

Comparative Family Policy: Eight Countries' Stories

Kathy O'Hara

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this study is to describe how eight countries developed their policies for families and children, and in particular the factors that led to the development of divergent strategies. The countries studied were Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Although much of the family policy literature tends to focus on the role of specific actors and institutions in the development of family policy, this paper considers the importance of values and ideas in explaining the emergence of very different family policies in these eight countries.

The literature on comparative family policy has not tended to focus on the nature of the policy discourse that led to the development of specific policies. Therefore, in addition to a literature review, this study reflects interviews held with a number of government officials, academics, and advocates in the eight countries, which sought their perspectives on how family policy had been developed in their country. This material is supplemented by data from the 1991 World Values Survey and other values studies that examined values in these countries with respect to gender roles and the consequences for their children of mothers working.

The study's perspective differs from much of the comparative family policy literature in several ways. Rather than categorizing different countries' family policies as being more or less strategic or coherent, we argue that each country in fact has a "story" that explains the development of specific policies or sometimes the lack of policies. We do not label concern about the impact of dual-earner families on children as "traditional" or "conservative" but, rather, note that "liberal" values on gender roles are often combined with concerns about the implications for children. While recognizing that many factors contribute to the development of specific family policies, we explore whether values, and in particular ambivalence in values with respect to balancing work and family responsibilities and the level of acceptance of the state's role in the family, are important explanatory variables that have not been explored in the comparative family policy literature to the same extent as other factors.

The paper begins with a very brief overview of each country's family policy "story," which is intended to help readers unfamiliar with comparative family policy

to understand the different policy in each country. The next two sections of the paper explore the values in each country with respect to gender roles and the implications for children, and the influence of values, ideas, actors, and institutions in the development of family policy. Each section provides an overview of the issue and then describes the specific situation in each country. The final section identifies areas of convergence and divergence in the eight countries and explores potential directions for the development of family policy in Canada.

We find a surprisingly high degree of convergence in values in these countries with respect to gender roles and the impact of dual-earner families on children but divergence in behaviour and public policies, as well as in the level of support for the role of the state in the family. Citizens in all of these countries (but to somewhat different degrees) reflect ambivalence, in the sense of holding conflicting feelings or attitudes, in their open-minded attitudes towards mothers working combined with concern about the consequences for children of mothers working. Even countries such as Sweden, Norway, and France, which have high levels of labour force participation by mothers, large numbers of dual-earner families, and significant policies and programs to help families balance work and family, express ambivalence about the impact on their children, particularly young children, of mothers working. Unlike some of the other countries examined in this study, where ambivalence seems to have resulted in inaction, in these countries, a high level of support for the state's role in the family appears to have enabled them to implement family policies despite their ambivalence.

In exploring the influence that values, ideas, actors, and institutions have on the development of family policy, we note that actors and institutions can be constrained by the presence or absence of specific values or ideas, and that their influence is particularly restricted in the presence of strong ambivalence in values. Actors who promote policies and programs based on values that do not resonate with the public's values will be rejected, and, in the face of strong ambivalence, institutions may lack either the confidence or legitimacy to act. In particular, actors espousing the development of family policies in countries whose values support a limited role for the state in family matters are often stymied.

While there appears to be convergence in the inventory of policies and programs that these eight countries use to implement their family policy strategies, they diverge significantly in the range of measures they use and the specific strategies they pursue. For example,

- France's strategy is a neutral policy, which attempts to support choice for parents in their decisions about balancing work and family;
- the stated policy in the Netherlands is to help parents balance work and family;
- Germany's strategy is to support a stay-at-home parent;
- the strategy in Norway and Sweden is to seek gender equality at home and in the workplace, but with a child centred focus; and

- the strategy in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States is to leave to parents both the choice of how to balance work and family and the difficulties resulting from their choice.

In considering the key factors of ambivalence in public policy about balancing work and family, and support for the state's role in the family, Canada (and also the United States) combine high ambivalence about balancing work and family in their public policies and a low level of support for the state's role in the family. The other countries have different combinations of levels of ambivalence about balancing work and family, and support for the state's role in the family. Thus, depending on how Canadian values about these issues shift over time, these countries provide possible models for the development of family policy in Canada. But perhaps the most important lesson for Canada to draw from these countries' experience is that ambivalence did not lead to inaction but rather diversity in policy measures, based on a societal consensus on the need for the state to actively support families and the choices they make.

Foreword

In November 1996, CPRN gathered a diverse group of Canadians in the boardroom of the Laidlaw Foundation to brainstorm the design of a project to address the question: What is the best policy mix for Canada's children? What drew the group together was the common desire to bridge the yawning gap between research knowledge about early child development and the evidence of deterioration in the actual environment shaping the lives of families and their children. The group included academics, federal and provincial policy advisors, representatives of professional organizations, child advocates, and independent analysts. (It also included baby Anna – just to underline the vulnerability and the potential of Canada's children.)

We considered the kind of policy research needed to inform public understanding and create the political will needed to improve the context for children and their families. The scope of the project was vast – work, family, health, education, recreation, transport, social services, public safety, environment, and on and on. We realized that day that three elements were missing: an understanding of how the needs of parents and children have changed over time; basic information on how the social, economic and policy context affects families; and an understanding of how the pieces fit together – what potential models might work for Canadians. Our job would be to create new ways of thinking by all the stakeholders in healthy child development, including families, employers, federal, provincial, and municipal governments, education and health institutions, and community organizations.

The workshop then mapped a research program, which demanded information on: the values and preferences of Canadians; how other countries deal with these issues; and the state of the evaluation research on policies that support children. Suzanne Peters, Director of the Family Network and Director of this project, then took on the challenge of transforming the workshop results into a research plan. This study is one of several that she commissioned. All will be published over the next year, as well as a synthesis report pulling together the findings from all the studies.

In this study, Kathy O'Hara, who was a research fellow with CPRN from October 1996 to May 1998, describes the "policy stories" of eight industrialized countries.

The countries were chosen for their diversity. The stories themselves are rooted in the core social values and political history of each country. In all cases, however, they have been struggling with the same sets of issues, especially the transforming workplace, an evolving family structure, and the changing economic role for women.

What is remarkable is how different countries' responses have been to these challenges – both in their intent and in their consequences for children. Most countries make use of a common base of policy interventions, including parental leave, family leave, flexible hours, child care supports, pension benefits for stay-at-home parents, and income supports. And in every country, parents take full responsibility for the care and nurture of their children. But they do so in quite different policy settings.

This diversity of models offers Canadians a chance to reflect on which ones might best suit our particular social and political structures. The study also demonstrates that Canada has not made use of all the levers available to help create better outcomes for children, nor does it exploit all the possible sources of financing to support families and their children.

This study is a complement to a paper by Shelley Phipps, of Dalhousie University, to be published in the winter of 1999. Phipps uses a more quantitative approach to compare values, tax and transfer policies, and outcomes for children in four countries for which outcomes data are available. Both papers were reviewed in depth at a roundtable held in Ottawa in June 1998.

I want to thank Kathy O'Hara for her contributions to the Best Mix project, and this paper in particular. Thanks is also due to the members of the Advisory Committee, who continue to contribute good ideas and valued advice. And a special thanks to the foundations and government agencies who funded the work. Their names are listed at the end of this publication.

Judith Maxwell
December 1998

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I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Sarah Cox, who undertook the literature review and conducted the interviews for this study.

Comparative Family Policy: Eight Countries' Stories

Introduction

This study was written to contribute to a research project that is exploring the development of a societal strategy to improve outcomes for Canada's children. The project will examine the values of Canadians with respect to children, their preferences among alternative policy mixes for children and families, identification of desired outcomes for children in Canada, existing research on the effectiveness of policies and programs for children and families, and international analyses of children's outcomes.

This is the first of the two international papers prepared for the project. The second, written by Shelley Phipps, provides a quantitative comparative analysis of children's outcomes in five countries – Canada, the United States, Great Britain, Norway, and the Netherlands – which have outcome data comparable to data from Canada's National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY).

The purpose of this paper is to provide a qualitative analysis of the policy context in which these countries developed their policies for children and families, focussing in particular on "family policies," since in many of these countries the emphasis is on families rather than children specifically. In addition to the five countries discussed in the Phipps paper, which were circumscribed by the availability of outcome data comparable to NLSCY data, in this paper we examine three other countries – France, Sweden, and Germany – to obtain a wider sample of family policies. It attempts to provide a sense of

the factors that led to the development of a specific policy mix in each country, focussing in particular on its values and the influence of values, ideas, actors, and institutions in the policymaking process. While it is not the intention to overstate the importance of values in policy development, this paper, unlike much of the comparative family policy literature, focuses more on values and ideas than other explanatory factors such as actors and institutions.

Given the diversity of family policies in the countries under review, the paper seeks to discover *why* and *how* different family policies were developed in these countries, and what lessons this might hold for the development of policies for children and families in Canada. There are always limitations on the applicability of comparative analysis to a specific country, particularly in this case, where there are profound differences among these countries with respect to size, heterogeneity, ethnicity, and structure of governmental institutions. Nonetheless, it is hoped that there are sufficient similarities among these countries, since they are all Western, industrialized, OECD countries, that the analysis will be relevant.

Methodology

Research began with a literature review, which very quickly revealed the limitations of existing

literature with respect to the purpose of this paper. As Anne Gauthier notes in her book entitled *The State and the Family: A Comparative Analysis of Family Policies in Industrialized Countries*, “despite the increasing interest in family policy, literature in this field, especially from a comparative perspective, is very sketchy. Studies have either compiled data on specific family benefits at one point in time, or analysed the development in family policy in a specific country, but have rarely done so by combining both a historical and a cross-national perspective.”¹ Linda White, in a recent comparative analysis of child care policies in France, Canada, and the United States, notes that although there is a growing comparative literature on child care, “the literature offers little explanation or analysis of the political factors driving child care policy development.”²

For this reason, in addition to the literature review, we report on interviews held with officials, academics, and advocates in the eight countries under review on the development of family policies in their country. Interviewees were asked whether there is an overall strategy for family policy in their country; how values, outcome measures, and research are brought to bear in the policy discourse around family policy; and how the perspectives of different actors are brokered in the policymaking process. The interviews provided revealing insights into the way in which family policy was viewed by participants in the policy development process in these countries, and supplemented the information gleaned from the literature. (See the Appendix for a list of those interviewed.)

As noted earlier, the paper focuses on family policy rather than children’s policy, recognizing that each of these takes you in very different directions. From the perspective of children, issues such as early childhood development and child protection are critical. Conversely, a focus on families will consider, of necessity, issues of concern to parents as well as children, and particularly issues around balancing their work and family responsibilities and income security. Since most of the countries under review refer to “family policy,” as does

much of the literature, we have used the same terminology.

Various authors in the field of comparative family policy have taken different approaches to the definition of “the family” and the scope of “family policy” that they have considered. Some take fairly broad perspectives with respect to the definition of the family. For example, Michael Fogarty and Barbara Rodgers, in an overview of international perspectives on family policy, note that “family policy, as currently understood, focuses overwhelmingly on families with dependent children,” and they suggest that “couples of any age, whether or not they currently have dependent children, are still families with problems and potential specific to their family relationship, including their own marital relationship as well as their relationships with an extended family.”³ Others take an expansive approach to defining the scope of family policy, consistent with Senator Moynihan’s view that “the essence of family policy is that it focuses on the outcomes of other policies.”⁴

In general, however, authors in the field of comparative family policy tend to look at households with dependent children, including married and common law couples as well as lone parents, and policies targeted to families with dependent children in five areas: direct and indirect cash transfers, such as family allowances and tax relief for child care expenses; services for families, such as child care and home visiting programs; legislation, such as marriage and divorce laws; labour market measures targeted to workers with families, such as maternity benefits and parental leave; and public services such as health and education (and in some countries, housing).⁵

Here the “family” is defined as a household with dependent children, irrespective of the marital status of the head of the household, although our primary focus is on two-parent families, and specifically dual-earner families, rather than lone-parent families. Of the five areas discussed above, the paper particularly highlights family policies intended to helping parents balance work and

family responsibilities, as well as income security measures.

Assumptions

Before proceeding to the substance of the study, this section lays out a number of our assumptions or perspectives, which are reflected in the paper. First, unlike many scholars who have focussed on the study of comparative family policy, the author is a policy analyst who has worked in government in the area of social policy for many years. One notable difference between this paper and much of the work of academics in this field is that, perhaps as a result of this exposure to the policymaking process, we tend to take a more pragmatic and forgiving approach to characterizing government policies as “strategic” or “coherent” or “consistent.”

For this reason, we have resisted the Kamerman and Kahn view that some countries “reject” the idea of family policy or the Schultheis characterization of “negative” family policy.⁶ We take the view that each country has a distinctive and complex “story” to tell, which explains why it has (or has not) developed particular policies for families over time, and which may (or may not) have the appearance of consistency or coherence but nonetheless reflect the policy/political dynamics in that country with respect to families. As Eleanor Rathbone said in 1949, “what appears haphazard in our present arrangements for the family is probably the result of more deliberate purposing and choosing than appears on the surface, but it has been a subconscious and therefore inarticulate purpose and choice.”⁷

This pragmatic approach also recognizes the challenges that face governments attempting to articulate *explicit* family policies and why they therefore may be loathe to do so. A paper prepared on the Family Impact Monitoring initiative of the Netherlands Family Council and Population and Family Study Centre in Belgium notes that “governments trying to design or execute general or specific family policy measures face a number of difficulties. First and foremost they have to take a

position on family values, that is, there has to be agreement at the national/governmental level on the question of which family developments are seen as desirable or undesirable. Secondly, they have to choose specific goals in the family field, of which the range and complexity is enormous.”⁸ Given the potential political minefield that family policy represents for some governments, it is not surprising that their forays tend to be *implicit*.

Second, the literature on comparative family policy betrays a certain adherence to “political correctness” with respect to gender issues. Concerns about how children are faring in dual-earner families are often dismissively characterized as “conservative” or “traditional” or worse. We will argue that this betrays a misreading or lack of understanding of the complexity of societal values on these issues. For example, cross-national research has demonstrated that “attitudes to the consequences of women’s employment may take different meanings in different national contexts. Other cross-national comparisons on [the consequences of women’s employment] indicate... that gender ‘conservatism’ on this item is *not* systematically related to conservative gender role attitudes.”⁹ In other words, people may hold “liberal” values on gender role issues but still be concerned about the implications for children. This ambivalence is reflected in data on values in the eight countries, which will be discussed later in the paper.

Third, many of the classic texts in the comparative family policy literature identify models of family policies that are often quite similar to the social welfare models of Gosta Esping-Anderson. This comparative analysis of models is useful but is not discussed in this paper since it does not attempt to formulate models of family policies, but rather focuses on each country’s unique family policy “story” and a much narrower set of variables than the models generally discussed in the literature.

Fourth, this paper tends to focus on a specific family type, that is, the dual-earner family, rather than families in general or other family types such as lone-parent families. In most of the countries

examined in this study, while as recently as the 1970s the majority of families were single-earner families (i.e., the so-called traditional “breadwinner” model), by the late 1990s, most families were dual-earner families. While it is true that the number of lone-parent families also increased significantly during this period, the change in family structure that has likely affected the most families and children in these countries has been the shift from a single-earner to a dual-earner family. This paper explores the way in which family policies in these eight countries have dealt with this particular change in family structure.

Finally, the comparative family policy literature identifies many variables that are thought to be most relevant in explaining the development of family policies in countries, such as demographics, economic growth, the role and influence of various actors in the policy process, and the perspective of the political party in power. While acknowledging the importance of these factors as explanatory variables, we began with the hypothesis that a key factor that has influenced the development of family policy in Canada is the profound ambivalence that Canadians demonstrate with respect to caring for children and balancing work and family lives, despite the dramatic changes in behaviour that have occurred in this area over the past two decades. “Ambivalence” is defined in dictionaries as acting in opposite ways or the coexistence of conflicting feelings or attitudes such as love and hate at the same time. Public opinion data reveal the ambivalence of many Canadians who believe that women should work and contribute to the household income but, at the same time, worry about the consequences for children of their mothers working.

Our initial hypothesis was that countries such as France and Sweden, which had developed family policies intended to help parents balance their work and family responsibilities, would not exhibit such ambivalence. In fact, as will be discussed, in many of these countries, the degree of ambivalence with respect to caring for children, gender roles, and balancing work and family lives is as high or even

higher than in Canada. What emerged as a key difference between these countries and Canada was the high level of acceptance of the state’s role in the family in these countries and the consensus that the state should actively help families.

This study focuses on the values in each country with respect to balancing work and family responsibilities and the role of the state in the family as one factor in the development of family policy in that country. We do not seek to minimize the importance of other explanatory factors, such as the influence of particular actors or ideas such as pronatalism, or argue that values replace every other factor. Rather, as will be discussed later, we seek simply to add the concept of values to explanatory frameworks that tend to focus on actors, institutions, and ideas and often exclude consideration of values. We argue that ideas are unlikely to be adopted if they are not compatible with a country’s values, and actors will not be credible or influential if their ideas are not consistent with or challenge the public’s values. Differences in values may help to explain why some ideas flourish in one country but are rejected in another.

At the same time, we do not argue that the linkage between values and policies is unidirectional. Clearly, values affect policies and policies can affect values. For example, the provision of public child care could lead to increased female labour force participation, which might change values over time about whether or not children suffer when both parents work. It should also be noted that the paper explores the values of citizens rather than governments. As will be discussed in each country’s story, sometimes family policies reflect the values of the government of the day and not necessarily the values of the general public.

Structure of the Paper

In the next section, each country’s family policy “story” will be recounted very briefly so that readers

unfamiliar with comparative family policy can easily differentiate among the eight countries' policies. In the third section, we discuss societal values specifically with respect to gender roles and the consequences of mothers working for their children. In the fourth section we explore the influence of values, ideas, actors and institutions in the development of family policy and the nature of the interaction of these factors. In the final section, we identify areas of convergence and divergence among the family policies of these countries, discuss lessons that Canadian policymakers might learn from the other countries' family policies, and suggest possible directions for the development of family policies in Canada.

The study is structured to help the reader understand the universal policy and political dynamics that appear to influence the development of family policy generally, and then focus on the specific dynamics at play in each country. Thus, in addition to the general overview discussion in the third and fourth sections of the paper, there is a separate discussion of values in each country and the influence of other factors such as actors and institutions. While this means that each country is discussed in three sections of the paper, this approach ensures that each country's family policy is considered from three perspectives: *what* the policy is; *why* that policy was developed; and *how* that policy emerged from the policymaking process.

Brief Overview of Family Policy “Stories”

In this section, we recount very briefly the “story” of each country’s family policy to help the reader understand and differentiate among them. The resulting capsules of a long history and complex policy mix in each country will undoubtedly appear simplistic and perhaps stereotypical to family policy experts, but they are intended to give newcomers to comparative family policy a context for the subsequent discussion of values and the key actors in the family policy debate and decision making in each country. The capsules are not comprehensive but include illustrative examples of the policy mix in each country that best demonstrate the country’s overall approach to family policy rather than attempting to provide an inventory of all of their programs, as well as the key factors that have influenced each country’s family mix. The latter will be explored in more detail in the sections on values and actors.

Canada’s Family Policy Story

Canada’s approach to family policy is based on a number of factors, but one of the key factors is the resistance to, or lack of consensus on, the state’s role in family matters. Maureen Baker notes that “in [France, Germany, Netherlands, and Sweden], there appears to be more consensus than in Canada that the birth, care, and development of children is a social rather than an individual family responsibility.”¹⁰ Elsewhere, Baker and Phipps have argued

that laws and policies in Canada “have incorporated the values of self-reliance, individualism, and family privacy.”¹¹ A key exception is the province of Quebec which has regarded support for families and children as a societal responsibility, and has consciously articulated a family policy.

Recently, increased media attention on child poverty and the neglect and even death of children in their own families or in foster homes, as well as the impact of an increasing number of dual-earner families, has had an impact on the concept of family privacy and responsibility for children. Some advocates worry, however, that this may be leading to a more generalized focus on the role of the broader community rather than the specific role of government. For example, the 1996 federal Speech from the Throne stated that “while families have the greatest responsibility for the nurturing of and development of our children, they are not alone. Developing our children requires a concerted effort and partnership by parents, governments, and the private and voluntary sectors.”¹²

This has meant that although the role of the state in the family has increased steadily in Canada, as in other countries, governments in Canada (with the exception of the provincial government in Quebec) have avoided major interventions and steering policies of the kind developed in some European countries. Canadian policy has instead taken a minimalist approach to the need to adapt to changing

demographic and labour market realities. As Kamerman and Kahn note in *Family Change and Family Policies in Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States*, given family changes in these countries, governments were faced with a choice between facilitating female labour market participation and gender equality or promoting and supporting parents to stay at home. “The countries in this volume have done neither deliberately nor on a sufficient scale.”¹³

This is particularly surprising given that the rate of family change, as reflected in increasing female labour participation rates, and the related consequences for child rearing has been more dramatic in Canada than in New Zealand, Great Britain, or some of the other countries studied in this paper. Statistics from the early 1990s, in Maureen Baker’s book entitled *Canadian Family Policies: Cross-National Comparisons*, indicate that women in Canada accounted for about the same proportion of the labour force (about 45 percent) as in the other countries, with the exception of Sweden, but had one of the lowest rates of female part-time employment.¹⁴ In 1991, 65 percent of married mothers in Canada were employed, and 70 percent of employed married mothers worked full time, the latter being a much higher rate than in all of the European countries studied in this paper, except France. Thus, while dual-earner families are now the norm in Canada as in the other countries studied, Canadian families are often attempting to juggle two full-time jobs rather than a mix of full- and part-time employment. As Kamerman and Kahn conclude about the four countries – Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Great Britain – discussed in their most recent book, “Canada and the United States appear to have experienced the largest changes in women’s roles, followed by Britain.”¹⁵

But for the most part, with the exception of Quebec, Canadian governments have left families to fend for themselves in adapting to this change. There have been some limited actions in the area of maternity benefits and parental leave, little effort to promote and enforce flexibility in the workplace, and no clear direction on child care. In the latter

case, this may be because of the ambivalence reflected in a 1994 public opinion poll, which found that 77 percent of Canadians support a national subsidized child care service for everyone who needs it while at the same time 77 percent believe that families should take primary responsibility for child care.¹⁶ Statistics Canada’s 1995 data on gender roles and the consequences of female employment for children show that “attitudes towards women, work, and family are somewhat contradictory and characterized by both traditional and contemporary views of the division of labour.”¹⁷ For example, 46 percent of both male and female respondents agreed that “a job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children,” with 38 percent disagreeing, and only 3 percent strongly disagreeing; 15 percent didn’t know.

A key factor in Canada’s approach to family policy is its federal structure, which historically has mitigated against a national policy. Instead, the federal government has tended to focus on income support while provincial governments have been concerned with providing welfare assistance to families and a broad range of services. In many provinces, child protection is the overwhelming government concern, again with the exception of Quebec, whose declining birth rate combined with strong nationalist sentiment has led to an explicit pronatalist element in its family policy. Quebec’s family policy also seeks to help parents in child rearing through parental training, and to integrate their work and family responsibilities through the provision of child care and leave.

In family policy, as in most social policy, Canada lies between the United States and Western Europe in its approach. It is much closer to the Western European countries in its investment in key social infrastructure such as health and education. At the federal level, it tends to have some of the family benefits that European countries have introduced, but at a lower level than many of the European countries examined in this paper, and a higher level than in the United States. For example:

- 15 weeks of maternity leave and 10 weeks parental leave, funded at 55 percent of wages up to a weekly ceiling;
- an income-tested child tax benefit, replacing a universal family allowance and tax credit;
- tax relief for child care expenses provided through a deduction recently increased to \$7,000 for each child under seven.

One area in which Canada is closer to the United States than most European countries is its historically high child poverty rates, which until recently were second only to the United States among the industrialized countries. (The United Kingdom's poverty rates have now overtaken Canada's.) As a consequence, in the early 1990s some advocacy groups in Canada began to focus on the reduction of child poverty as their primary objective. In response, the federal and provincial governments have recently developed a National Child Benefit to which the federal government has allocated significant incremental funding. Critics worry that this focus on children rather than their families' circumstances takes the pressure off governments to provide jobs for the parents of poor children, but they acknowledge the political appeal of a focus on children.

To generalize, Canada's "story" on family policy (which is actually two stories) is dominated by ambivalence and individual rather than social family responsibility. While from time to time and in various places there has been a focus on child protection or child poverty, when confronted with the major demographic and labour market changes facing families, Canadian governments have failed to act due to a lack of consensus and/or a reluctance to interfere. s

France's Family Policy Story

France is most often cited as a country with an "explicit" family policy, which is usually characterized as driven by pronatalist concerns. This focus

on pronatalism is particularly reflected in France's "family code," introduced in 1939, which contained numerous provisions aimed at increasing the birth rate. As J. Commaille notes in his report on France in *Family Policy in EEC Countries*, "the instigation of family allowances which increased with the number of children irrespective of means, a system of tax relief in respect of dependents and an allowance for the 'at home' mother, are still measures which show the political will of the time to give preferential treatment to a specific family model – the family with at least three children with the mother at home – in order to encourage a type of reallocations within the framework of welfare transfers as a whole, based on the single criterion of the financial burden represented by the child in the family."¹⁸

More recently observers have argued that other objectives, such as horizontal equity, poverty reduction, and helping women balance work and family life, dominate the development of family policy in France. Indeed, a French official interviewed for this study argued that demographic policy had become a taboo subject in French political debate, and pointed out that when asked in a recent public opinion poll about the objectives of family policy in France, only 4 percent of the respondents identified increasing the fertility rate. This is a major turning point in the development of family policy in France. He also noted that, since in France new family policy measures are simply added to old measures rather than replacing them, family policy in France is actually an accumulation of historical and current measures that reflect the range of objectives that over time accounted for the introduction of each individual measure.

While the French Constitution affirms the nation's duty to the family, the 1994 Family Law talks about "supporting the harmony of the family." This reflects the evolution of French family policy to "a more formally neutral policy, intended to offer women an equal choice between caring for their children themselves and working outside."¹⁹ As Commaille wrote in 1989, "although the desire to increase the birth rate is not entirely absent, the

basic principles behind the family policy and population policy of the socialists currently in power are to remain neutral.”²⁰ He quotes from a 1985 document of the Ministère des Affaires sociales et de la Solidarité nationale, which notes that the state “should not encourage a particular type of family rather than a couple living together – the legitimate family rather than that of the common law family – or the two parent family rather than the single parent family. It should respect the choice of individuals, and those individuals only – Neither should it encourage couples to have more or fewer children – nor encourage mothers to work or not; the choice is exclusively up to them.”²¹

The French government provides a wide-ranging mix of income security, labour market policies, and services such as child care to support families and provide options for balancing work and family life. Sixty-eight percent of married mothers in France were employed in 1992, and 72 percent of those employed worked full time. French family policies include:

- 16 weeks maternity benefits at 84 percent of a basic daily wage for the first and second child, and 24 weeks for the third child and subsequent children;
- up to 3 years unpaid parental leave, which includes job protection and can be combined with part-time employment or education and training;
- family allowances;
- single-parent allowance, which acts as a minimum income;
- sliding income tax rate for families;
- extensive child care financed through payroll taxes, general revenues, and parental fees; and
- tax relief for child care expenses.

Both maternity and parental benefits, as well as family allowances, are funded by employer and

employee payroll taxes as well as government revenues. But France is perhaps best known for its extensive child care system. Twenty to 25 percent of children under the age of three attend day care centres or *crèches* run by the ministry of social affairs, and about 95 percent of children aged three to six attend *écoles maternelles*, which are preschools operated by the ministry of education. Both systems are financed through payroll taxes paid by both employees and employers. There is no tuition for the *écoles maternelles*, but parents pay 25 percent of the costs of the *crèches*. Baker notes that while a mother’s helper or nanny is the child care of choice for many middle-class parents, it is very expensive, although there is tax relief for such expenses. Baker also points out that there are waiting lists for child care spaces, particularly in Paris, and many parents who use relatives and family day care would prefer regulated care.²²

France’s neutral strategy with respect to family policy is curious given its proximity to countries that have taken a more deliberate positioning, such as Sweden on gender equality, Germany on the traditional breadwinner model, and the Netherlands on support for balancing work and family life. This may be a result of the explicit focus in France’s family policy on children. This could be linked to France’s pronatalist objectives since, as Pedersen argues, “demographic concerns led to the belief that children are not just the private responsibility of parents, but rather are a collective resource that add to France’s demographic and economic strength, and therefore have a place in state policy.”²³ A French academic interviewed for this paper argued that France’s family policy is centred around values of free choice, equal opportunity, and *le familialisme*, which he described as a belief that “the family is the basis of society and the first place of socialization of the child.” One French official has described the family as “the first place for integrating the child into social life,” and argued that the family needs to be supported in this role. Others point to the influence of “maternalist” ideas in France, which emphasize both the needs and rights of women as mothers but also focus on the welfare of children.

To generalize, France has historically been seen to have one of the most coherent and deliberate family policies of industrialized countries, and certainly one of the most generous. Its original pronatalist goals have since been overtaken by other objectives, such as helping parents balance their work and family lives. Unlike some other European countries, it attempts to retain a neutral policy position with respect to the lifestyles of families, whether in their choice of marital status or employment. Over time it has developed a package of family policy measures that cumulatively, but perhaps not systematically, seek to support whatever choices families make. It should be noted that “there are critics who would argue, however, that the [neutral] policy does not really support either choice adequately and that despite acknowledgement of the value of both options, French policy does not appear to be fully committed to either.”²⁴

Germany’s Family Policy Story

Germany’s approach to family policy is driven by a strong consensus around the traditional breadwinner model, which is reflected in a number of government measures. The consensus appears to be so strong that the recent reunification of East Germany and West Germany has resulted in the dismantling of the extensive support system provided for working parents by the socialist state in East Germany, rather than any extension of supports to help parents balance work and family in West Germany. As a result, the German family policy story is in part a test of what happens when a society loses measures such as universal child care and generous maternity leave that support female labour force participation. As Marina Adler indicates in a recent article on “Social Change and Declines in Marriage and Fertility in Eastern Germany,” “between 1989 and 1994, the birth rate in Eastern Germany fell from 12.0 to 5.1 per 1,000, while fertility in the West remained stable at around 11.0 per 1,000. In addition, marriage rates in the East have been cut in half.”²⁵ Since the unemployment rate of East German women has doubled, Adler points out that “the East German trends in

marriage and fertility rates after 1989 move in the opposite direction of women’s employment rates: as unemployment doubles, marriage and birth rates are cut in half.”²⁶

Germany’s Constitution provides for the protection of both marriage and the family, and, while governments have recognized the changing patterns of family structures, they have been unwilling to introduce policies that would make these changes official. In any case, Germany has probably seen the least change in family lifestyles of the countries studied in this paper. It has a very low divorce rate, likely as a result of the complexity and high cost of divorce proceedings. Prior to reunification, only 8 percent of West German families were lone-parent families compared to much higher rates in other European countries. In 1994, women represented only 43 percent of the labour force, and this level presumably reflects the impact of reunification since “female labour participation in West Germany was 30 percent lower than East Germany’s at the time of reunification.”²⁷ Forty-one percent of married mothers were employed in 1991, but only 51 percent of them worked full time.

Germany’s family policy includes a number of measures that explicitly support the traditional model of the father as the breadwinner and the mother as the caregiver. These include:

- parental leave up to three years;
- minimal state support for child care and limited tax relief for child care expenses;
- income support equivalent to about 50 percent of the cost of raising a child (according to one interviewee); and
- income tax splitting, which rewards higher incomes, particularly if the wife does not work.

German family policy is particularly concerned with horizontal equity, that is, the need to recognize the financial burden of raising children. This principle is prominent in the debate on family

policy and was recently the focus of a decision of the Federal Constitutional Court. A 1990 report on German family policy notes that the definition of the family policy of the federal ministry of family is the following: “objectives are the creation of conditions that do no longer disadvantage the decision for a family life, for children and home activities in comparison to other decisions.”²⁸ Although the German child benefit is already equivalent to what one German family lobby has calculated is half of the cost of raising a child, the lobby is pushing for an even higher benefit and regards this as a particularly important area in which the government should be held accountable.

The German official, academic, and advocate interviewed for this study all noted that in Germany women’s equality issues were seen to clash with family issues. While women’s equality issues were part of the public discourse, they were not seen to have an impact on family policy beyond the level of rhetoric. Indeed, one academic noted that research in men’s rights and roles had increased during the late 1990s. Moreover, surveys of gender-role attitudes in Germany taken in the early 1990s indicated that “gender role ideology appears to have become more traditional.”²⁹ For example, the percentage of West Germans giving the “pro-feminist” response to the statement “it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the children” increased from 30 percent for both men and women in 1982 to 51 percent for women and 49 percent for men in 1991. A year later, the pro-feminist response rate had fallen to 47 percent for women and 41 percent for men. Observers caution, however, that “the question remains whether this change is a consequence of the economic upheaval associated with reunification, in which case the apparent backlash may be reversed once economic stability is reversed.”³⁰

In general, the German family policy story reflects a very strong societal consensus on support for the traditional breadwinner model and governments willing to introduce measures that explicitly promote this model. In the context of reunification, when confronted with an extensive support system

for dual-earner families, the government chose to dismantle the system rather than extend it to the rest of the new Germany.

Netherlands’ Family Policy Story

Unlike Germany, the Netherlands, which had an equally strong belief in the breadwinner model, has recently chosen to abandon that model and explicitly adopt family policy measures focussed on helping parents balance work and family lives. But the shift in behaviour from the traditional breadwinner model to the modern, dual-earner model is occurring slowly, and there continues to be debate about the new model. Moreover, some in the Netherlands are taking a distinctly different approach to concerns about balancing work and family lives, as evidenced by their discussion of a model of dual-earner families in which both partners work part time.

Although the breadwinner model was as entrenched in Netherlands’ society as it was in West Germany, one key difference is that, while in Germany the traditional model was reflected in federal legislation and then implemented by the state governments, in the Netherlands, there is a tradition of non-interference by the state in family matters. In his report on Netherlands family policy, J. M. L. Jonker notes “the strong emphasis on the autonomy and the closed character of the family in the ‘family concept’ that we (including the government) use as the standard: outsiders (again including the government) have no right to interfere in family affairs. This appears, for instance, from the way in which parental authority is protected by law.”³¹

In the Netherlands, the breadwinner model was endorsed through agreements reached in a tripartite process involving employers, unions, and governments. For example, it was agreed that the minimum wage would be set high enough that a male worker could support a dependent spouse and two

children. Women's wages were set lower and the first \$5,000 of a married woman's wages was taxed away because her husband was receiving a breadwinner wage. Child care was also negotiated through tripartite agreements rather than provided by the government. As a result of these provisions, female labour force participation used to be the lowest in the world, according to an advocate in the Netherlands interviewed for this paper, and the Netherlands is categorized by Saraceno as a country in which women's activity rate drops with the birth of the first child.³²

This non-interference in the family was compounded in the last 20 years by the reluctance of the Dutch to refer to "family policy" in political discourse. One advocate interviewed for this paper recalled that in the 1960s the cultural elite adopted a distinctly "anti-family" attitude, arguing that living in families created problems for their members. He also pointed out that the Dutch government had opposed the identification of the International Year of the Family. Family policy became taboo as it increasingly became associated with the "conservative" breadwinner model, and even worse, efforts to increase fertility. Political parties are reluctant to talk about family policy, with the exception of the Christian Democrats who worry that the traditional family will disappear.

Much of the literature on Dutch society and the interviewees for this paper commented on the impact of "individualism" on Dutch policy. The official definition of the family adopted in 1996 reflects this approach: each unit of one or more adults living with and taking responsibility for the care and upbringing of one or more children. It is a definition that is inclusive in that it does not refer to the marital status or sexual orientation of the adults, and also is focussed on the individuals in the unit. "Structural and cultural societal changes, such as the processes of individualization, secularization, and emancipation have been translated in changes with respect to marriage and the family, resulting in a variety of primary living arrangements. The right to equal opportunities, irrespective of the way in which people have arranged their primary

relationships, leaves no room to favour the traditional family above other lifestyles."³³

Van de Kaa and van den Brekel, writing in *Social Europe: The European Union and the Family*, characterize Dutch family-oriented policies as "new policy orientations that are aimed at creating better conditions for people (men and women) to reconcile their option to start a family with children with their wish to participate in society and to be active in the labour market... The government has considered it important to formulate 'a policy to create conditions in which both men and women are provided with better opportunities for combining parenthood, the choice of children, with other lifestyle options, such as employment outside the home.' The government has explicitly declared that [this] policy... will be continued in the 1990s within the government policy programme on equal opportunities."³⁴

The measures used by the Dutch government to implement this policy include:

- 16 weeks of maternity leave at full wage replacement;
- unpaid parental leave up to six months;
- child care (provided largely through collective agreements);
- universal family allowance, which covers 33 percent of the cost of raising a child; and
- flexible employment conditions, e.g., government employees can reduce their working hours by half for up to six months and receive 75 percent of their salary for the leave hours.

The shift to the modern dual-earner family is still underway in the Netherlands and there are signs of continuing ambivalence about moving away from the traditional breadwinner model. "50 per cent of married mothers and sixty per cent of lone mothers with children under the age of 18 are still full-time housewives, and of those

who are employed a majority work part-time.”³⁵ Only 25 percent of employed married women work full time. Schools break for an hour and a half at lunch, and the expectation is that small children will eat lunch at home. Recently political debate focussed on extending shop hours in the evenings and its impact on families eating dinner together.

In general, the Netherlands family policy story is one of a shift away from the breadwinner model to an inclusive and individualistic approach to helping men and women balance their work and family lives. The Netherlands story has some unique aspects in that there is some discussion of both parents working part time to achieve this balance, although it is currently women who are predominantly working part time. Delivery of family policy in the Netherlands is also somewhat unique in that it is largely the subject of tripartite discussions and collective agreement rather than government programs. While behaviour and attitudes in the Netherlands do not consistently conform to the modern family model, the Dutch appear to be looking at the Scandinavian countries as their model rather than Germany.

Norway’s Family Policy Story

Norway can be described as a country grappling with blending support for the traditional breadwinner model and a longstanding child centred focus with increasing female labour participation and an objective of gender equality. Arnlaugh Leira argues that “preference for the gender-differentiated nuclear family was more pronounced in Norway [than in Denmark or Sweden], where this family form has attracted stronger political and popular support than in the neighbouring countries.”³⁶ For example, child care policies were traditionally more oriented to child development and socialization than support for the working mother. “Nevertheless, women’s equality is a major and explicit policy objective, as it is in the other Scandinavian countries, and in Norway a feature of the debate around ‘women’s work’ was that, to some extent, domestic caring is

recognized as ‘work’ and assistance with child care is not linked to biological reproduction.”³⁷

This blending of objectives and emphases is reflected in a June 1996 speech delivered by the Minister of Children and Family Affairs, which noted that “family policy in Norway has to a great extent focussed on enabling parents to combine caring for young children with having a job. It is the present government’s view that family policy and gender equality are closely connected; good family policy is based on and strengthens gender equality. The objective is to enable women and men to participate in working life on an equal footing and to share work in the home. Similarly it is an important political objective to ensure that our policy relating to gender equality supports a committed family life.”³⁸

While there appears to be consensus in Norway about the desirability of parents spending more time with their children, the issue for debate is how to achieve this objective. The same minister quoted above, in noting the conflict between those who would resolve the issue by allowing one parent to stay at home and those who believe that the family needs services and parental leave, stated that “I want to give more time to parents with small children without this resulting in women having to go back home. Instead of cash support, we should involve the men.”³⁹ That minister, who was a member of the previous Labour coalition government, which resigned in October 1997, had built onto the existing generous package of parental leave benefits (e.g., 42 weeks of parental leave with full wage replacement or 52 weeks at 80 percent), a “paternity quota” that entitles the father to four weeks of this period, which is lost if the father does not use his entitlement. As a result, the take-up of parental leave benefits by fathers increased from 4 percent in 1993 to 70 percent in 1995.

The new centrist coalition government, on the other hand, campaigned on a promise to provide more tax credits for child care and to a lesser extent invest in more child care spaces. In its first speech from the throne in October 1997, the government

noted that it would “pursue a family policy that helps to enhance gender equality. By means of a family policy reform, the parents of young children will be given greater freedom of choice as regards forms of care for their children.”⁴⁰ The family policy reform is a child care allowance or cash grant for families that do not have places in child care facilities. As of August 1998, these families receive a grant that corresponds to the government subsidy for a full-day child care space.

Kari Waerness notes that “the new child care allowance has become the most heated topic in social policy debate in many years. The resistance toward this reform from leading Labour politicians as well as from many political and academic feminists seems to be formidable. Opinion polls show however that a majority of the population and also most young women welcome it.”⁴¹ Waerness argues that “if we try to predict some probable consequences of this reform more on the basis of empirical knowledge rather than from a political or ideological standpoint, we have to admit that it is difficult to come up with any clear conclusions.”⁴² Women might decrease their labour force participation, particularly in low-wage jobs, or they could increase their participation because of the additional family income available to fund child care. Values studies suggest that Norwegians are less “progressive” on the impact of women’s employment on the family but more progressive on gender role issues, indicating a “family friendly” rather than “gender conservative”⁴³ approach, which might result in more parents staying at home to care for their children.

Leira has argued that the partnership between the state and mothers evident in Sweden was not adopted in Norway, which tended to view child care issues, for example, as a private matter. Nonetheless, Norway has adopted a wide range of family policies, some of them quite innovative, such as the paternity quota and the time account scheme, which makes it possible for both parents to combine part-time work and partial paternity benefits. For example, one parent could take full leave at 100 percent pay for eight months and then another

could combine 80 percent work and 20 percent leave over a period of almost two years. Other family policy measures include:

- a universal family allowance;
- tax deduction for child care both receipted and unreceipted;
- unpaid leave of absence for up to one year and up to three years for lone parents;
- reduced working hours for a shorter week or shorter days up to two years, with the agreement of the employer; and
- benefits for lone parents including child care, a transitional benefit on top of family allowance, and advance maintenance payments.

Like the Netherlands, Norway appears to be a society whose government policies are intended to support a transition with respect to family models, but behaviour in Norway suggests ambivalence about the shift to the modern dual-earner family, and particularly the impact on children. While the majority of families are dual-earner families and 77 percent of married mothers are employed, only 53 percent of them are in full-time jobs. Norway also continues to support lone parents to stay at home, unlike other Scandinavian countries. Norway has been able to develop a generous family benefit package, appearing third in a ranking of industrialized countries based on an index of average income support offered to families with children.⁴⁴ It is launching a social experiment with its new child care allowance, which may provide lessons to other countries about parents’ preferences for balancing work and family if support is available.

Sweden’s Family Policy Story

Swedish family policy has historically been focussed on issues such as female labour force participation and gender equality. This perspective originated in the 1930s with the publication of a

book entitled *Crisis in the Population Question*, by Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, in 1934, the endorsement of the Myrdal proposals by the Social Democratic government elected in 1932, the subsequent discussion of these proposals by a Commission on Population appointed by the government in 1935, and their implementation in the prewar and postwar period.

The impact of the Myrdals on the development of Swedish family cannot be overstated. This was due both to the influence of their innovative ideas and their prominence in the newly elected Social Democratic government, which would remain in power for some 30 years. The Myrdals argued that declining fertility rates were the result of economic factors rather than moral issues, and recommended “subsidizing the well-being of families so that child bearing would be economically feasible, [arguing] that women would have more children if government programs helped them combine motherhood with employment.”⁴⁵ Their ideas about women’s right to employment coincided with the commitment of the Social Democrats to social equality and full employment. But “what made the Myrdals’ recommendations so radical was that they were suggesting that Sweden develop a pronatalist policy that made society, rather than individual women, increase their commitment to family life.”⁴⁶ Thus, from its origins, Swedish family policy was based on “an acknowledgement of state responsibility in the support of families.”⁴⁷

The key elements of Sweden’s family policy are the provision of public child care funded through payroll taxes paid by employers, general revenues, and parental fees covering about 15 percent of the cost, and lengthy paid parental leave, 85 percent of which is funded through employer payroll taxes and the remaining 15 percent is paid by government. In 1991, 57 percent of parents who worked used public day care. As of 1996, municipal authorities are obliged to provide child care spaces for all children between one-and-a-half and six years old and before and after school care. Parents are entitled to one year of parental leave, receiving 85 percent

of their income for the first 30 days, 75 percent for the next 210 days, and a flat rate thereafter. Thirty days of leave were set aside in 1995 for a “father’s month,” which can only be taken by fathers.

In addition to these key measures, Sweden’s family policy includes:

- 120 days leave to care for children under 12 at 75 percent of wage;
- universal, non-taxable family allowance;
- advance maintenance payments to lone parents; and
- right to reduce work day until child is eight.

As in Norway, there has recently been a heated debate about giving parents freedom of choice with respect to child care. A conservative government introduced a child care allowance but the Social Democrats abolished it when they regained power. Nonetheless, an academic interviewed for this paper predicted that the issue would return to the public debate.

Sweden is often described as being at the forefront of family policy, having addressed issues such as increasing female labour force participation rates, the emergence of the dual-earner model as the dominant model, and high rates of lone parents ahead of many other countries. Swedish family policy is both more comprehensive and more generous than that of most countries. In a ranking of industrialized countries using an index of average income support to families, Sweden tops the list before housing expenditures are considered, ranking fifth when these are added.⁴⁸

Yet, other factors need to be mentioned if one is to have a complete picture of Sweden’s family policy. Studies have found that the division of household labour in Sweden remains unequal, and Swedish mothers retain the primary responsibility

for child rearing. Although “there has been a steady increase in the usage of leave by fathers, ... mothers use 92 percent of the available days... and 49 percent of fathers do not take any parental leave at all.”⁴⁹ Fathers’ use of leave to take care of a sick child has actually fallen from nearly half in 1987 to a third in 1997, according to an academic interviewed for this study.

One explanation for the continuing gender inequality may be that although 80 percent of Swedish mothers work, nearly half of employed married mothers work part time, i.e., less than 30 hours per week. Also, the Swedish fertility rate is one of the highest in Europe. Another explanation, however, may lie in Swedish values about the consequences of female employment for children. Comparison of the results of the 1991 World Values Survey for the countries under review reveals that although the Swedish respondents are *most* likely to agree that “a working mother can establish as warm a relationship with her children as a stay at home mother” and *most* likely (with the exception of the French) to agree that “having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person,” they are also the *most* likely (with the exception of only the Germans) to agree that “a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works.”

This may be why Baker notes that “controversies continue in Sweden about whether children are being neglected or left too much in the care of non-family members as a result of policies promoting full employment. Encouraging women to accept the ‘male model’ of employment may result in negative consequences for children.”⁵⁰

In general, Swedish family policy is characterized by consensus around objectives of gender equality and female labour force participation, a very strong commitment to the desirability of parents taking care of their children in their first year and the state providing public child care for the remainder of the pre-school years, and agreement on the allocation of significant resources to income support for families.

United Kingdom’s Family Policy Story

As in Germany, family policy in Britain is driven by a strong underlying support for the traditional breadwinner model. Unlike in Germany, however, the government does little to promote or support this model. While some argue that Britain took a more progressive, if still “hesitant,” approach to families in the postwar expansion of the welfare state, 18 years with a Conservative government in power has left its mark. “Since 1979, the trend has been in the opposite direction, with government systematically opposed to further legislation that could increase the welfare dependency of families or impose additional burdens on employers.”⁵¹ The election of a Labour Party in 1997 has not led to significant changes, with the exception of the move to encourage lone mothers to work. One academic interviewed for this paper commented on the degree of consistency in the Tory and Labour approaches to family policy. While there has been a noticeable increase in political rhetoric about the family, over the past 20 years, “no political party has identified itself with the social and economic interests of the family.”⁵²

This consistent support for a limited state role in family matters reflects British values about the privacy of the family. This is particularly evident in Britain’s approach to child care, which is generally left entirely to families to sort out for themselves. Moreover, provision of child care appears to be driven more by the needs of children than working parents. A government publication entitled “Child Welfare in Britain,” notes that “it is recognized that a young child’s overall development of skills is likely to be enhanced through being with his or her peers during the day. Some types of day care facilities also help to meet the needs of working mothers.”⁵³

Like Germany, Britain demonstrates a high degree of congruence in values and behaviour with respect to the family. Comparative analysis of values surveys in Europe indicates a very slow rate of change in attitudes about gender roles in Britain, although

support for the importance of women's labour force participation has remained relatively steady and at a relatively high level. Scott, Alwin, and Braun conclude that "there has been a slow but clear shift in support of women's labour force participation. Nevertheless, the majority of both men and women are still uneasy about the conflicts that can occur between employment and child care."⁵⁴ This uneasiness is reflected in British behaviour, particularly the way the British balance work and family responsibilities. Although two-thirds of British families are dual-earner families (largely to pay for housing, according to an academic interviewed for this paper), only 10-15 percent of all households have both partners working full time. Only one-third of employed married mothers work full time compared to 70 percent of working married mothers in the United States, Canada, and France. Scott et al. speculate that this "allows married women to contribute to the household income and gain some economic independence, while not posing any fundamental challenge to the traditional division of roles that reaffirm gendered identities."⁵⁵

Government policy to support changes in the female labour force participation and the significant increase in dual-earner families has been limited and introduced much later than in the rest of Europe. These measures include:

- 18 weeks of statutory maternity pay at 90 percent of the previous wage for 6 weeks and 12 weeks at a flat rate;
- 40 weeks unpaid family leave; and
- child care subsidies only for low-income families.

Income support to families, however, is very generous, perhaps reflecting a concern about poverty in the British welfare state rather than a particular focus on families. Britain's income support package includes a universal Child Benefit, an additional One Parent Benefit, and a Family Credit for low-income working parents. In a ranking of industrialized countries using an index of average income support offered to families with children,

Britain is in the middle of the pack, along with Germany and the Netherlands."⁵⁶ Nonetheless, it is experiencing a rapidly rising child poverty rate, which recently became the second highest in the Western industrialized countries.

In contrast, then, to the other European countries discussed in this study, there appears to be remarkably limited interest in issues of female labour force participation, gender equality or balancing work and family responsibilities in Britain. British values reflect concern for the consequences for families of mothers, including lone parents, working, and likely as a result, the percentage of employed married mothers in Britain who work full time ranks among the lowest of industrialized countries. British values associated with the privacy of the family, combined with the previous Conservative government's reluctance to intervene in the family or regulate employers' behaviour, have ensured that family policy in Britain is limited but nonetheless coherent. This consistency, despite Britain's proximity to other countries with much more highly developed family policies, illustrates the profound importance of values concerning the role of the state in family matters and a strong consensus on either a traditional or modern family model in the development of family policy.

United States' Family Policy Story

Most comparative family policy studies place Britain and the United States in the same category, largely due to the limited role of the state in family matters in both of these countries, and their shared values concerning the privacy of family matters. But from the perspective of gender role values and particularly female labour force participation behaviour, these countries are very different.

Studies of values related to gender roles have found "while for many gender-role attitude issues Britain is similar to the United States, it is somewhat more similar to Germany with respect to the labour-force involvement of women."⁵⁷ An interesting

difference, even with respect to shared values on gender-roles, however, was the different pace of change in attitudes. While, as was noted earlier, in Britain attitudes toward gender role changed slowly but steadily, in the United States “the marked period of change was in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the pace of change has slowed considerably over the past decade, although the trend is still in a pro-feminist direction.”⁵⁸ Indeed, data from the 1991 World Values Survey suggest that British values may even have overtaken American values with respect to gender roles in the early 1990s, with more American than British respondents agreeing that “a job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children.”

More significant is the difference in female labour force participation rates in the two countries and, therefore, the overall pattern of change. Although in 1990 a higher percentage of two-parent families were dual-earner families in Britain, the percentage of employed married mothers working full time was 70 percent in the United States in 1996, twice as high as the percentage in Britain. While both countries provide a low level of support to help parents balance work and family lives, the absence of a family policy in the United States has meant that the brunt of this significant change has largely been borne by families.

As in Britain, Americans historically did not refer to family policy. In the 1970s, however, the Democrats began to use the term and during the 1976 presidential election campaign Jimmy Carter committed to holding a White House Conference on the Family. The fallout is illustrative of the polarized views on family policy, more often discussed as “family values,” in the United States. The planning for the conference was quickly overtaken by debates about abortion, sex education, the equal rights amendment, gay rights, and even the very definition of the family. In response, organizers renamed the event as “the White House Conference on Families” and thought they had diffused the issue. In “Family Values: The Sequel,” however, Arlene Skolnick notes that “they were surprised to find that the name change galvanized conservative

forces determined to limit the definition of the family to the basic unit of husband, wife, and children. One of the original architects of the New Right... [believes] that the White House conference was the decisive event that turned religious activists toward Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party.”⁵⁹

Skolnick argues that the war over family values, which is unique to the United States among the countries discussed in this paper, “has been a convenient way for both conservatives and liberals to avoid confronting the harder political questions: what kind of country are we becoming? Will we become like the rich democracies, conservative and social democratic, who invest in families, whatever their form, as an essential part of the nation’s social infrastructure? Or will we continue further down the path of increasing inequality?”⁶⁰

Skolnick suggests that it is Americans’ devotion to family values that makes this whole issue so divisive, and John Gillis argues that this is due to Americans’ reverence for the family as a religious symbol, whether or not they are religious or even live in a traditional family. Despite dramatic changes in family structures, both point to the dissonance between “the way Americans think our families ought to be and the complex, often messy realities of our lives – or as Gillis puts it, the gap between the families we live with, and the symbolic families we live by.”⁶¹

In this context, family policy benefits in the United States are, not surprisingly, somewhat limited. For example:

- 12 weeks of unpaid parental leave (although there is also coverage in some employer benefit plans);
- subsidies for child care for welfare recipients;
- a child care tax credit and a tax exemption for child care provided by the employer; and
- earned income tax credit for low-income working parents.

These limited supports for families, many of which are trying to juggle two full-time jobs and child care, seem inconsistent with President Clinton's speech in January 1998 announcing a child care package (which basically expanded existing benefits) in which he said, "but there is no more important responsibility on us to apply the values of America, the timeless values of America, to modern conditions, none is more important than making sure every American can balance the dual responsibilities succeeding as parents and succeeding at work. There is no more significant challenge."⁶² (sic) Recent welfare reform has reduced the access of some families, particularly lone-parent families, to welfare while expanding

access to job training and child care. Interestingly, opponents of publicly funded child care supported this legislation.

Family policy in the United States can thus be characterized as reflecting both values that limit government involvement in the family and polarized views about the implications of the demographic and labour force changes that have occurred in American families. These polarized views on family issues appear to preclude the introduction of measures such as those which have been adopted by most of the other countries discussed in this study, even those with much less dramatic changes in their female labour force participation rates.

Comparative Analysis of Values

We have argued, as have others, that “one of the most significant changes in family life in the last few decades concerns the unprecedented growth of women in paid employment.”⁶³ It is important, however, to keep this change in perspective since, as has been noted, mothers’ labour force participation is predominantly part time in some of the countries under review. Moreover, there is little evidence of significant change in the overall division of labour within households as a result of this change, to the extent that women are often described as working two shifts. Some have even suggested that “there may have been a reversal in the public’s support of more egalitarian family roles, as attention is focussed on the negative impact that women’s employment may have on family life in terms of the real conflicts involved between the respective claims of paid work and bringing up children.”⁶⁴

In this section, we explore research that has been done on values in the eight countries under review related to gender roles and the consequences for children of both parents working. The objective is to explore each country’s values on these issues to try to explain the particular focus of each country’s family policy and the family model on which it seems to be based, and also to assess cross-national variations. On these particular value questions, there appears to be a high degree of convergence in values, which is often inconsistent with the divergence in either behaviour or policy evident among those countries.

A number of caveats are warranted about the methodology used for this research and the approach adopted in this section. First, there are limited trend data available for questions asked in the 1991 World Values Survey in all of the countries, making it difficult to compare trends in these countries over time. In order to draw out some sense of possible trends, we have taken data from a number of papers that report on the same questions but from different surveys, e.g., the General Social Survey (GSS) in the United States, the ALLBUS in Germany, the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS), the General Social Survey in Canada, the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), the European Values Study, and the World Values Survey. Specifically, the data for 1991 come from the World Values Survey and references to earlier or more recent data are based on the other surveys. This blending of survey sources may result in inconsistencies in the trends discussed in this paper.

More importantly these kinds of survey questions raise a number of specific methodological problems. As Scott et al. note, “social desirability effects are sometimes evident in responses to questions about the sexual division of labour, with men claiming more involvement in child care and household chores than their wives are willing to credit. It seems likely that there will be similar problems with response bias regarding gender-role attitudes. Furthermore, some of the items that we use here can be criticised because they are open to more than

Table 1

Data¹ on the four gender role questions, eight countries

	Canada	France	Germany	Netherlands	Norway	Sweden	United Kingdom	United States
V220 – A job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children.								
Year	1991	1991	1988	1991	1991	1991	1988	1991
Agree ²	40	61	38	36	51	n/a	36	33
Disagree ²	52	29	33	55	49	n/a	42	38
Don't know	9	10	19	9	n/a ³	n/a	22	7
V221 – Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay.								
Year	1991	1991	1991	1991	1991	1991	1991	1991
Agree ²	66	53	44	50	53	53	55	70
Disagree ²	27	35	38	40	47	31	35	24
Don't know	7	12	18	10	n/a ³	16	9	6
V222 – Having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person.								
Year	1991	1991	1988	1991	1991	1991	1988	1991
Agree ²	53	76	65	52	75	68	60	43
Disagree ²	43	21	14	43	25	24	15	31
Don't know	4	4	16	5	n/a ³	9	25	5
V223 – Both the husband and the wife should contribute to household income.								
Year	1991	1991	1988	1991	1991	1991	1988	1991
Agree ²	66	77	47	29	74	85	69	49
Disagree ²	31	19	26	69	26	12	27	19
Don't know	4	4	21	2	n/a ³	3	4	30

1 1995 data – General Social Survey, Statistics Canada; 1991 data – World Values Survey; 1988 data ISSP, which include: West Germany – ALLBUS, United Kingdom – British Social Attitudes Survey, United States – General Social Survey. Numbers have been rounded so may not equal 100 percent particularly the 1988 data for Germany.

2 Agree rows include strongly agree. Disagree rows include strongly disagree.

3 Norway did not include a “don't know” category in the 1991 survey.

one interpretation. In addition, the items refer only to women's work and family roles and do not tap attitudes towards men's changing roles."⁶⁵

There is also the risk that employment behaviour will affect responses to questions about the consequences for their children and families of mothers working, particularly by women. While employment experience may make some women feel optimistic about the compatibility of work and family life, other women who are actually experiencing role conflict may nonetheless feel compelled to respond positively about the impact of women's employment on children.

As a result, it is only possible to draw conclusions from these data at the most basic qualitative level. No attempt is made to assess whether differences are statistically significant or to apply regression analysis to the data. We do not provide breakdowns of the data, for example, by gender or age of respondent, except where noted, in order to simplify the analysis, which is already difficult given the number of countries involved.

Three questions are often asked in these surveys about the consequences of women working, and four questions about gender roles. (The number in brackets refers to their designation in the World Values Survey.) They are:

- a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work. (V218)
- a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works. (V219)
- all in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job. (Used in ISSP)
- a job is alright but what most women really want is a home and children. (V220)
- being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay. (V221)
- having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person. (V222)

- both the husband and wife should contribute to household income. (V223)

Data on the four gender role questions for the eight countries follow in Table 1.

Looking at the responses across the eight countries, one finds "a considerable degree of conflict with regard to the tasks which men and women are expected to perform."⁶⁶ Over half of all respondents in all eight countries agree that "the best way for a woman to be independent is to have a job," but there is a significant imbalance in the responses in the eight countries. While over 65 percent of respondents in France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom agree, only a little more than half of respondents in Canada, the Netherlands, and the United States agree, although the percentage has increased significantly in the United States, up from 43 percent in 1988.

But, as Sheena Ashford and Noel Timms ask in *What Europe Thinks: A Study of Western European Values*, "is independence what women actually want?"⁶⁷ Their study of values in 10 countries (Britain, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal) reported in the 1990 European Values Study found that half of the respondents in these countries agreed that "a job is alright but what a woman really wants is a home and children," with a further 10 percent undecided. They found a similar level of support for the proposition that "being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay."⁶⁸ It should be noted that although this particular article does not report on variations in the responses from men and women, most studies of this kind have found such a variation. Specifically, women tend to be more supportive of mothers working outside the home and say they worry less about the consequences for children.

In the 1991 World Values Survey, over 40 percent of respondents in all of the countries, except the Netherlands, agree that women really want a home and children rather than a job. Opinion is totally split in Germany and Norway, and only in

Table 2
Data¹ on three questions related to the consequences of women working

	Canada	France	Germany	Netherlands	Norway	Sweden	United Kingdom	United States	
V218 – A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.									
Year	1991	1991	1991	1991	1991	1991	1991	1991	
Agree ²	68	72	39	70	69	71	68	71	
Disagree ²	30	26	55	28	31	27	30	27	
Don't know	2	1	6	2	n/a ³	2	3	2	
V219 – A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works.									
Year	1991	1991	1988	1991	1991	1991	1991	1988	
Agree ²	52	63	69	80	59	71	51	43	
Disagree ²	46	33	15	15	37	25	45	44	
Don't know	3	4	11	5	4	4	4	13	
All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job.⁴									
	Germany			Netherlands			United Kingdom		United States
Year	1988	1991	1994	1988	1991	1994	1988	1991	1994
Agree	74	63	76	66	47	62	59	56	49
Disagree	26	37	24	34	53	38	41	44	51
							50	50	48
							50	48	51

1 1995 data – General Social Survey, Statistics Canada; 1991 data – World Values Survey; 1988 data ISSP, which include: West Germany – ALLBUS; United Kingdom – British Social Attitudes Survey, United States – General Social Survey. Numbers have been rounded so may not equal 100 percent.

2 Agree rows include strongly agree. Disagree rows include strongly disagree.

3 Norway did not include a “don't know” in their 1991 survey.

4 Source for “all in all, family life suffers when a woman has a job” is the 1988 ISSP Survey.

the United Kingdom and the Netherlands do more people disagree than agree with the statement. The trend data available for Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States show that support for this rather stark statement has actually increased. Moreover, over 50 percent of the respondents in all of the countries, except Germany, agree that “being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay,” particularly in Canada and the United States with nearly 7 out of 10 respondents agreeing. But despite this support for the role of the housewife and the ambivalence about whether women really want a home and children rather than a job, there is a strong consensus in all of these countries, with the notable exception of the Netherlands, that both spouses should contribute to household income. Presumably this reflects the reality of the predominance of the dual-earner model in these countries, despite the apparent ambivalence about whether women would prefer to stay at home to take care of their children.

So, although across the eight countries there is considerable support for women achieving independence through a job, and a strong belief that both spouses should contribute to the family’s income, there remains some ambivalence about whether women really want to work and continuing support for the role of the housewife. Scott et al. conclude that, at least in Britain, “the ideology surrounding traditional gender roles is increasingly rejected, although there is evidence that the pace of change has slowed in the 1990s. There is, however, no evidence to suggest an anti-feminist backlash, although a majority of both men and women are still concerned that maternal employment can cause real difficulties for children.”⁶⁹ Similarly, Ashford and Timms conclude from their study of values in 10 European countries that “the dominant European view is that, in principle, women should contribute to household income and that doing paid work helps women become independent. When the issue of children’s welfare is brought into the picture, however, support for equality between the sexes is more equivocal.”⁷⁰ Data on three questions related to the consequences of women working are presented in Table 2.

Nearly 7 out of 10 respondents in all of the countries under review, with the sole exception of Germany, agree that a working mother can establish as warm a relationship with her children as a stay-at-home mother. Conversely, over 50 percent of Germans disagree. Of the four countries where there are data on the question of the overall impact on the family of a woman working, half or more of respondents agree that the family suffers, and this concern appears to have remained stable in all of these countries, except Britain. But the view is clear in all of the countries, except Norway, with respect to the impact of mothers of pre-school children working. Fifty percent or more of respondents in all of the other countries believe that pre-school children are likely to suffer if their mothers work, although the American and British respondents appear to be split on the question. Again, where there are trend data available (in Germany, Canada, and the United States), the percentage of respondents concerned about the impact appears to have increased.

Scott et al. found that in Britain, while 50 percent of women worried about the negative effects of women’s employment on family life and particularly on pre-school children, men were more likely to worry about the impact on pre-school children (6 out of 10) than the general negative effects (5 out of 10). In the United States, 50 percent of men believe a pre-school child will suffer if his or her mother works, compared to 40 percent of women. In Germany, 8 out of 10 men and 7 out of 10 women worry about the impact on pre-school children. This consistent variation between the responses of men and women is also evident in the data from Canada, Norway, and the Netherlands. It is difficult to know how to interpret this difference, however, since Ashford and Timms found in the European Values Study that, “not surprisingly women who work view the effects of employment on family life more optimistically than do women at home, although it should be noted that a substantial proportion of working women are employed despite holding traditional views.”⁷¹ It is not clear, however, whether the women holding traditional views really were more optimistic about the impact

of their employment on their family or felt it necessary to deny that there was any negative impact.

Scott et al. conclude, with respect to Britain, the United States, and Germany, that “in all three countries, however, gender-role attitudes have shifted in favour of greater egalitarianism. It is important not to overstate the extent of change. Even with the greater proportion ideologically committed to women’s rights to participate in the labour market, the overwhelming evidence remains that women’s family responsibilities, particularly those involving young children, must come first.”⁷² Considering the responses in some of the other countries discussed in this paper, including countries such as France, Sweden, and Norway, it would appear that this conclusion would likely apply across the board. Cross-national comparisons of these values consistently demonstrate that those who hold “liberal” values with respect to gender roles are often nonetheless concerned about the consequences for families, and pre-school children in particular, of women working.

Having explored values across the eight countries, we will now focus on values in each country, and discuss the linkage between values and the behaviour and policies discussed in the previous section. For ease of reference in recalling behaviour as expressed in labour force participation by mothers, which has been referred to earlier, Table 3 summarizes data on the labour force participation of married mothers in the eight countries. It is derived from a table prepared by Bradshaw et al. in 1996 on the percentage employed full time and part time (less than 30 hours per week) for married/cohabiting mothers.

Three clusters of countries are presented in the Table 3. The first cluster of Sweden and Norway shows two countries in which more than 75 percent of married mothers are employed, but a little more than half of them work less than thirty hours. (It should be noted that the two other Scandinavian countries, Denmark and Finland, have similar percentages of employed mothers working but much higher percentages of employed mothers working full time – 76 percent in Denmark and 89 percent in Finland.) The second cluster of France, the United

Table 3

Percentage employed full time and part time (less than 30 hours per week), for married/cohabiting mothers

	Full time	Part time	All employed	Percent of employed who work full time
Sweden (1994)	42	38	80	53
Norway (1991)	40	37	77	52
France (1992)	49	20	68	72
United States (1992)	45	19	64	70
Canada ¹ (1991)	45	20	65	70
Germany (1992)	21	20	41	51
United Kingdom (1990-92)	21	41	62	34
Netherlands (1994)	13	39	52	25

1 Source: Baker, Maureen and Phipps, Shelley, “Family Change and Family Policies: Canada,” in Kamerman, Sheila B. and Kahn, Alfred J. (eds.) (1997), *Volume I: Family Change and Family Policies in Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Source: Bradshaw, J. et al. (1997), “The Employment of Lone Parents: A Comparison of Policy in 20 Countries,” Family Policy Studies Centre, London, presented in OECD, *Family, Market and Community: Equity and Efficiency in Social Policy*.

States, and Canada have fewer married mothers working than countries in the first cluster but a much higher percentage of employed mothers working full time. The third cluster of Germany, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands have even lower percentages of married mothers working than the countries in the second cluster and much lower numbers of married mothers working full time.

Canada

In Canada, half of employed people are women and dual-earner families are the norm. Not surprisingly, then, 1995 data from the Statistics Canada General Social Survey show that 70 percent of Canadians agree that “both spouses should contribute to household income” although women were more likely to agree (73 percent) than men (68 percent). Similarly, women were more likely than men to agree that “the best way for a woman to be independent is to have a job.” But for both women and men, “the persistence of traditional views in a modern society has resulted in conflicting attitudes. People see value in women being in the workforce but feel that the family, especially young children, may suffer as a result.”⁷³ Trend data suggest that this ambivalence may be increasing. Comparing 1991 data from the World Values Survey and 1995 data from Statistics Canada reveals that in 1995 more people agreed (46 percent compared to 40 percent) that “women really want a home and children rather than a job,” with men and women agreeing equally. Moreover, Canadians were less likely in 1995 (63 compared to 68 percent) to agree that “a working mother can establish as warm relationships with their children as stay-at-home mothers,” and a majority (55 percent) continued to believe that “a pre-school child is likely to suffer if both parents work.” (Statistics for Quebec are unavailable, so it is impossible to say whether Quebec values on these issues vary from the values of other Canadians.)

Despite this apparent ambivalence, married mothers have entered the workforce in increasing numbers over the past two decades, and more often

than in many of the other countries discussed in this paper they hold a full-time job. In the absence of the public child care and parental leave provisions available in some of the other countries, families themselves, and in particular working mothers, have borne the brunt of change. But given the scope of these changes, Canadians may be beginning to consider the role that the government could play in helping them cope with this change, particularly those who would prefer to have a parent stay at home to take care of children. For example, a 1997 Southam/Compass poll looking at views on who in society most deserves a tax break found that “Canadians’ greatest tax sympathy is with the working poor, especially the working poor with children, and with families where one parent is at home... 94 percent favour a lot of or some priority for low income families with children while 86 percent favour a lot of or some priority for families with one stay-at-home parent.”⁷⁴

A 1994 survey reported in *The State of the Family in Canada* revealed that although 50 percent of parents would stay at home to take care of their children if they could afford it, 46 percent of parents working full time and 61 percent of parents working part time were happy with the balance of work and family in their lives. While 40 percent strongly agreed and 23 percent moderately agreed that “Canadian families are in crisis,” they were almost twice as likely (28 compared to 15 percent) to blame divorce and its effects on children than too many working parents. Alan Mirabelli at the Vanier Institute of the Family suggests that “to some extent what [this survey] does is sort of unearth what people would like – for instance, to have one partner stay home and look after the children. But economic reality simply doesn’t permit it to happen.”⁷⁵

France

The level of ambivalence in France about gender roles and the consequences of mothers working is even higher than in Canada. While 77 percent of the French agree that “both spouses should contribute to the family income” and that “the best way for a

woman to be independent is to have a job,” 6 in 10 agree that “woman really want a home and children rather than a job,” compared to 4 in 10 in Canada. While they agree that “working mothers can establish good relationships with their children,” 63 percent of the French compared to 55 percent of Canadians worry about the impact of a working mother on a pre-school child.

Perhaps even more interesting, despite the government’s significant investment in child care and the widespread use of child care in France, the French seem to prefer income support to allow a mother to stop working rather than child care to allow her to continue to work. A 1993 survey by the Centre de recherche pour l’étude et l’observation des conditions de vie (CREDOC) asked the respondents with which of the following statements they were more in agreement: “It is necessary to enable mothers of young children to continue to work while offering them more child care facilities and services” or “It is necessary, through financial support, to help women of young children to stop work temporarily.” Twenty-eight percent of respondents agreed to the first statement on child care while 71 percent preferred financial support. (Interestingly, only 0.8 percent of respondents did not have a view on this issue.) Trend data on this question from 1987 reveal an incredible amount of volatility in responses to this question, although support for child care increased from 21 to 28 percent.⁷⁶

The high level of ambivalence that appears to be expressed in these values, combined with high female labour force participation rates and the previously discussed focus on children in France, perhaps explains the government’s adoption of a “neutral” family policy rather than a proactive “breadwinner model” strategy as in Germany or “gender equality” strategy as in Sweden, or even a “balancing work and family” focus as in the Netherlands and Norway.

Germany

The values reported for Germany in the 1991 World Values Survey are generally consistent with

both German behaviour, as reflected in relatively low rates of labour force participation by mothers, particularly in full-time employment, and German family policy, which proactively supports the traditional breadwinner model. As might be expected, the Germans are less likely to agree than the respondents in all of the other countries except the Netherlands that “both spouses should contribute to household income.” But with respect to values related to gender roles, there are some surprises. The Germans are split on whether “women really want a home and children rather than a job.” Germany reports the lowest level of support for the view that “the role of the housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay,” and Germans are much more like their fellow Europeans than North Americans in their strong view (68 percent agreement) that “the best way for a woman to be independent is to have a job.” Interestingly, data from 1988 suggest that these values preceded reunification. Scott et al. found that East Germans and West Germans have similar perspectives on gender roles. “For example, in 1991, 68 percent of West Germans and 70 percent of East Germans rejected the belief that it is more important for a woman to help her husband with his career than to get ahead herself.”⁷⁷

On the other hand, East Germans and West Germans have very different perceptions of the consequences of women working for children. “42 percent of East Germans compared with 24 percent of West Germans rejected the notion that a pre-school child would suffer if his or her mother works.”⁷⁸ Presumably this reflects the fact that, as Scott et al. note, “the dual role of the woman, as worker and mother, was not the exception but the rule in the former GDR, and the provision of child care and other forms of assistance made both roles much easier to combine... [while in West Germany], there is relatively little institutional support for working mothers.”⁷⁹

Not surprisingly, Germans are much less likely than respondents in the other countries to agree that “a working mother can establish as warm a relationship with her child as a stay-at-home mother,” and are much more likely to agree that “a pre-school

child suffers if his or her mother works.” Three-quarters of Germans agree that “all in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job.” Thus there appears to be a high degree of convergence between German values on the consequences of women working and government policies supporting the breadwinner model, but perhaps less consistency between behaviour, policy, and values with respect to gender roles.

Netherlands

Values in the Netherlands reflect the society’s somewhat reluctant move away from the breadwinner model toward the modern family model and a surprising combination of traditional and modern attitudes. Only 29 percent of the Dutch agree that “both spouses should contribute to the household income,” compared to 55 percent or more in all of the other countries. Moreover, the Dutch are less likely than respondents in most of the other countries to agree that “the best way for a woman to be independent is to have a job.” Like all of the other countries, with the exception of Germany, 70 percent of the Dutch believe that “a working mother can establish as good a relationship with her child as a stay-at-home mother,” but 59 percent worry about the impact of both parents working on pre-school children. Sixty-two percent believe that “family life suffers when the woman has a job.”

On the other hand, the Dutch are less likely than respondents in all of the other countries to agree that “women really want a home and children rather than a job.” They are also less likely than respondents in all of the other countries to believe that “a housewife’s role is just as fulfilling as working for pay.”

One might speculate that this mix of traditional and modern values could require a fairly lengthy transition period toward the predominance of the modern dual-breadwinner model already in place in many other countries. On the other hand if, as argued earlier, the Dutch have taken the Scandinavians as their role models rather than the Germans, it is

reassuring to find that, at least with respect to attitudes concerning the consequences for children and families of mothers working, Dutch values appear to be closer to values in Sweden and Norway than to German values.

Norway

Earlier discussion of Norway’s family policy focussed on Norway’s child-centred approach and the high degree of consensus around the need for parents to spend more time with their children. Family policy was seen as linked to gender equality, and the concept of gender equality encompassed sharing of “care.” Government policy was, therefore, focussed on helping both parents spend more time with their children while both participated in the labour force. Spending more time with the children was not intended to result in women withdrawing from the labour force.

Norwegian values tend to be consistent with the general trends in the other countries with respect to gender roles and the consequences of women working. About three-quarters of respondents agree that “both spouses should contribute to the household income” and that “having a job is the best way for a woman to be independent.” They are less likely than other Europeans, with the exception of the Germans, to agree that “a housewife’s role is as fulfilling as working for pay.” As in the other countries, with the exception of Germany, about 70 percent of respondents agree that “a working mother can establish good relationships with her children,” but Norway is the only country in which fewer than 50 percent of respondents are concerned about the impact of mothers working on pre-school children.

One interpretation of this result is that the blending of gender equality with respect to both support for female labour force participation and sharing of care for children is so ingrained that Norwegians take for granted that work and family life will be balanced by parents so that, in fact, children will not suffer. It might also reflect Norwegian behaviour. Like Sweden, Norway has the highest

rates of employed married mothers of the countries studied in this paper, but just over 50 percent of these employed married mothers work full time, compared to 70 percent rates in Canada, the United States, and France. Crompton and Harris conclude in their study of values in Britain, Norway, and the Czech Republic that “Norwegian respondents, therefore, appear to be rather less ‘progressive’ as far as the impact of women’s employment on the family is concerned, but they emerge as most progressive in relation to gender roles.”⁸⁰ But they speculate that, with respect to Norwegian men in particular, one should consider a “family friendly” rather than a “gender conservatism” interpretation to explain these results.

Values in Norway would appear to reflect a “family friendly” perspective and an expansive interpretation of gender equality, which differentiate it from many of the other countries discussed in this paper. This may explain the experiments in family policy, such as the time account scheme, the paternity quota, and the child care allowance discussed earlier.

Sweden

Not surprisingly, Swedish respondents are the strongest supporters (85 percent) of both spouses contributing to the household income, and among the strongest believers that “the best way for a woman to be independent is to have a job.” Balanced against that is majority support for the role of the housewife, and the highest level of concern about the impact of mothers working on pre-school children among all of the countries, with the exception of Germany. About 70 percent believe that “a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works,” although the same percentage agree that “a working mother can establish as warm a relationship with her child as a stay-at home mother.”

These values in support of female labour force participation combined with concern about the effects on pre-school children of mothers working are

reflected in both behaviour and government policies in Sweden. Although 80 percent of married mothers work, nearly half of them work fewer than 30 hours per week. Government policies on parental leave ensure that children under 18 months can be cared for by a stay-at-home parent.

In this analysis, the Swedish respondents appear to exhibit the greatest extremes in values on gender roles and the consequences of women working of the countries discussed in this paper. They are the strongest supporters of dual-earner families and female labour force participation, but the greatest worriers (except for Germany) about the impact of all of this on young children. It may be that this simply reflects Sweden’s longer history of dealing with gender equality and dual-earner families relative to the other countries and, therefore, its sensitivity to these issues. It may also signal how dogged and persistent the ambivalence discussed in this paper appears to be.

United Kingdom

As in some of the other countries studied here, there appears to be a mix of traditional and modern values in Britain. There is strong support for both spouses contributing to the household income and the importance of having a job for a woman to be independent. The belief that “women really want a home and children rather than a job” is lower than in the United States, Norway, France, and Canada. On the other hand, 50 percent of British respondents believe that “family life suffers when the woman has a job,” and although they are less likely than the Germans, French, Swedes, Dutch, and Canadians to agree that “a pre-school child is likely to suffer if both parents work,” 51 percent of the British respondents do worry about the effects on pre-school children of mothers working. Scott et al. conclude that “British attitudes lean more towards the liberal than the traditional, in comparison with other countries, ... [and] while overall, attitudes in Britain are becoming more pro-feminist, the change is somewhat uneven and not very great.”⁸¹ They note, however, that “the majority of both men and

women are still uneasy about the conflicts that can occur between employment and child care.”⁸²

British values are reflected in behaviour that is also both traditional and modern. Two-thirds of British families are dual-earner families, reflecting support for both spouses contributing to the household income (as well as necessity due to the high cost of housing, as discussed earlier). Sixty percent of married mothers work, reflecting values about the importance of a job to women’s independence, and a rejection of the belief that women really want a home and children rather than a job. On the other hand, only one-third of employed married mothers work full time, reflecting concern about the consequences of women working on the family, particularly for young children.

Government policies, on the other hand, reflect neither the “liberal” values discussed above nor changes in behaviour, particularly with respect to the large number of families trying to balance work and family responsibilities.

United States

As discussed earlier, there appears to be a gap between how Americans think families ought to be and what they are in fact. This is clearly reflected in data in the 1991 World Values Survey, which are not what might be expected from a country in which, for example, 70 percent of employed married mothers work full time. Despite that behaviour, Americans are less likely to agree that “both spouses should contribute to the household income” than respondents in Canada, France, Norway, Sweden, and England. With the exception of the French, Americans are more likely than respondents in any of the other countries to agree that “women really want a home and children rather than a family” or say they don’t know. They also express the most support of all of the countries for the role of the housewife. Moreover, they are less inclined than the French, German, Norwegian,

Swedish, and British respondents to agree that “having a job is the best way for a woman to be independent.” On the other hand, they are less likely to agree that “pre-school children suffer as a result of their mother working” than respondents in all of the countries, except Norway, although this is still more than half of the American respondents. As discussed earlier, this may reflect the reluctance of parents who must work to acknowledge the possible negative impact on their children.

Scott et al. note that in the United States, “women have, in the main, led the way in the development of egalitarian attitudes [between 1977 and 1994] and are far more supportive than men of women working. This positive shift toward more liberal attitudes in the United States data over this period is not uniform and, for all measures, the changes between 1977 and 1985 are somewhat greater than those occurring between 1985 and 1994. This is true for both women and men on all items. Thus there is substantial support for the observation that gender-role attitude change in the United States is slowing down.”⁸³

In any case, it is clear that the greatest dissonance between expressed values and actual behaviour of all the countries discussed is evidenced in the United States. Kamerman and Kahn suggest that “attitudes of the American public toward [changes in families] have also changed: significantly, their attitudes reveal contradictions, inconsistencies, and differences, reflect ambivalence and ignorance regarding the new realities, and offer insights into why the debate remains heated.”⁸⁴ In particular, they suggest that “the limited development of infant and toddler care reflects continued ambivalence on the part of the public regarding women’s roles at home and in the workplace.”⁸⁵ They conclude that one core element of family policy in the United States is “continuing ambivalence about gender roles, in particular the role of women, with inconsistent, often inadequate and even conflicting responses to women’s changed behaviour in the workplace and in the home.”⁸⁶

4

The Influence of Values, Ideas, Actors, and Institutions in the Development of Family Policy

A number of different factors have been advanced to explain the variation in the development of family policy, particularly in the industrialized world. For example, Irene Wennemo's study of tax and transfer benefits for families in 18 OECD countries found that "there are three important social actors affecting the formation of the support to families: religious parties, left parties, and women's groups."⁸⁷

Baker notes that the arguments explaining variation in family policy can be placed into three categories: demographic (fertility rates, population aging, women's labour force participation), economic (economic growth and prosperity), and political (coalitions, party in power, ideology). She argues that demographics alone cannot fully explain the development of family policy; economic prosperity is also not a sufficient explanation since not all countries expanded their family programs during periods of economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s; and that the structure of decision making is likely even more important than the strength of coalitions or the impact of ideology.⁸⁸ She also notes that most researchers tend to combine these factors to explain the uneven development of the welfare state.

Baker concludes, however, that "although demographic, social, and economic changes can make existing family policies obsolete and create the need for policy reform, subsequent action depends largely on the strength of coalitions, political

ideology, and the structure of decision-making. From studying the family policies of eight countries [Australia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States], it appears that the thrust for improved family policies came largely from social democrats, labour organizations, and feminist groups. Demands for family policy reform were most likely to be incorporated into the government agenda in countries with social democratic governments or a history of left-wing parties, strong labour unions, homogenous values, structures requiring negotiation among various interest groups, and a centralized government."⁸⁹

In a recent unpublished thesis on the development of child care policies in France, Canada, and the United States, Linda White argues that child care policy development is not fully explained by socio-economic or structural factors, or the beliefs of the political party in power, or pressure from interested actors. Instead, she refers to a quote from John Maynard Keynes that "the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas."⁹⁰ In her view, actors are important as "carriers of ideas," and institutions are important, because once ideas become embedded in them, "ideas set normative pathways and policy choices become path dependent."⁹¹

White's thesis argues that "institutions, in combination with ideas and actors, provide the most

compelling explanation for the wealth of child care programs and services in France and the comparative paucity in North America, and account for policy differences between Canada and the United States.”⁹² In White’s framework, institutions include formal rules, procedures, organizational standards, and governance structures, as well as conventions, customs, traditions, and even culture. “Ideas” are defined as beliefs held by individuals, which can encompass ideologies, policy paradigms, public philosophies, and cultures, and which “structure the very way in which policy makers see the world and their role within.”⁹³

This section of the paper merges the Wennemo, Baker and White frameworks by focussing on ideas, institutions, and actors as key factors in explaining the variation in the development of family policy in eight countries, but adds the important dimension of values to the analysis. Values are more basic than ideas in that they are an expression of what the *Oxford Dictionary* describes as “one’s judgement about what is valuable and important in life.” Values are often translated into ideas, which then are reflected in public policy. The rationale for adding values as an explanatory factor is that ideas are unlikely to be adopted if they are not compatible with a country’s values, and actors will not be credible or influential if their ideas are inconsistent with or challenge the public’s values. Differences in values may also help to explain why some ideas flourish in one country but are rejected in another.

Many of the ideas that White finds to be key factors in the development of child care policy are relevant to the evolution of family policy in the eight countries and were reflected in the discussion of values in the previous section. For this reason, they are defined here, using Linda White’s definitions,⁹⁴ before assessing how these ideas and others combine with values, actors, and institutions in the development of family policy in general, and then specifically in each country.

Familialism – ideology that promotes the separation of male and female roles and that supports the

idea of husbands as breadwinners and wives as homemakers and mothers.

Individualist/liberal feminist – ideology that emphasizes the strict equality of men and women. Individual feminist discourse promotes the equalization of roles and positions of men and women in society. Individualist feminists tend to minimize sexual differences between men and women and promote policies such as equal pay for equal work and non-discrimination in law.

Maternalism – ideology that exalts motherhood, the home, and child rearing, promotes values of care and nurturance, and encourages the politicization of motherhood as a public policy rather than a private issue. Maternalist discourse emphasizes the differences between men and women that motherhood brings and the idea of equality as “complementarity,” not sameness. Maternalists argue for special policies such as mothers’ pensions to help women in their child bearing and child rearing roles, as well as policies to help reconcile work and family life, such as maternity leave.

Pronatalism – ideology that supports and promotes the increase of the birth rate.

White found that the key ideas that help to explain the development of child care policy in France, Canada, and the United States were also relevant with respect to other countries such as Germany, Italy, and Britain. These ideas include maternalism, pronatalism, collectivism, individualism, and subsidiarity. In general, she found the presence of strong child care programs in countries where the ideas of maternalism, pronatalism, and collectivism/solidarity had been institutionalized, and the absence of strong child care programs in countries in which the ideas of individualism and subsidiarity had been institutionalized, and the ideas of maternalism and pronatalism were absent.⁹⁵

This analysis applies equally to the development of family policy and can be linked directly to the values discussed earlier. Countries with strong individualist values, such as Canada, the United Kingdom,

the United States, and the Netherlands, have not tended to develop family policies and have instead tended to follow a course of non-intervention in family matters. On the other hand, countries with collectivist values and values supporting solidarity, such as France and Sweden, believe that one role of the state is to support families and they have highly developed family policies. Moreover, these collectivist values influence the development of institutions such as tripartism, which appears to have facilitated the development of family policy in some countries. Countries such as France (and also the province of Quebec) with a history of strong pronatalist ideas, presumably flowing from a values base, have pursued the development of family policies, while countries such as Canada and the United States have encouraged immigration.

The most important conclusion of White's thesis, however, is that "the institutionalization of 'maternalist' or 'maternal feminist' ideas is crucial, both in the development of the early welfare state, and later on, as policies [such as for child care] developed and expanded."⁹⁶ She recognizes that this is inconsistent with the feminist critique that "the presence of maternalism is to blame, rather than its absence, for low levels of child care,"⁹⁷ and notes that it is contrary to the view of some feminists that governments should develop social policies for individuals and not family policies. But the values of care and nurturance reflected in the ideas of maternalism may also explain the development of family policies in countries such as France, Sweden, and Norway, which, as has been noted, have a child centred focus in their family policies.

White's argument is that, until the 1930s, maternalism in both France and in the United States was in these countries as well as in Canada a better fit with prevailing values and the ideas of other groups than individualist feminism. This explains why France provides the most child care, and the United States has more child care than Canada (although much of it is private rather than public). In France, maternalist ideas meshed well with both proponents of women's equality in the workplace and the more conservative family associations.

There was thus a base of values upon which to build, so that as female labour force participation rates rose in France, the debate easily shifted to the need for child care to help women balance work and family responsibilities and a societal consensus around child care emerged.

In the United States, "maternalist ideas fit with familialist norms that promoted a gendered division of labour. Maternalist ideas found favour with male-dominated trade unions which wanted to preserve employment for men. Maternalism had appeal among conservative as well as reformist women."⁹⁸ Due to the influence of maternalist women, child care spaces were created in the early 1900s, but they tended to be developed in a welfare context. When maternalism was replaced by individualist feminism in the 1930s, however, White argues that pressure for child care ended because individualist feminists focussed more on legal rights for women and equality in the workplace than on children and family issues.

In Canada, opposition to child care, according to White, is based on the belief that child care is a private responsibility to be paid for by parents and that care outside the home is not as good as parental care. White notes that "maternalist thinking tempers both of those views for, while not approving care outside the home as an ideal form of care, maternalists realize that such care is necessary for working parents. In addition, maternalists lobby for policies to ease the burden of child care on mothers and promote policies to protect children and help them flourish."⁹⁹ White notes, however, that maternalist ideas never took hold in Canada, and she argues that this is largely due to institutional reasons. For example, unlike in the United States, social movements in Canada driven by maternalism were not powerful enough to pressure government to enact social reforms. While the United States created the Children's Bureau in 1912, which was dominated by maternalist feminists, the Canadian government did not agree to requests to establish a similar body in Canada.

Canada, therefore, lacked the base of maternalism that had led to the development of child care in

France and the United States. Moreover, many child care advocacy groups in Canada, in alliance with women's groups and trade unions, tended to build their arguments for "universally-accessible, publicly-funded, and high quality" child care on women's equality in the workplace, which addressed neither Canadians' ambivalence about having to work and sending their children to be taken care of outside the home nor their belief that parents should have the primary responsibility for funding child care.

In the remainder of this section we discuss the interaction of factors such as values, ideas, actors, and institutions that influence the development of family policy, and then explore how family policies were developed in each of the eight countries under review, focussing in particular on the relative influence of these factors but also probing the policy discourse and policymaking process that brought these factors together and brokered them to produce a specific family policy, i.e., *how* family policy is developed.

While many analysts focus on the presence of social democratic parties and particularly governments to explain the development of family policies, it may be that it is actually collectivist values rather than the presence of specific parties or governments that explain the focus on family policies in France and Scandinavian countries. This might also explain differences in approaches to family policy between the province of Quebec and the rest of Canada rather than the usual focus on the presence of pronatalism in Quebec.

White's hypothesis, that maternalism and values of care and nurturance provided a stronger foundation for the development of child care than individualist feminism in France and the United States, was perhaps confirmed by the number of people interviewed for this paper, from a variety of countries, who commented that women's groups did not influence family policy in their country because they saw women's issues as, in fact, being in conflict with family issues. Kamerman and Kahn note that women's groups in the United States tended to

focus on the rights of individuals rather than child and family issues and argue that "the feminist movement gave relatively limited attention to child and family related issues such as child care and parental leave until late in the 1980s (the Bush years) and the start of the Clinton era."¹⁰⁰

The values of trust and partnership that support the concept of "social partners" in France and Quebec, or even formal tripartism in the Netherlands and Sweden, provide the base for an institutional framework to implement family policies throughout the society, supported by a consensus shared by key social partners such as government, labour unions, and employers. In Canada, on the other hand, White argues that both unions and business leave the development of child care to government, with the exception of Quebec, which "has the largest number of workplace child care centres in Canada because public sector unions in Quebec were effective at negotiating child care facilities in public buildings in the late 1970s."¹⁰¹

It is very difficult for actors and institutions to make much progress in the development of family policy where values reflect ambivalence, such as in Canada and particularly in the United States, where "family values" appear to polarize the society. Policy development is often frustrated where values and behaviour do not coincide. On the other hand, when a strong consensus exists, as in West Germany, institutions such as governments have strong mandates to act, as evidenced by the dismantling of family benefits in East Germany following reunification.

Values that reflect ambivalence about or lack of support for state intervention in the family are very difficult for any of the other factors to overcome. For example, there appears to have been some resolution of ambivalence of values related to preferred family models in Britain and the Netherlands, with Britain tending to focus on the breadwinner model and the Netherlands' official family policy supporting balancing work and family. Nonetheless, the lack of support for government to intervene in the family remains in these countries, resulting in

limited policy support for the preferred family model in either country.

White's thesis points out that sometimes values and ideas lead to policies with unintended consequences, such as "conservative" maternalism in France leading to the development of child care. On the other hand, Sweden and Norway have highly developed gender equality objectives in their family policies, but there is little evidence of significant change in actual distribution of labour in Scandinavian households, and limited take-up by men of parental benefits, unless forced to by the actual loss of benefits, suggests possible dissonance between values and policies.

Values appear to have a strong impact on demographics (and presumably vice versa). While there are economic pressures in all of the countries for dual-earner families and therefore increased labour force participation by mothers, there remains a wide variation in the percentage of married/cohabiting mothers employed full time, ranging from 25 percent in the Netherlands, 34 percent in Britain, a little over 50 percent in Germany, Norway, and Sweden, to 70 percent in the United States and Canada, and 72 percent in France.¹⁰² Since this range occurs despite similar economic pressures and does not appear to be correlated with the level of support provided to dual-earner families, it may be that the variation is driven by the impact of values such as maternalism, support for the breadwinner model, the priority attached to parental care for infants even in gender equality models, and individualist feminism. Institutional factors, such as benefit levels for part-time employment and restructuring within labour markets that have increased job insecurity, may also account for the differences in these countries.

Canada

In this study we have argued that the development of family policy in Canada has been hindered by values that do not support government involvement in family matters and are ambivalent about whether

and how public policies should help parents balance work and family responsibilities. In the specific case of child care, for example, White argues that Canadians' ambivalence about child care, compounded by the failure of actors advocating child care strategies to address this ambivalence, has resulted in the absence of significant public child care in Canada.

The development of a comprehensive national family policy in Canada has also been inhibited by institutional features, such as federalism and the division of powers in the Constitution, and the dominance of the government as an actor in the policymaking process, in part due to the conflicting values and objectives of the other actors.

On the other hand, most of the provincial governments have created infrastructure and developed coherent strategies for family policies, although some of it has subsequently been dismantled. For example, Saskatchewan created the Saskatchewan Council on Children and developed an Action Plan for Children. Alberta established the Premier's Council in support of Alberta Families, which developed a Family Policy Grid. Quebec appointed a minister responsible for the family, created three structures including the Secrétariat à la famille and the Conseil de la famille, and developed a unified family policy. Before it was disbanded, Ontario's Premier's Council on Health, Well-being, and Social Justice developed recommendations on policies for children and youth. At the federal level, however, there is no focal point for the development of family policy, although there is a Secretary of State responsible for children and youth.

Some of the Canadians interviewed for this study argued that experts and research have a strong influence on the development of family policy in Canada, resulting, for example, in the current focus on early childhood development. In addition, the availability of statistics on child poverty and outcome data through the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth has enabled advocacy groups and research organizations to produce

“report cards” on child poverty and children’s outcomes, which explains both the focus of some advocacy groups on child poverty and the recent intergovernmental initiative to develop a National Children’s Agenda. Outcomes are now an integral part of the National Child Benefit and the National Children’s Agenda. Polling is also used by governments to gauge public opinion and values with respect to children and family issues.

Some interviewees felt that actors such as experts, think tanks, and some advocacy groups are very influential in the development of children and family policies, but women’s groups were considered less effective. Historically the advocacy groups have pursued different and sometimes conflicting agendas, which has reduced their effectiveness and impact, but more recently they have become more strategic about advancing integrated proposals. Think tanks are also becoming effective at synthesizing data as a basis for brokering consensus on policies. It was generally felt, however, that the brokerage of conflicting perspectives and proposals is done primarily by government officials and, more specifically, by cabinet ministers. While experts, officials, and some advocacy groups are increasingly thinking in terms of comprehensive and integrated frameworks for children and family policies, politicians and the media still seem to focus on specific incidents or issues. One interviewee concluded that while the intellectual climate for the development of policies for children and families had improved significantly, it was not clear that politicians and journalists were part of that change.

France

People interviewed for this paper tended to argue that the “social partners” – governments, employers, and unions – rather than women’s groups, experts, advocacy groups, or the Catholic Church have the most influence on the development of family policy in France. This may be because many family benefits in France such as the *allocation familiale* (family allowance), parental leave, and child care are funded through payroll taxes, although child

care is partially funded by general revenues and parental fees. They also noted the power of the “national union of family associations,” while pointing out that it tended to be traditional and it was not clear that its views were representative of the general population. Nonetheless, it is represented in national and local bodies administering some family policies.

France has created a research organization (an institute of childhood and the family), and polling on family issues is done by the Centre de recherche pour l’étude et l’observation des conditions de vie. A great deal of statistical data on the family is collected although not with a specific focus on outcomes, one priority area being statistics that assess whether families with children are worse off than families without children. Some groups also continue to focus on the fertility rate. In addition to the brokerage function performed through the negotiations of the social partners, a commission on the family and population, whose members are appointed by the government, also attempts to broker consensus on research and policies. Within the government, there is a secretary of state responsible for family affairs within the ministry of social affairs.

Germany

Since 1982, Germany has been governed by a coalition government consisting of the Christian Democrats, the Christian Social Union, and the Free Democratic Party. It has a federal ministry of the family, aged people, women, and youth. It is a federal state strongly influenced by the principle of subsidiarity under which broad policy such as family policy is developed at the national level and administered at the state level.

As noted earlier, there remains strong support for the traditional breadwinner model, which is supported by a number of government policies, such as a preferential tax system, despite some reluctance for government intervention in the family, another impact of the principle of subsidiarity.

People interviewed for this paper tended to feel that interest groups had little influence on the development of family policy in Germany, and that government dominated the policymaking process. Within government, however, there was debate, particularly on financial issues, between the finance ministry and the family ministry. Recent decisions of the Federal Constitutional Court on family issues, particularly taxation issues, were seen to have had a significant impact on family policy.

There was a sense that the advocacy groups and non-governmental organizations did not work well together since they pursued conflicting agendas. For example, the child advocacy groups clashed with the family organizations, and there was also seen to be a conflict between women's issues and family issues. As well, many of the family organizations were dominated by older members with traditional perspectives. It was also argued that the media tends to focus on negative images and is not able to discuss family issues in a comprehensive way.

Some interviewees argued that a great deal of research on the family was undertaken but that it tended to be short term and was not well communicated. One vehicle for reporting on research and outcomes is a report on the state of the family prepared by experts every two or three years, which is debated in Parliament and to which the government is expected to respond. During the International Year of the Family, the government committed to establishing an annual family conference, which is intended to involve interest groups in the identification of priorities and advice to the government. This conference could also perform a brokerage function between experts, interest groups, and government officials and politicians on family policy.

Netherlands

Since 1994 a coalition government, including the Social Democrats, Conservative Liberals, and Democratic Liberals, has been in power and it was

recently re-elected for another term. There is a reluctance among the political parties to discuss family policy, which is viewed as conservative and linked to the breadwinner model, or even worse, population debates. The Christian Democrats, however, do worry about the decline of the traditional family.

Family policies, particularly on employment issues such as child care, are brokered through tripartite discussions and joint social and economic councils, and some are implemented through collective agreements. For example, about 50 percent of child care is provided through collective agreements. Moreover, employers and employees negotiate other arrangements such as reduction of working hours and pay for leave hours. Task forces, involving government, employers, unions, and sometimes family organizations, are often created to examine specific issues, such as a recent task force exploring new ways to organize care and work. Another task force looking at problems in the Dutch family recently concluded that there were very few problems in the Dutch family, with the exception of difficulties in balancing work and family. A report issued at about the same time, however, found worrisome levels of sexual abuse within families.

Attention to outcomes tends to focus on female labour force participation rates and the availability of child care spaces, and, as in France and Germany, comparisons of the financial situations of families with and without children. In 1955, the Netherlands Family Council was created as an independent organization, funded by government, to do research and provide advice. It has developed a proposal for a vehicle called the Family Impact Monitor to assess the impact of all government policies on families.

A wide range of perspectives are reflected in debates about family policy in the Netherlands. Some groups support the traditional family model, others endorse the new dual-earner model, while unlikely coalitions such as the Christian Democrats and some women's groups focus on diversity and

providing support for choice between the models. As in some other European countries, recently there has been some focus on fathers' rights issues associated with custody of and access to children in the event of divorce, and particularly men's rights when cohabiting couples with children break up. Issues such as the closing hours of stores during the week and the long mid-day school break are also on the family policy agenda, with many concerned about the impact of changes in these areas on the family. The much discussed "Dutch Miracle" includes increasing part-time employment to address high unemployment and rigidities in the labour market, which coincides with the argument of some advocates that the best way for parents to balance work and family responsibilities is for both parents to work part time.

Norway

Until October 1997, Norway was led by a Labour Party government. It is now governed by a coalition government of Christian Democrats, the Centre Party, and the Liberal Party. During the election campaign, the Liberal party campaigned for more child care spaces while the platform of the Christian Democrats included more tax credits and other means for mothers to stay at home longer with their children and less focus on more child care spaces. As noted earlier, this reflects an ongoing debate about whether the most appropriate way to help parents balance work and family is to give them cash supports so that one of the parents can choose to stay at home or to provide services and parental and family leaves.

The government proceeded with a child care allowance, which began in August 1998, although it was controversial and opposed by the Labour party, unions, and women's groups. But it was supported by the general public and particularly by young mothers. The election of the new government makes it more difficult to assess who will be the key players in the development of family policy, although traditionally it has been political parties, employers, unions, experts, and women's groups.

Women's groups appear to be divided. For example, some parts of the women's movement opposed the introduction of the father's quota. Although women's groups had tended to become integrated into the political parties, some believe that the debate triggered by the introduction of the child care allowance may revive these groups.

In addition to the child care allowance, there are several other issues on the family policy agenda in Norway that are controversial. There are issues about how to deal with the generous supports for lone parents that were developed when this group constituted a much smaller part of the population. Fifty percent of children are now born out of wedlock (some of these to cohabiting couples rather than lone parents), and a seminar was held in March 1998 to discuss how to adjust the welfare system to deal with lone parents. Divorced fathers are raising custody issues, but there continue to be concerns about the financial situation of many mothers who are the custodial parent after divorce. The new government has appointed a "values commission" which is likely to trigger intense debates about family policy issues.

Sweden

Sweden has been governed by the Social Democrats for much of the post World War II period. Leira describes it as a country that created a "partnership model" between mothers and the state.¹⁰³ While it has no specific ministry or minister responsible for family policy, one of six divisions in the ministry of health and social affairs deals with children and families.

Ulla Bjornberg notes the influence of social scientists on the development of family policy in Sweden, which is evident in books such as the Myrdals' in the 1930s, the use of research and evaluations of child care programs in the development of public child care policy, and a committee in 1972 whose recommendations based on the results of research by social scientists led to the introduction of parental insurance in 1974.

According to Bjornberg, the development of family policy “has been based on several political investigations in close collaboration with scientists who have undertaken specific studies of different aspects of women’s labour in the home and in the labour market, of economic living standards of families with children, and of developmental aspects of children in connection with institutional child care. The committees working with different aspects of family policy have published scientific reports and other documents in order to stimulate a debate within society at large. The different interest organizations have been invited to write comments on the reports and these have been carefully studied and commented upon by the committees.”¹⁰⁴ An issue currently under review by a commission appointed by the government is parenting, triggered by debates about child custody for cohabiting fathers, since married fathers get joint custody and shared parenting. Access orders are enforced by the courts and some women’s groups oppose access in situations where there is potential for abuse.

Bjornberg argues that women’s groups were very influential in the development of family policy in Sweden, although they have struggled over whether to define issues as women’s issues or family issues. They have also tended to work within the political parties, which have been the dominant players in this area and among whom there is a high level of consensus on family policy issues. Other groups such as voluntary organizations also play a role, particularly with respect to reporting on children’s outcomes. The media as well has begun to reflect the interest groups’ perspectives in their reporting on family policy issues.

United Kingdom

The Conservative Party led the government for 18 years, from 1979 to 1997 when it was defeated by the Labour Party. Apart from the level of political rhetoric (in 1977, Margaret Thatcher proclaimed that “we are the party of the family”¹⁰⁵), the Conservative government avoided intervening in family matters, and none of the other political

parties in Britain appear to have focussed on family policy. In theory, the Secretary of Health is responsible for coordinating family policy in Britain but the other Ministers retain the policy lead in their portfolios.

Wicks and Chester argue that there has been increased discussion of family issues beginning in the 1970s as a result of concerns about family poverty but primarily changes in the family, such as greatly increased divorce rates and a consequent increase in lone-parent families. They note, however, that “the debate about family policy in the United Kingdom has been approached with interest but also with some caution... Given [the many different perspectives on the family], many in the United Kingdom would see ‘family policy’ as a controversial rather than a uniting perspective.”¹⁰⁶ They note the creation of an organization called the Family Forum, which was established to bring together all of the voluntary organizations with an interest in family life to influence policymakers and provide a voice for the family. They argue, however, that it is difficult to reconcile the radically different positions that these organizations take on issues, which makes it difficult to build alliances that can realistically have a significant impact on government policy.

A great deal of research on family issues is undertaken, but it is not clear how influential it is since some find that the research undertaken by academics in universities is not strategic enough while the think tanks are politicized. In response, foundations attempt to fund balanced research. There is little focus on outcomes per se, although local authorities are required to prepare children’s services plans for education, health, and social services based on an “audit” of need in the area. Implementation of these plans against the audit can be monitored.

While the role of religious groups, unions, and women’s groups in framing family issues is thought to have declined, it is argued that the influence of the media, particularly the tabloid press, has increased significantly. For example, it had a major

impact on the ability of the government to respond to a decision of the European Court requiring it to remove a defence of “reasonable chastisement” from the *Children’s and Young Person’s Act*. The media increasingly reflects the views of interest groups and some argue that family policy issues get brokered through the process of media coverage and lobbying of officials and Ministers by interest groups.

As in many of the other countries studied in this paper, there is increasing interest in fathers’ rights issues and the Department of Health recently held a conference on “What is Good Parenting?”

United States

Like Sweden, the policy discourse in the United States is strongly influenced by research and experts. The United States is in the forefront in research on the effects of early childhood development, for example. The ideological debate is also fuelled by research done by think tanks such as the Institute for American Values, which Skolnick argues is responsible for the sudden shift in the national debate on the family since 1992. The institute has produced four books that discuss research on issues such as the effect of divorce on children and the problems flowing from lone parenthood. According to Skolnick, although the arguments in these books have almost become conventional wisdom, “the Institute and its associates present a skewed and misleading version of the research evidence on the causes and effects of divorce and lone parenthood [using studies] which have been severely criticized on methodological grounds... [and ignoring] more systematic research that does not support horror stories about the effects of divorce.”¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, the data and arguments are used by religious groups and conservative groups seeking to return to the traditional family model.

On the other hand, Skolnick notes the polling results of Dick Morris who found that “voters were far less polarized than the public debate; massive majorities embraced an ‘amalgam’ of conservative

and liberal views. On welfare, for example, majorities favoured work requirements and time limits but also day care, job opportunities, and training.”¹⁰⁸ But “liberals” have been unsuccessful in developing a strategy to challenge the conservative messages and build the support of these large majorities. Moreover, as noted earlier, the messages of some women’s groups, and individualist feminists in particular, do not always resonate with the values held by many Americans. Skolnick argues that “liberals” need to develop a strategy to promote a political and economic climate that values children and supports those who care for them. This sounds like a return to the maternalism values that White argued prevailed in the early 1900s in the United States.

Since the governance structure of the United States is based on federalism, the capacity to develop a national family policy is constrained. State governments implement social policies, although the federal government attempts to steer spending through conditional transfers to the state governments. This is difficult to do, however, given the stovepipe funding provided through a myriad of programs. Through the Administration for Children and Families in the Department of Health and Human Services, however, the federal government does fund and manage the Head Start program, which is administered by local authorities. The Head Start program provides early childhood development, educational, health, nutritional, social and other services mainly to low income preschool children. The *Government Performance and Results Act* now requires all departments, including the Administration for Children and Families, to develop strategic plans with identified outcomes. These will assist the many non-governmental organizations that already actively monitor the impact of government programs on outcomes. The other advantage of the requirement to produce outcome measures is that it will likely increase the volume of research done on the effectiveness of programs, focussing on specific outcomes.

There are a wide range of women’s groups, advocacy groups, researchers, and politicians who engage in family policy issues, and some argue that

no group is pre-eminent in the debate but rather that all have an equal voice. As in other countries, the role of the media is significant. For example, media coverage of cases of children killed within their families led to the adoption in 1997 of the

Adoption and Safe Families Act, which nullifies the “reasonable efforts” clause to keep children in their families enacted in 1980 legislation in cases where there has been sexual abuse or a previous incident.

Conclusion

We have found areas of convergence and divergence in the development of family policies in the eight countries discussed in this study. There appears to be a consensus on the need for dual-earner families in all of these countries, although different reasons are often cited, e.g., to meet high housing expenses in Britain, to maintain a reasonable quality of life in Sweden, or to keep some families above the poverty level in Canada and the United States. In most of the countries, there is a strong consensus that both spouses should contribute to household income and that a job is the best way for women to be independent. In the Scandinavian countries, gender equality is valued in society, while in North America, women's rights in the workplace and their need for individual fulfilment have dominated the approach of some groups to family issues. Many families in these countries either do not feel that they have a choice or prefer a dual-earner model.

At the same time, men and women in all of these countries worry, to varying degrees, about the consequences of the dual-earner family model for children. Many of them believe that the family suffers when both parents work. Even more of them believe that preschool children are likely to suffer if both parents work. Many parents in all of the countries appear to share the tension that Alan Mirabelli described between what they would prefer, that is, a parent staying home to take care of the children, and economic reality. This is not necessarily a

“conservative” view that women should not work or that mothers should stay at home with their children, but rather may reflect widely held values about how best to meet the needs of children.

While these values may be “traditional,” they do not appear to have been replaced by new values. Perhaps recent research on the importance of child development in the first five years of a child's life will ultimately lead to broader support of the acceptability and possibly even the preferability of children being cared for outside the home. In the meantime, governments and parents grapple with the tension of competing pressures and uncertainties.

Divergence is evident in how these eight countries are attempting to deal with this tension. Five broad approaches or strategies are illustrated in this paper:

1. develop a neutral policy that attempts to support choice for parents by providing income supports to stay-at-home parents and services such as child care for parents balancing work and family responsibilities. This is the strategy France has adopted;
2. develop a strategy to help parents balance their work and family lives through negotiated arrangements for child care, part-time work, and flexible hours. The Netherlands family policy adopts this approach;

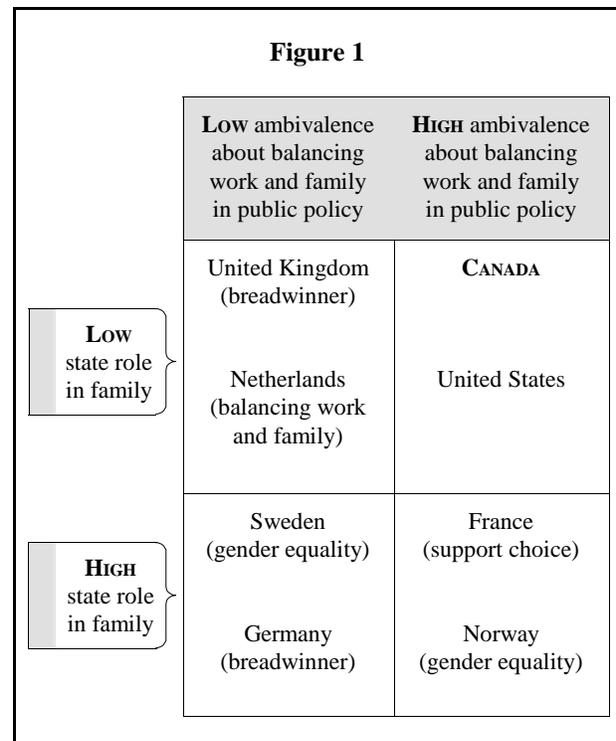
3. develop a strategy to support a stay-at-home parent, usually the mother, by providing income supports, parental leave, tax incentives, and pension benefits. This is the strategy adopted by Germany;
4. develop a strategy that seeks gender equality at home and in the workplace but with a child-centred focus, by providing lengthy and paid parental leave for both parents, income support, flexible hours, part-time work, family leave, and child care services. Norway and Sweden have taken this approach; and
5. develop a strategy that essentially leaves parents to determine how they will cope with the pressures of balancing work and family responsibilities since the government provides minimal parental leave, income support, child care services, and flexible hours. This is the approach taken by the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States.

Despite the different strategies, there appears to be convergence in the inventory of policies and programs that these countries use to implement their strategies. It is not an exhaustive list and does not reflect more radical proposals, such as reimbursement for unpaid work in the home or modern approaches such as telework. The inventory includes:

- part-time benefits
- flexible hours
- parental leave with full or partial wage replacement
- paternity quotas
- family leave (paid and unpaid)
- child care services
- child care allowances or tax benefits
- income support for families

- pension benefits for stay-at-home parents
- income tax provisions that support the family in general or a specific family model

We have focussed on two factors in particular in the development of family policy in these eight countries. The first factor is the level of support for government involvement in family affairs or even endorsement of a role for the state in supporting families. The second factor is the level of conflict or unresolved tension and ambivalence around balancing work and family responsibilities reflected in public policies. Figure 1 shows that the eight countries can be sorted into four categories or mixes of high and low role of the state in the family and high and low ambivalence in public policies about how to balance work and family responsibilities. It is important to note that in both cases, the figure refers to how these factors are reflected in public policies and not necessarily in expressed values. For instance, while there is low support for state intervention in the family in Germany, which is associated with the principle of subsidiarity,



Germany appears in the category for a high state role in the family because despite these values, governments in Germany have chosen to implement measures intended to support a specific family model.

Canada and the United States appear in the box for countries with low support for the role of the state in the family and high ambivalence in government policy (and in these cases in public values as well) about balancing work and family responsibilities. It should be noted, however, that although these countries share values about the role of the state in the family, there is nonetheless much greater government support in Canada than in the United States for social infrastructure, such as public health and education systems, which are critical for children and families.

The United Kingdom is shown in the box for low support for state intervention in family affairs but low level of ambivalence about balancing work and family lives since, by providing minimal support for dual-earner families, its policies implicitly reflect support for the traditional breadwinner family model. The Netherlands shares this box with the United Kingdom because it does not support the role of the state in family matters but has resolved its ambivalence around balancing work and family matters (at least in theory) through family policies that are explicitly intended to help dual-earner families balance work and family responsibilities.

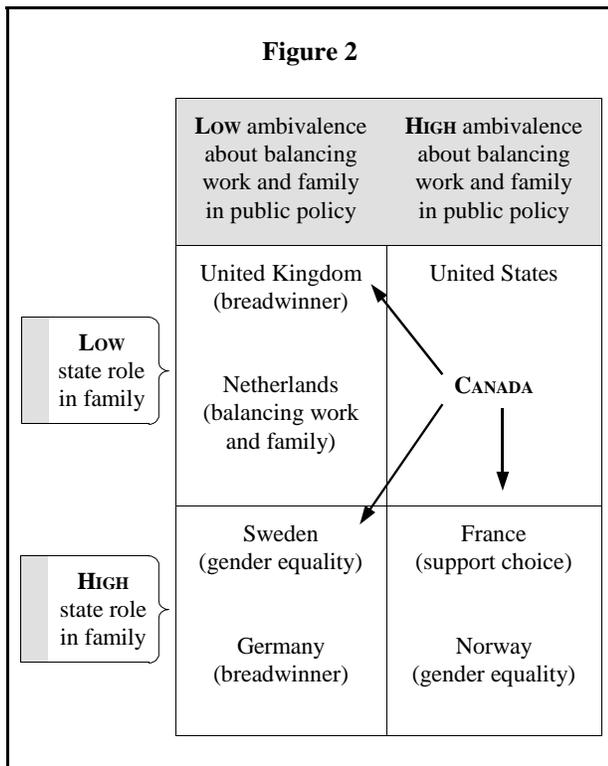
Sweden appears in the box for countries whose family policies reflect low ambivalence about balancing work and family lives, since its family policies explicitly endorse gender equality, and there is a high level of support for the involvement of the state in the family. Germany appears in the same box since it too has low ambivalence about how to balance work and family, having opted to maintain support for the traditional breadwinner model, and has chosen to exercise a high degree of government involvement in the family through family policies designed to support that family model, despite values that do not necessarily support state intervention in the family.

France appears in the box for countries with high ambivalence about balancing work and family lives, since it has chosen to adopt a neutral family policy that supports parental choice rather than explicitly supporting one of these choices, and a high level of support for state intervention in the family. Norway appears in this box because its political discourse and changing public policies around whether to support a stay-at-home parent or both parents equally sharing work and family responsibilities indicate a continuing level of ambivalence about balancing work and family responsibilities, but there is a high degree of state intervention to support families through innovations such as the paternity quota and the child care allowance (and the resources to allocate to family policies).

Throughout the remainder of this study we will explore lessons that might be drawn in Canada from the experiences of other countries that have developed family policies. In particular, we discuss possible directions family policy could take in Canada if values and attitudes shifted in support of the development of a family policy or perhaps a strategy for children and their families. White's thesis quotes Giandomenico Majone, who wrote that "major policy breakthroughs are possible only after public opinion has been conditioned to accept new ideas and new concepts of the public interest."¹⁰⁹ Experience from the other countries studied in this paper suggests that a breakthrough in the development of a family policy could flow from a shift in values with respect to the role of the state in the family, resolution of ambivalence around balancing work and family, or both. These scenarios are explored below, but they are not intended to imply that values *must* change if Canada is to develop a family policy. We have pointed out that many other factors can lead to the development of a family policy. We caution, however, that the process will be constrained by values.

If, because of the dramatic changes occurring in the family, Canadians came to agree that there is a need for governments to help families and values shifted in support of stronger government

involvement in family affairs, Figure 2 suggests that Canada could move in the direction of France, which maintains a neutral policy with respect to the choices families make to balance work and family responsibilities but provides support for either choice. Alternatively, it could follow the Norwegian model, in which values associated with gender equality are reflected in government policies as well as values associated with the importance of parental care of children. In both of these models, however, ambivalence in public policy about how to balance work and family remains.



If Canadians' ambivalence about the best way to balance work and family lives were resolved and the outcome reflected in public policy, Figure 2 indicates two possible directions. Canada could move in the direction of the United Kingdom, where government policies implicitly endorse the traditional breadwinner model but with limited actual support. Alternatively, it could adopt the Dutch strategy for family policies, which are explicitly intended to help parents balance their work and family lives, although again with relatively low levels of government support.

If Canadian values shift *both* with respect to a strong role for government in family matters and resolution of ambivalence about how to balance work and family responsibilities, Figure 2 again points in two directions. Canada could move in the direction of Sweden with strong government support for gender equality and investments in parental leave and child care to help both parents balance work and family lives and provide early childhood development for children. Alternatively, it could choose the approach Germany has adopted and provide a system of income supports, leave policies, and tax expenditures that support the traditional breadwinner model.

What lessons can Canada draw from these countries' experiences with family policy? In the case of France, we know that despite the significant focus and investment in a neutral family policy that respects choice with respect to balancing work and family responsibilities, critics argue that the net result is that it fails to adequately support either traditional breadwinner families or dual-earner families. For example, there are not enough child care spaces, particularly in Paris but also in the regions. This suggests that the downfall of a neutral strategy is that it requires significant resources to truly support choice.

One of the problems in the Swedish and Norwegian approaches to gender equality is that unless fathers lose benefits such as parental leave if they fail to use them, there appears to be little change in behaviour or division of labour in the home. This is likely due to the continuing wage differentials between men and women, which mean a greater loss of family income if the father uses much of the parents' entitlement to parental and family leave benefits. Moreover, these continuing wage differentials combined with a focus on parental care for children, particularly in Norway, may result in relatively high levels of part-time work for married mothers, as compared to North America and France. If parents prefer that children are cared for by a parent but wage differentials penalize families in which fathers stay home, the result will likely continue to be a high proportion of mothers staying home to take care of children.

Approaches that imply a return to the traditional breadwinner model, as in the United Kingdom and Germany, are unlikely to succeed in Canada because, in the case of the United Kingdom model, it relies heavily on married mothers working part time, which would only be acceptable if family incomes were supplemented to offset the loss of income, or if one can generalize from the German experience, could result in dramatic changes in marriage and fertility rates if Canadian women felt economically insecure as a result.

The Dutch approach to helping families balance work and family responsibilities does not yet appear to have had much influence on female labour force participation in the Netherlands. Perhaps more for economic reasons rather than family policy reasons, there appears to be some discussion of a model in which both earners in dual-earner families work part time. This is unlikely to be an acceptable model to most Canadians given their views on the economic pressures that they believe require them to have two full-time incomes.

It is true that Statistics Canada has reported an increase in the number of single-earner families in which the mother is the earner from 4 percent in 1976 to 16 percent in 1997. When the families in which the father is staying at home because he is unemployed, is looking for work, is unable to work or is attending school are removed, the proportion of stay-at-home fathers has increased from 1 percent in 1976 to 6 percent in 1997. Statistics Canada notes, however, that “the lower occupational and educational attainment levels of some stay-at-home parents suggests that reduced employment options may have contributed to their decision to remain at home with the children.”¹¹⁰ Thus, unlike the proposed Dutch model, fathers in Canada are more likely to stay at home to take care of their children due to economic reasons than a desire to share child rearing responsibilities.

The Norwegian experiment with the child care allowance, on the other hand, may offer interesting insights for Canada. As discussed earlier, Norway’s experience with its new child care allowance may

reveal a great deal about parental preferences for dealing with child care, since it will effectively act as either income support for a stay-at-home parent or a voucher for a married mother to purchase child care so that she can work. As Waerness points out, it is difficult to predict what the outcome of this experiment will be, based only on empirical evidence. This policy initiative will likely influence changes in family behaviour, but it is not clear what the calculus will be for individual families. Presumably it will involve a number of very different factors, such as the parents’ values about the best way to take care of children and the potential income and/or career opportunities for the stay-at-home parent. Nonetheless, a proposal such as this might resolve the longstanding gridlock or standstill in Canada with respect to child care.

One lesson Canada might draw from all of these countries’ experience with policies for families is the desirability of providing a large and flexible range of options from which families in different circumstances and with different values, and therefore behaviour, can choose. They can also make different choices depending on where they are in the life cycle. There is unlikely to be a “one size fits all” family policy that will meet the needs of all or perhaps even most families in Canada. This is particularly true for policies specifically designed to help families balance work and family responsibilities. Some families place a premium on both parents working while others prefer to have a parent stay at home taking care of the children. Some parents believe strongly in the developmental opportunities provided in formal and regulated day care while others believe these opportunities are maximized by care at home. Some parents want to work but still maximize time spent with their children and prefer part-time work, flexible hours or parental leave options. Some prefer to stay at home and seek government support for families with a stay-at-home parent while working parents would prefer to receive help in paying for child care.

Providing a range of options to meet the diversity of needs in families also permits governments to avoid the difficult choices described earlier,

which may have led to implicit rather than explicit family policies. Governments attempting to formulate explicit family policies are confronted with decisions on preferred family choices and lifestyles that are inherently divisive. Policies that are flexible with respect to family decisions and individual circumstances are likely to be more broadly acceptable than narrowly focussed policies.

One noticeable difference between Canada and some of the countries discussed in this study is the number and scope of the measures from the inventory of family policy options for helping parents balance work and family responsibilities that they have in place compared to Canada. Many of the European countries have in place a range of measures dealing with parental leave, family leave, flexible hours, child care space creation and tax expenditures, pension benefits for stay-at-home parents, and income supports. They draw from general revenues, employer and employee payroll taxes, and parental fees to fund this wide range of measures. They use national government departments, local agencies, non-governmental organizations,

and, in some cases, employers to deliver family policies and programs. Thus, in considering the experiences of other countries in developing family policies, an important lesson for Canada is the scope of measures these countries have put in place, the number of ways in which they fund these measures, and the different means and actors they use to deliver them.

Perhaps the most important lesson for Canada to draw from these countries' experiences, however, is that even countries that have not resolved their ambivalence about balancing work and family, such as Norway, France, and even to a certain extent Sweden, have nonetheless implemented a wide range of measures to support families. Ambivalence did not lead to inaction; other countries just did it! Rather than ambivalence leading to standstill in the development of *any* family policy, it lead to a diversity of policy measures – a kind of smorgasbord. What was required, however, was a commitment to allocate resources to children and families and consensus on the need for government to actively support families.

Appendix

List of Interviewees

- Baker, Maureen. Professor, School of Social Work, McGill University, Quebec.
(November 26, 1997.)
- Bierschock, Kurt. State Institute for Family Research, University of Bamberg, Germany.
(Series of interviews through e-mail.)
- Biggs, Margaret. Special Advisor, Human Resources Development Canada, Ottawa.
(January 22, 1998.)
- Bjornberg, Ulla. Professor, Department of Sociology, Goteborg University, Sweden.
(December 11, 1997.)
- Bussemaker, Jet. Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Free University Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
(January 15, 1998.)
- Clarke, Lynda. Family Policy Studies Centre, London, United Kingdom.
(December 17, 1997.)
- Cohnen, Dr. Gabriele. Secretary-General, Evangelische Aktionsgemeinschaft fur Familieinfragan, Germany.
(Interview by correspondence.)
- Cuyvers, Peter. Director, Nederlandse Gezinsraad (Netherlands Family Council), The Netherlands.
(January 6, 1998.)
- de Jonge, Loes. Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, Government of the Netherlands.
(January 26, 1998.)
- Emmelmann, Iris. Deutscher Familienverband (German Family Association), Bonn, Germany.
(December 17, 1997.)
- Felix, Martine. Chargée de Mission, Institut de l'Enfance et de la Famille. Paris, France.
(Interview by correspondence.)
- Friendly, Martha. Director, Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto, Toronto.
(November 19, 1997.)
- Harrell, James. Deputy Commissioner, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, United States.
(February 4, 1998.)
- Hill, Jessica. Assistant Deputy Minister, Integrated Services for Children, Government of Ontario.
(January 26, 1998.)

Kamerman, Sheila. Compton Foundation Centennial Professor, School of Social Work, Columbia University, United States.
(January 8, 1998.)

MacLeod, Mary. Director of Policy, Research and Information, Childline, London, United Kingdom.
(January 7, 1998.)

Math, Antoine. Bureau de la recherche, Caisse nationale des allocations familiales, Paris,

France.
(December 9, 1997.)

Sering, Agathe. Director, Coordination Office for National and International Family Affairs, Bonn, Germany.
(December 19, 1997.)

Waerness, Kari. Professor of Sociology, University of Bergen, Norway.
(February 18, 1998.)

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