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## 4 Men's Work-Life Choices

### Supporting Fathers at Work in France and Britain?

*Abigail Gregory, Susan Milner*

In February 2011, the United Kingdom's (UK) government announced the extension of paternity leave to six months and further plans to develop fathers' rights by 2015. The news was widely seen as the culmination of efforts across all three main political parties to support working fathers and initiatives, particularly under the previous Labour administration, to promote work-life balance for parents. Commenting on the news, some leading public figures argued that the move reflected a wider societal shift based on 'the choices being made by mothers and fathers'<sup>1</sup> (Taylor 2011: 57).

However, other policy advocates and academics have expressed doubts about the extent to which fathers in the UK, as elsewhere, have shifted their priorities away from paid employment to domestic responsibilities. Richard Collier (2010) for example has warned against expecting significant shifts in men's domestic involvement as a result of the extension of fathers' rights, arguing that men still enjoy the 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell 1995) which allows them to continue investing time in their career development (Dermott 2008; Featherstone 2009). More controversially, Catherine Hakim (2009) has gone further in claiming that not only do men not want to become more involved in childcare but that women's strong family orientation supports this division of household labour.

These debates reflect a wider discussion among policymakers, advocacy groups and academics across European countries about how best to reach the twin goals of supporting parenthood and raising employment rates. The European Union (EU) has been a particularly influential champion of gender equality and children's rights, which François-Xavier Kaufmann (2002) argues represents an attempt to extend the influence of Scandinavian policy and thereby modernize family relationships. Broadly across Western Europe, a trend away from traditionally gendered notions of employment and care has been identified (see Lewis 2009), which Ann Orloff has gone so far as to characterize as 'the end of maternalism' (Orloff 2006). However, differences in the pace and direction of this trend across countries reflect not only the timing of policy change but also 'the complex interplay of material and ideational, societal and political explanatory factors' (Mätzke and Ostner 2010: 396).

In this chapter, drawing on our earlier research on statutory and organizational constraints and opportunities for fathers wishing to renegotiate their work-life boundaries in France and the UK (Gregory and Milner 2011), we examine two major, interrelated debates. First, we ask whether men really want greater family involvement. Second, we address questions of whether statutory and organizational measures not only help those men who wish to reconcile work and family, but also thereby contribute to wider shifts in gender behaviours. As well as responding to the first debate, this second question highlights the design and implementation of fathers' employment rights and work-life balance measures for parents. We focus particularly on the British and French contexts, in light of similar debates and initiatives elsewhere in Western Europe.

#### FATHERS' CHOICE AND AGENCY

Opinion polls indicate a strong and growing desire among men (whether fathers or potential fathers) to spend less time at work and more time with their family. For example, Gornick and Meyers (2009: 11) cite a series of OECD surveys showing that over half of mothers report a wish to have more time with their children, compared with at least 80 per cent of fathers in the same countries. However, such data need to be treated with caution since there is evidence of a gap between stated preferences and real behaviour (Hobson, Duvander and Halldén 2006), and some indication that men tend to use additional time outside paid work for social or leisure pursuits rather than for increased family time (Lewis 2009). For example, surveys of the impact of working time reduction in France showed a gender divide, with fathers reporting an increase in time spent with their family, although to a lesser extent than mothers, and at the same time significantly more time spent on sporting or other leisure activities (see Fagnani and Letablier 2004; Méda and Orain 2002). Across European countries, men are more likely than women to express a desire to reduce working time for family reasons (Wallace 2003, cited by Letablier 2006; see also Bielenski, Bosch and Wagner 2002; European Foundation 2006). This gender difference may simply reflect the fact that men work longer hours, and indeed men who work the longest hours report high levels of dissatisfaction with their working hours and a demand for reduced working time (Holter 2007; Scherer and Steiber 2009).

The work of Barbara Hobson and her colleagues provides a useful framework for interpreting data on fathers' working time preferences. According to this analysis, differences across European countries can be explained by the trade-off between economic pressures (necessitating a strong breadwinner role for fathers) and clusters of rights and services available to parents. Thus, in Eastern Europe, men already work long hours but choose to increase their hours after the birth of a child due to financial pressures and

the lack of affordable childcare. In Scandinavian countries, on the other hand, men's working time is already lower than the average and parental leave is relatively widely available. In both these sets of countries, the gap between real and desired working hours is small (Hobson et al. 2006; Hobson and Fahlén 2009).

This analysis shows that it would be wrong to dismiss men's stated preferences for shorter working time and greater family time and that, as we have argued elsewhere (Gregory and Milner 2008), the constraints of working time regimes exert a strong influence on men's availability for childcare. Working time regimes in this sense must be seen as a set of gendered working time arrangements which create either constraints or opportunities for couples seeking to take decisions on the trade-off between paid employment and domestic responsibilities. In the British case, very long working hours for men, and notably for fathers, are widely recognized as limiting time available for men's paternal involvement (see Gray 2006) and are accompanied by high levels of (often low-paid) employment for women: a male-breadwinner/part-time female-carer model of childcare (Pfau-Effinger 2006). The European Social Survey showed that 43.5 per cent of British fathers living in couples with at least one child aged under 15 normally worked more than 46 hours a week, compared to only 28.9 per cent in France (Lewis 2009: 38). This compared with an average for the 13 EU nations surveyed of 35.7 hours.

In the UK, fathers work among the longest hours in Europe (European Foundation 2010) on average and also express higher than average levels of demand for increased family time (Bielenski et al. 2002). Various surveys since the mid-2000s (EHRC 2009; Yaxley, Vintner and Young 2005) have shown high proportions (over 70 per cent) of fathers complaining of work-family stress and demanding reduced working hours. In a 2009 survey, half of fathers who responded, and particularly those who worked long hours, reported that they believed they spent too much time at work, and 42 per cent thought they spent too little time with their children (EHRC 2009: 5). One father for example argued that: 'In the long term we need a shift in working culture so it's more acceptable to work shorter hours and this isn't seen as a lack of commitment or ambition' (EHRC 2009: 52). Overall the survey, which revealed a high level of support for an extension of paid paternity leave, indicated fathers' strong desire to be involved in the day-to-day care of their children.

However, in-depth studies of fathers' attitudes and practices in the UK portray a different situation and suggest that men are largely satisfied with their working hours even when working 60 hours a week (O'Brien 2005). Indeed, in the aforementioned survey (EHRC 2009) over half of fathers said they had a good compromise between work and care. Work-family conflict was more common among fathers on low household incomes, fathers with a child with a disability or with a disability themselves and those identifying as belonging to an ethnic minority group. Esther Dermott (2005,

2008) also found that, contrary to her anticipation of work-life conflict, the fathers she interviewed 'felt that they were able to achieve and maintain the status of "good father" and "good worker" simultaneously' (2005: 92). For them it was not the quantity but the quality of the time they spent with their children which was important. This apparent contradiction is difficult to explain: it may reflect diverse experiences of the relationship between work and family for different fathers, or simply different ways of thinking about work-life tensions in large-scale attitudinal surveys and more focused in-depth interviews; or it may mean that despite work-family conflict, men's satisfaction with paid employment outweighs their subjective experience of the negative impact on father-child relationships.

French surveys have highlighted differences between various groups of fathers in their response to the relationship between work and family life. Although overall fathers' share of childcare remains well below that of mothers, 'egalitarian' fathers who share childcare equally with their partner may represent around 15 per cent of those surveyed and are characterized by younger age and higher levels of income and education than the average (Bauer 2007). A third of fathers report that paid employment became less important for them after the birth of their child (compared to 57 per cent of mothers) and a similar proportion reduced their working hours accordingly (compared to 52 per cent of mothers) (Méda 2010). Holter (2007) found that it was a combination of the father's personal disposition towards involvement in family life (division of labour in the couple and degree of egalitarianism), type of work (more highly qualified work leading to greater adjustment to family needs) and value system (notably a lack of attachment to materialism) that seemed most conducive to fathers permanently adjusting work to meet their family's needs.

Comparative time use surveys indicate a general trend in industrialized countries towards increased parental time for both mothers and fathers, with fathers increasing parental time through a reduction of paid work time and personal time and mothers decreasing the amount of time spent on housework (Kan and Gershuny 2010). In the UK, father involvement appears to have risen most rapidly after 1990 (Smith 2007), whereas in France most change took place in the 1970s and 1980s and slowed in the 1990s (Brugeilles and Sebille 2011). But in both countries fathers still only spend around half of the time mothers devote to childcare (see Fatherhood Institute 2010), lagging behind the more equal sharing reported in Nordic countries. Moreover, debates around childcare responsibilities hide the fact that women continue to carry out the bulk of domestic work (Smith 2007), particularly more routine housework (see Burnett et al. 2010). Therefore, men's increased contribution to care activities does not significantly challenge the domestic division of labour. On the other hand, the number of fathers becoming primary caregivers (sharing childcare at least equally with their partners) appears to have increased over the last ten years and, according to two recent surveys, now accounts for around a quarter of

fathers with children aged under five (Aviva 2010; Burnett et al. 2010), although the data require further investigation.

Overall this brief overview suggests that the number of men challenging traditional gender roles in childcare is small but growing rapidly, and is likely to continue to grow since it appears to be the result of women's role in the labour market. Although men who challenge traditional gender roles in childcare are in the minority, there is evidence that a substantial proportion of fathers, perhaps the majority, while retaining a primary breadwinner role, still wish to reduce their working hours in order to undertake a more substantial carer role. A large majority of men and women in Western Europe express gender-egalitarian attitudes such as, 'Men should take as much responsibility as women for the home and children' (Grönlund and Öun 2010: 192), and changing societal norms about what constitutes a 'good father' mean that young working men expect to play a greater role in childcare than their fathers (Collier 2010). Changes in men's reported preferences and expectations represent what Andrea Doucet (2006) calls 'the slow drip' of social transformation. Given the weight of evidence indicating the beneficial outcomes of greater paternal involvement for child development (see Lamb 2010) we would argue that such changes are sufficiently significant to warrant support through public policy measures.

#### STATUTORY AND ORGANIZATIONAL WORK-LIFE BALANCE MEASURES

What kind of policies can support working parents, particularly working fathers, and facilitate societal change in favour of shared parenting? Evidence to date suggests that, despite recent policy initiatives, policy and organizational practice lag behind societal change:

Parents across the OECD countries are managing greater demands on their time and energy, but they are doing so, to a large extent, in the context of working arrangements and workplace policies that do little to make their lives more compatible with caring for dependent family members. (Gornick and Meyers 2009: 9)

Parent-friendly policies are complex and multi-dimensional (raising wider questions about their fit with other elements of the rights-benefits regime), and their behavioural consequences are difficult to disentangle (Ray, Gornick and Schmitt 2010: 198). Measures to support fathers at work may be roughly divided into three types: leave arrangements (maternity and paternity leave and parental leave); working time arrangements; and other types of measures targeted specifically at fathers, such as mentoring, information campaigns and so on (Gornick and Meyers 2009; McDonald, Brown and Bradley 2005; Ray et al. 2010). Of these, parental leave in particular has

come to the forefront of debates around gender equality (Ray et al. 2010). Academic research tends to highlight the need for specific rights for fathers (as opposed to general, gender-neutral rights for parents), due to societal assumptions about the gendered nature of care; such concerns have found their way into policy debates, notably around the idea of reserving stipulated portions of leave (post-birth or parental leave) for fathers. Gender egalitarianism is held to be best promoted by individual, non-transferable incentives to both parents (Brighouse and Wright 2009; Ellingsæter 2010).

Measurement of the degree of state support for childcare figures prominently in comparative rankings of the mother-friendliness of welfare states (see Gornick and Meyers 2009; Mätzke and Ostner 2010), but is less evident in discussions about how best to support fathers. This omission no doubt reflects the highly gendered distinction between public (paid employment) and private (care) spheres. Policies to support fathers are principally defined in terms of those which either explicitly target men as fathers, or are based in universal employment rights. Childcare provision outside the household affects men's ability to negotiate work-life balance, but indirectly rather than directly, since mothers tend more than fathers to adapt their employment choices to the childcare options available (Grönlund and Öun 2010).

Another key question in policy debates is the extent to which measures in support of fathers need to be underpinned by statutory rights or could best be provided by organizational policies and practice (see below). Opposition to such policies centres on a perceived lack of demand among fathers on one hand, and the costs to businesses on the other. Cultural gender role attitudes and the relationship between the state and market are therefore highly influential in shaping 'bundles' of rights across different countries.

### **Statutory Work-Life Balance Measures**

A range of models for work-family balance across industrialized countries has been identified (see for example Scott, Crompton and Lyonette 2010), underpinned by differing gender regimes and conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Advocates of strong gender egalitarianism, based on equal sharing of care and paid employment, point to the Nordic model which has been variously termed a 'gender participation model' (Scott et al. 2010: 7) or a 'gender-differentiated supported adult worker model' (Lewis 2009). In these countries, parental leave has been at the heart of discussions on the relationship between work and family for men and women, and the state has intervened strongly since the 1990s to promote gender equality, with four main trends emerging: a shift from maternal to parental leave, extension of leave (up to around a year), the allocation of a portion of non-transferable leave to fathers ('daddy months' or 'daddy quotas') and more flexible regulation of take-up to suit individual circumstances (Ellingsæter 2010: 259).

The Norwegian example has been particularly influential in policy debates in France and the UK in recent years. Norway was the first country

to introduce a 'daddy quota' in 1993 and its example demonstrates that if leave is earmarked for fathers and paid at high compensation rates the quota results in higher rates and longer length of paternal leave. Ten weeks of leave (out of a total of 46 paid at 100 per cent, or 56 at 80 per cent) are now reserved for fathers (extended from six weeks in 2009). Around 80 per cent of all eligible men take up parental leave (which is around 60 per cent of all fathers, because of eligibility criteria related to mothers' employment status), and a growing number of men are choosing to take more leave than their quota: in 2008, 16.5 per cent of fathers extended their leave beyond the reserved ten weeks, compared to 11 per cent in 2000 (see Brandth, Chapter 8 in this volume; also Duvander, Lappegard and Andersson 2010). Fathers are also entitled to additional 'daddy days' immediately after the baby's birth but these are usually unpaid.

Despite broad support for the daddy quota, parental leave remains politically controversial in Norway. Unlike in Sweden where leave is supported by strong norms of gender equality, the Norwegian policy framework has been labelled 'gender equality light' (Duvander et al. 2010; Rønson and Skrede 2006) because it forms only one component of family policy alongside other options such as childcare cash benefits. Mothers remain the principal beneficiaries of longer leave, not least because daycare provision is less developed than in Sweden. Some feminists have called for leave to be split more equally between parents, as leave is still overwhelmingly taken by mothers (89 per cent of the total days) (Ellingsæter 2010: 260). Long leave reinforces gender segregation if taken exclusively or mainly by women. Others argue that flexibility is needed in order to promote mothers' autonomy and the caregiving potential of fathers. The Norwegian equality ombudsperson has for example advocated a three-way split in leave, with one third reserved for mothers, one third for fathers and one third to be left open (in reality, this would almost certainly result in a two-thirds/one-third split in favour of mothers).

The Norwegian model has explicitly informed recent policy debates in France and the UK, perhaps because it is seen as more easily transferable than the stronger equality model in Sweden. In France, as in the UK, proposals emerged in 2008 for the allocation of daddy quotas in parental leave (see Milner 2010). However, the debate around implementing the proposal continued into 2011. Division between advocates of parental 'choice' and proponents of gender equality based on incentives for fathers as well as mothers has to date hampered political initiatives related to parental leave other than moves to reduce the length of maternal leave, which is seen as reinforcing gender and class segregation in the labour market (Haut Conseil de la Famille 2011).

This stalemate reflects continued conflicts between pro-natalism and gender equality models of French family policy. Although Gornick and Meyers (2009) include France in their cluster of strongly gender-egalitarian states, due in particular to high levels of state support for childcare, it scores



much less highly on the first indicator which, we would argue, stands at the heart of the debate on family-supportive policy: that is, family leave policy. As Crompton (2009) has argued, France stands out in displaying gender-egalitarian attitudes regarding labour market participation, but gender-traditional attitudes regarding the domestic division of labour. In this context, state support for childcare may enable women to work full-time but does not tackle the gendered division of labour at home. Ambiguities around policy design therefore reflect a partial and 'stalled' shift towards stronger fatherhood rights (Gregory and Milner 2008).

In the UK, as previously noted, the initiative taken in 2011 to extend paternity leave may be seen as responding to similar policy debates. However, in the British case, take-up of paternity leave is likely to remain strongly hampered by its informal regulation in the workplace, resulting in haphazard implementation of statutory rights. Stronger statutory rights, notably concerning salary compensation, are a pre-requisite for effective change. The policy focus on paternal leave is significant, however, because it marks a shift towards the Nordic model and away from the previously dominant model which was based on enhancing workplace flexibility. The right to reduced hours and flexible working, introduced in 2003 for parents of children up to 5 years of age, had a mixed impact, with some researchers finding evidence of both mothers and fathers being able to use the law to negotiate increased family time (Smeaton and Marsh 2006) but others identifying workplace barriers to increased demands by parents. Plans to extend the right to all parents of children under the age of 18, announced in 2009, were resisted by employers and finally scrapped by the incoming Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government in 2011.

The recent initiative on paternity leave in the UK, if supported by a range of statutory measures based on high replacement rates, has the potential to shift the current British 'market-oriented' model (Grönlund and Öun 2010). Under Labour governments from 1997 to 2010, the UK began to move from a male-breadwinner/part-time female-carer model towards a (partial) adult worker family model aiming particularly to provide cash and childcare support for low-income families (Scott et al. 2010: 7). However, in the absence of strong statutory underpinning it is likely to have very little impact, particularly in the context of business hostility to parental rights constructed by the employers' lobby as costly burdens.

### **Organizational Work-Life Balance Measures**

It is widely acknowledged, particularly in market-oriented policy regimes, that working practices can either exacerbate or alleviate work-family conflict for employees (Haas and Hwang 2007; Holter 2007; McDonald et al. 2005). Business benefits from work-life measures in the workplace include greater employee commitment and wellbeing, and hence reduced absenteeism (European Foundation 2006). However, a number of obstacles to

effective work-family policies exist, particularly in the context of high-pressure work environments and work intensification, which can exacerbate work-family conflicts and create or reinforce workplace cultures of presenteeism (Kvande 2009). If few business enterprises offer family-friendly measures, there will be little incentive for others to do so (Gornick and Meyers 2009). For these reasons, workplace measures are likely to have greater impact if backed up by statutory rights for employees which establish a sense of entitlement, especially to paternity and parental leave (Lewis and Smithson 2001).<sup>2</sup>

This is particularly true for fathers, as workplaces have been found to entrench gendered norms about the division between career and care and to reserve family-friendly measures for women, reinforcing the ‘mummy track’ or gendered patterns of professional segregation within the workplace (Burnett et al. 2010; Hochschild 1997). As Holter (2007: 441) notes: ‘Gender has appeared as an organizational issue, but only as far as women are concerned.’

Flexi-time is seen as a particularly useful tool for reconciling both employer and employee perspectives on working time (European Foundation 2006), and there is evidence that men in particular find it useful to resolve work-family conflicts (Burnett et al. 2010; Forrest 2007). However, the availability of working time flexibility varies significantly across countries and between sectors and companies within the same country. It can also be influenced by factors such as conditions in the local, national or international labour market (EHRC 2009; Gregory and Milner 2011; Holter 2007) as well as wider competitive conditions. In the UK for example there is evidence that employee-led flexibility is being increasingly used (particularly for qualified workers) to compensate for pay freezes in the context of economic recession (Woods 2010).

Existing research shows that the interplay between formal statutory rights, formal workplace rights and wider organizational work styles and cultures strongly influences fathers’ ability to take up existing work-family measures. The example of Sweden is instructive in this respect. Flexible parental leave, supported by statutory entitlement and high replacement rates, provides the principal means by which fathers, particularly those in high-pressure jobs, can negotiate more family time. Moreover, due to relatively short working hours, the length of working time is not considered to be a source of work-family conflict. However, the ability to gain day-to-day flexibility in working time arrangements is severely constrained by competitive pressures within the workplace and creates strong work-family conflicts for men in managerial positions (Allard, Haas and Hwang 2007).

In the British case, work-family conflict appears to arise from a variety of pressures, including organizational cultures of long working hours, weak entitlement (in particular, low replacement rates of benefits and low levels of awareness of individual and collective rights) and an unmet demand for flexibility in working hours despite the statutory innovations noted above

and the spread of more flexible workplace arrangements in recent years (Burnett et al. 2010). In such conditions, fathers still find opportunities for 'flexibility at the margins' but these are contingent on very localized conditions such as the attitude and behaviour of line managers. Wide disparities in individual opportunities exist and are likely to widen (Gregory and Milner 2011). Gender segregation in the labour market is thus continually reproduced in a vicious circle as a substantial proportion of women, defined as primary carers, remain trapped in low-paid part-time jobs, while fathers find it difficult to access work-life balance measures defined as support for female employees (Fatherhood Institute 2010).

France scores more highly on the Fatherhood Institute's (2010) index of supportive measures for fathers. However, workplace support is inconsistent and often dependent on state initiatives which launch local collective bargaining, such as the 1999 law on the reduction of working time. As in the UK, we found in our research of two sectors (public and private) that work-life balance measures in the workplace were strongly motivated by statutory innovations which allowed for the development of localized, company-specific initiatives. Studies have also highlighted wide disparity between the public and private sectors in the availability of work-life balance measures in France (Pailhé and Solaz 2009).

In both France and the UK, workplace measures based on the reduction or flexibility of working hours appear to work best when they are couched in terms of universal rights which give fathers a sense of entitlement (Lewis and Smithson 2001); conversely, if they are framed as measures to support parents they will in reality be constructed within the workplace as aimed at mothers, and take-up among fathers will be low. Unlike in Nordic countries, companies have not on the whole developed awareness campaigns for fathers (although the Swedish company IKEA has done so in the UK). Leave arrangements aimed specifically at parents need to be underpinned by statutory rights, otherwise they will be taken up as informal leave by those fathers able to afford to do so, and for minimal duration.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have sought to answer two main questions. We first asked whether men really wanted greater family involvement. We found evidence, drawing on literature from industrialized economies, and notably from the UK and France, that some fathers (particularly those working long hours) did want to be more involved in family life and that a minority of fathers were adopting a more feminized life course as primary care-giving fathers. Fathers' preferences were related to economic pressures on couples alongside the availability of rights and services for parents and the working time regime. The last of these generated constraints and opportunities for couples seeking to make decisions on the trade-off between

work and family. There is a clear link between the father's individual value system (level of materialism, attachment to egalitarianism, education level), situation at home (such as the need to cope with a child with a disability; division of labour within the couple) and at work (level of qualification of work, location [e.g., customer-facing/not], business needs and labour market situation) and actual levels of involvement at home.

The second question posed in this chapter was whether statutory and organizational measures could not only help men wishing to reconcile work and family but contribute to a wider shift in behaviours relating to the division of work. Our brief review suggests that statutory rights in and of themselves are not sufficient to generate significant changes at the organizational and household level, although they help provide the context in which men's and women's choices are made. It is their embedding in the wider national gender regime and the relationship between the state and the market which strongly determine outcomes for parents as our examples in Norway, France and the UK have shown. Organizational-level policy has the potential to help ease work-life conflict, particularly where it is underpinned by statutory rights, but its implementation is strongly impacted on by competitive conditions, work styles and cultures. Specific workplace factors conducive to achieving better work-life balance include the existence of policy champions at corporate level, positive attitudes of line managers and the type and style of working (e.g., the ability to share work via team-working). Overall, however, organizational work-life balance policies and practices lag behind demand and institutional leads.

How then can wider changes in the division of work be engendered, if indeed this is deemed to be a worthwhile objective as many feminists claim?<sup>3</sup> There is widespread evidence that change towards gender equality via a two-carer/two-earner model is likely to result from changes within the couple (see Holter 2007; Singley and Hynes 2005). In particular, men are seen as being 'constrained' into new work-life choices by their partner's decision to remain in or enter full-time paid employment (see Méda 2010; Lyonette, Kaufman and Crompton 2011). This fits with the 'lagged adaptation' model we have outlined above, resulting in gradual change in the division of labour within the couple.

However, as we have indicated, changes in paid and unpaid work are not tending towards absolute equality, even if fathers are more involved in the care of their children, but towards continued gender differentiation. In this context should we, as Scott Coltrane (2009: 406) argues, accept that 'it is unrealistic to assume that men will do half the parenting and housework in the majority of families', but at the same time refuse to accept that 'we should set significantly lower standards for fathers than for mothers'? This means that although we cannot necessarily assume gender equality can be the basis for policy or the end goal, it is nevertheless worthwhile and effective to provide supportive policies for those men wishing to rebalance their lives in favour of family. These policies would include supportive state

policies, especially leave, as they can 'influence the normative and behavioural dimensions of gender relations in housework and parenting' (Coltrane 2009: 397). In sum, our findings indicate that change arises from the individual and at household level but that statutory and organizational policies can not only facilitate this change, but also contribute to it by enlarging the space for debate and discussion around gender roles and practices.

## NOTES

1. In this case, Matthew Taylor, director of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, together with his father, the writer Laurie Taylor, had previously published a book on parenting entitled *What Are Children For?* (London: Short books).
2. Although these may be undermined by the local and wider economic context, it has been found, for example, that job security is a condition for fathers to take up parental leave.
3. It is by no means, however, the only perspective on how to progress gender equality; some (e.g., Orloff 2009; Zippel 2009) argue that it is more important to first address power imbalances in the public sphere.

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