference can mainly be explained by two factors: On the one hand, the public offer of childcare is clearly more considerable and flexible there, particularly as they are supplemented by free or low-cost municipal babysitters and bridging services to which the parents of children in need of care can take recourse. Furthermore, in Scandinavian countries, a ‘service culture’ is not strongly anchored in cultural terms due to the relatively pronounced egalitarian ideals, while in the other countries (except for Poland) this has historical roots, and in Poland was able to establish itself relatively easily in the cultural vacuum that existed on introduction of the market economy (Pfau-Effinger/Sakac-Magdalenic/Schüttpelz 2006).¹⁸

Social rights for parents connected to providing family care

A characteristic of the housewife marriage was that taking responsibility for childcare meant women relinquished gainful employment, which was carried out unpaid and ‘hidden’ in the private household. Changes in family structures and culture have contributed, however, to the establishment of new social rights in relation to informal childcare by parents in the family household through European welfare states. These comprise rights to temporary leave for parents within the existing employment

¹⁸ This is the result of collaborative research in a project forming part of the 5th EU Framework Programme that was directed by the author, entitled ‘Formal and Informal work in Europe. A Comparative Analysis of their Changing Relationship and their Contribution to Social Integration’. The chairs of the country team were Per Jensen/Jens Lind, Aalborg University (Denmark); Pertti Koistinen, University of Tampere (Finland); Birgit Pfau-Effinger, University of Hamburg (Germany); Traute Meyer, Southampton University (Great Britain); Alexander Surdej, Economic University of Warsaw (Poland); Lluís Flaquer, Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain). The research to which I refer here was based, among other things, on 215 semi-structured guided interviews in middle-class households with children under six years in cities and their suburbs in Finland, Denmark, Great Britain, Germany, Poland and Spain.

relationship, approaches to the payment of parental work and their inclusion in social security. In this context, a new form of care work was established by welfare state policies which I call 'semi-formal' care work (Pfau-Effinger 2004c). This can also be understood in the sense that the welfare state has extended the prevailing understanding of 'work' beyond the framework of that which is organised in an employment-type manner.

In more recent Western European welfare state childcare policy, in general a dual path of change has been chosen, in which both types of social rights relating to childcare have been substantially broadened (Pfau-Effinger 2005a). The most far-reaching was the extension of social rights in Scandinavian welfare states and in France, where both of the types of rights today receive the best provision in qualitative terms (Daune-Richard 2005; Anttonen/Sipilä 2005; Fagnani/Letablier 2005).

As a consequence, a new type of parent or family member has emerged who temporarily cares for his or her own children in his or her own home, and is therefore released from employment (on a full-time or part-time basis), receives some type of payment, and is included in social security in one way or another.

5. Analyses of the situation of children in the context of the arrangement of work and family

It is argued here that the differences concerning the situation of children between countries can be explained in the context of different arrangements of work and family. The basic risks of children differ substantially in the context of the different cultural models of the family, as far as the welfare state does not intervene.⁹ Moreover, within each family model, the situation of children can structurally differ between different types of families such as families in which the main breadwinner earns a relatively high wage in the employment system and families where the main breadwinner belongs to the low-income groups in terms of paid work. Moreover, children in one-parent families can be at a greater risk than the children of couples. In this paper, I stress the risk of children in relation to the income poverty of children, which is defined as the share of

⁹ The author's comparative research has shown that most women in affluent post industrial societies try to organise their everyday life during the period of active motherhood in accordance with the dominant cultural model of motherhood and a good childhood, even if this is difficult to do and connected with financial disadvantages for themselves (Pfau-Effinger 2004a).

children who live in a family household with less than 50 per cent of the average income of a society. The degree to which there is a risk of child poverty varies in comparison between the different family models and the situation of different family types within them, as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Particular risks of child poverty in different household types and different family models without welfare state support

	<u>Dual-parent family</u>		<u>One-parent family</u>	
	<i>low wages*</i>	<i>medium to high wages*</i>	<i>low wages*</i>	<i>medium to high wages*</i>
full-time male breadwinner/ part-time female carer model	high	low (high**)	high	medium (high**)
dual breadwinner/ external carer model	medium -high	low	high	low (high*)
dual breadwinner/ dual carer model	low	low	high	low-medium (high*)

* concerning the income of the main breadwinner

** in case of unemployment of the main breadwinner and relatively low unemployment benefits

The orientation towards a full-time male breadwinner/female part-time carer model leads in principle to relatively low earnings of mothers in the employment system during the period of ‘active motherhood’. This is due to the orientation to a family break during early childhood and part-time work during the later period of childhood. The model is based on the assumption that the mother’s loss in income should be compensated within the male breadwinner marriage. However, this is only possible in dual-parent families and in families in which the breadwinner is employed and earns a relatively high income that offers the possibility for two adults and a child to live alone

on this income in the first years, and on one and a half income later, when the wife is working part-time. Therefore, children in one-female-parent-families, where a full-time breadwinner does not exist, and children in families with low earning male breadwinners are at a relatively high risk of poverty, as long as the welfare state does not compensate for the loss of income of women who act as the family carer (see also Kalbitz 2007).

In general, the risk of child poverty is definitely lower if a cultural family model based on the assumption that both parents are employed full-time is dominant. However, this model also creates risks unless the welfare state intervenes, for in this case, parents have to pay rather high market prices for childcare provision. This is particularly difficult for low income couples and single parents on low income. These must either accept the high prices for childcare provision or reduce one parent's work hours, usually the mother. In both cases this leads to an increase in the family and children's risk of poverty.

The dual breadwinner/dual carer family model is based on the assumption that the working time of mothers and fathers comprises about two thirds of a full-time job, after a short family break (like the 'one and a half' earner model in the case of The Netherlands and Norway, see Kersbergen/Kremer 2007; Ellingsaeter 2003). The idea is that the parents together cover a substantial part of the childcare which they share with an external part-time provision of childcare. This means that even in the case of a market provision of childcare, the costs for external childcare are limited. However, the risk of child poverty might be high in one-parent families on low wages, for their low wages would be reduced by a reduction in working hours during active motherhood/parenthood, and their costs for childcare provision would be higher than for dual parent families who can provide a higher share of the childcare themselves.

It should be emphasized that the male breadwinner/female part-time carer model is particularly vulnerable to the unemployment of the male breadwinner. In all cases in which the unemployment benefits are considerably lower than the former income of the main breadwinner, the family is at risk of income poverty and child poverty. Moreover, in relation to all models, the risk of child poverty is high in the case of unemployment of the single earner, if the unemployment benefits are low.

The following section discusses which types of welfare state policies are adequate to reduce the risk of child poverty, in relation to the different family models (see table 3). I

distinguish four different types of family policy: a high level of decommodification of a welfare state, relating to Esping-Andersen's (1990) concept, which means that there is a relatively high degree of compensation for the loss of income through unemployment; social rights related to receiving public care provision: social rights for parents when they provide childcare to their own children in the family household: and state support of the financial autonomy of those who temporarily provide family care.

A generally high level of decommodification, particularly during unemployment, can particularly reduce the high risk of child poverty in the case of unemployment of the male breadwinner in the male breadwinner/female part-time carer model, and of the main breadwinner in low-income families and one-parent families in all family models. The findings of UNICEF's 2005 study indicate that a high general level of social security is the most important factor in explaining cross-national differences in the worldwide degree of child poverty.

Table 3: Welfare state policies that are relevant to compensating for high risks of child poverty in relation to the different family models

	Generally high level of de-commodification in case of unemployment	Social rights to receive care (Knijn/Kremer 1998)	Social rights for parents connected to providing family care (Knijn/Kremer 2005)	Support of the financial autonomy of those who temporarily provide family care (Orloff 1993)
full-time male breadwinner/ female part-time carer model	xx	x	xx	xx
dual breadwinner/ external carer model	xx	xx	x	x

dual breadwinner/ dual carer model	xx	x	xx	xx
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x – relevant

xx – particularly relevant

The *social right to receive care*, and a comprehensive care provision, is particularly important in the dual breadwinner/external care provider model in order to give parents the possibility to participate in paid work without high costs that would considerably reduce their family income or force one parent to reduce their working hours.

In the framework of the full-time male breadwinner/female part-time carer model and the dual breadwinner/dual carer model, mothers, or in a few cases both parents, are oriented towards temporarily providing childcare to a considerable extent by themselves. *Social rights for parents to provide family care* and state support, particularly in the form of parental leave schemes within the existing employment contract, is needed to support the connection of these parents with the labour market. Also, social rights to stay within the social insurance system during this period are important.

Single mothers, particularly single mothers on low wages in the cultural context in which the male breadwinner/male part-time carer model or the dual breadwinner/dual carer model is dominant, are at a high risk of the poverty of both themselves and their children, at least during periods when their children are of pre-school age. These risks are reduced when they have the option of caring for their small children on the basis of social rights that are connected with the *social right to act as financial autonomous carer*.¹⁰

Mention should also be made of another type of risk for children called ‘educational poverty’, although I will not go into too much detail here. This term relates to the risk of children receiving a low individual level of education (Allmendinger/Leibfried 2003). It can be assumed that this risk can also differ between the family types distinguished

¹⁰ Joan Orloff (1993) has suggested including the possibility of acting as a financially autonomous family carer as a criterion for analysing ‘women-friendly’ welfare states.

here. The risk can be particularly high for children in low income families with a low level of education in those societies where external childcare is mainly provided by the market and therefore too expensive for these families. Moreover, it can be particularly high for children with parents with a low level of education in societies where the male breadwinner/female part-time carer model is dominant and children are therefore cared for exclusively by their mothers/parents in their first years.

6. Conclusions in relation to the situation of mothers/parents and children in different work and family arrangements

The concepts of ‘the reconciliation of family and employment’ and of the ‘family/life balance’ are popular concepts in the description and analysis of the relationship between the family and the employment system and the tensions and contradictions that might develop. However, it is argued in this paper that these concepts are often not used in a way in which they are adequate for such analysis. It is suggested here that analyses of the relationship between work and family should be embedded in a broader theoretical framework of the ‘arrangement of work and family’ which is based on historical institutionalism. This approach conceptualises the differing ways in which the family can be linked to paid work, the role of care work, and the gendered nature of this relationship. Moreover, it provides an explanatory framework for analysing the way in which the work/family relationship is developing and changing, and for cross-national analyses. It was shown, using this approach, that there are differences over time and space in relation to what people believe to be a good or adequate connection between family and work, in relation to the patterns of parental employment and childcare. Such differences should be considered in analyses of the relationship between work and the family as well as of welfare state policies related to this relationship.

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