

## **WORKPACKAGE 7**

# **LABOUR MARKET TRANSITIONS AND HOUSEHOLD'S CAPABILITIES AROUND TIME, CARE AND EMPLOYMENT<sup>1</sup>**

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## INTRODUCTION

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Conceptually this paper focuses on households' organisation of work and care from a cross-national comparative perspective (O'Reilly 2006, Haas et al. 2006), developing an analytical framework from the capabilities approach (Sen 1992, Nussbaum 2003) and the concept of 'constrained choice' (Folbre 1994). It draws on the concept of transitional labour markets to examine changes of employment at various points in the lifecycle (Schmid 2008, Schmid 2002, O'Reilly et al. 2001 O'Reilly 2003, Giddens 2007). This analysis contributes to understanding individual's preferences, societal norms and realised functionings in relation to transitions around families and work. We focus on the capabilities approach and the conceptual and methodological problems this entails in particular in relation to evaluating labour market transitions in the organisation of work and care.

In our comparative empirical research we situate the concept of capabilities within different societies by examining individuals' perception of gender norm regimes and their sense of freedom, recognition and autonomy in four countries: Denmark, the UK, Spain and Poland. We provide some initial analysis from the ISSP on realised and preferred transition trajectories, and we conclude with analysis from the ECHP mapping different household transitions in the organisation of working time and care. The main argument we develop from this initial research draws attention to the different perception of realisable capabilities and possible transition trajectories in particular countries. Further, we raise the question of evaluating desirable and undesirable trajectories from both the perspective of individual's preferences for a particular 'way of life' and those deemed desirable by policy makers.

## 1. THEORETICALLY SITUATING THE CAPABILITIES APPROACH (CA)

The Capabilities Approach (CA) proposes an alternative way to assess inequality and the opportunities actors have to realize life goals that affect the quality of their lives. Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's work has its origin in a critique of traditional utilitarian or 'welfarist' approaches in economics (Nussbaum and Sen 1993). Its main contribution has been to challenge studies of economic inequality focused on the structural differences in income or commodity holdings (Sen 2000). The CA incorporates other dimensions of well-being and emphasizes the role of

actors (Sen 1992). Firstly, it differentiates means from ends, stressing that an increase in income does not necessarily bring an increase in other dimensions. Secondly, it emphasizes the notion of human differences indicating that people and households vary in their faculty to value as well as convert commodities into 'well-being' (Robeyns 2005). It proposes that inequality should be assessed not on the basis of commodity holdings, but on the effective capability people have to choose a 'way of life' they have reasons to value.

### Definition of key concepts:

- **Commodities** are means to achieve other ends; eg: income or basic goods - they are not ends in themselves (Sen 2000).
- **Functionings** are ends or achievements in themselves: 'beings' or 'doings' in life such as being healthy, living healthily, being educated or enjoying a decent life.
- A '**way of life**' is a combination of specific set of 'beings' and 'doings' in life. Functionings grouped into different combinations.
- **Freedom** is to choose a 'way of life' that a person values/ prefers (Sen, 1999).
- **Capabilities** are the various combinations of functionings/ 'ways of life' available from which a person can choose one particular group.

Regarding the distinction between means and ends, the CA suggests three main concepts: commodities, functionings and capabilities. **Commodities** are understood as means to achieve other ends, such as income or basic goods, which are not ends in themselves but means for achieving other ends (Sen 2000). **Functionings** are ends or achievements in themselves; in Sen's words, functionings are 'beings' or 'doings' in life such as being healthy, living healthily, being educated or enjoying a decent life (Sen 2000). Everything is not equally possible in life;

consequently functionings can be grouped in different combinations, each of which can be understood as a different and possible 'way of life'. Finally, **capabilities** are the various combinations of functionings available from which a person can choose one particular group (Sen 2000). In other words, capabilities are the various 'ways of life' from which a person can choose one. In this context we seek to examine the transitions valued by individuals and how these vary both between countries and classes (This analysis is still on going).

### **Capabilities, Inequalities and the distribution of life chances**

The CA proposes that inequality should be assessed based on the capability people have to enjoy different 'ways of life'. Inequality is related here to opportunity but in a very different sense to that of libertarians. Even though it is possible to study disparities in commodities and functionings (such as income or level of education), the CA suggests studying inequality from the differences in capabilities to achieve ends. *'In this view, individual claims are to be assessed, not only by income, resources or primary goods the persons respectively have, nor only with reference to the utilities they enjoy, but in terms of the freedoms they actually have to choose between different ways of living they can have reason to value'* (Sen 2000: 65). Based on this perspective, a policy towards social justice should be oriented towards enlarging people's capabilities by endowing them with adequate, fair and efficient resources, *'providing individuals with effective means to develop'* (Salais and Villeneuve 2004). It is in this context that inequality is related to the notion of freedom; freedom to choose a 'way of life' that a person has reason to value (Sen 1999). In terms of transitional labour markets this approach emphasizes how individuals may value different types of labour market integration, as well as allowing us to assess to what extent they are able to realize these preferences.

Sociological approaches of inequality have tended to focus on a more structuralist perspective, emphasizing the systematic differences in life chances

among groups of people, which are the unintended result of social processes and social relationships (Crompton 1998). These approaches more commonly relate inequality to the notions of social class, status group or social stratification. The variety of perspectives and even definitions of social class tend to generate significant confusion. (Crompton 1998, Wright 2005a). The concept of class mainly derives from Marxist thought, while status group is associated to Weber's heritage. Stratum and stratification tend to be used as general terms that use both previous categories (Crompton 1998; Runciman 1967; Wright 2005c).

Erik Olin Wright (2005a) helps to clarify this debate by classifying the approaches based on what he considers the six basic questions of class analysis: Distributional location, Subjectively salient group, Life chances, Antagonistic conflicts, Historical variation, and Emancipation in these debates. This classification shows that 'life chances' is always a major issue of concern but linked in different ways with other questions. 'Life chances' are normally related to the possibility of opting for a particular 'life style', in the case of Weber's influence, or as the chances associated to the distribution of resources, in the case of a Marxist tradition. The CA proposition could be incorporated in the analysis of 'life chances', understood as opportunities in life. In this way, 'life chances' could be interpreted in the same way as the notion of capabilities. 'Life chances' are different because people vary in their capabilities to enjoy a valuable 'way of life', this being a more generalized notion than 'life style'. Three approaches related to 'life chances' are particularly interesting to relate to the CA: the neo-

weberian perspective, the analysis of inequality carried out by Pierre Bourdieu, and the so called post-class analysis.

Six basic questions of class analysis can be found in the literature and are summarized in Table 1:

1. Distributional location: “How are people objectively located in distribution of material inequality?”
2. Subjectively salient group: “What explains how people, individually and collectively, subjectively locate

themselves and others within a structure of inequality?”

3. Life chances: “What explains inequalities in life chances and material standards of living?”
4. Antagonistic conflicts: “What social cleavages systematically shape overt conflicts?”
5. Historical variation: “How should we characterize and explain the variations across history in the social organization of inequality?”
6. Emancipation: “What sorts of transformation are needed to eliminate oppression and exploitation within capitalist societies?”

**Table 1. Six primary questions of class analysis**

(developed from: Wright, 2005b: 182, based on Roche 2006).

Approaches to class analysis	Anchoring questions					
	1. Distributional location	2. Subjectively salient group	3. Life chances	4. Antagonistic conflicts	5. Historical variation	6. Emancipation
Popular usage	***	*	**	*		
David Grusky (neo-Durkheimian)	**	***	**	*	*	
Jan Pakulski (post-class analysis)	**	***	**	**	**	
Pierre Bourdieu	**	**	***	*		
Richard Breen and John Goldthorpe (neo-Weberian)	**	*	***	*		
Aage Sørensen (rent-based)	**	*	**	***		
Max Weber	*	*	**	*	***	
Erik Olin Wright (neo-Marxist)	*	*	**	**	**	***

\*\*\* primary anchoring question for the concept of class

\*\* secondary anchoring question (subordinate to primary anchor)

\* additional questions relevant to the concept of class, but not central to anchoring the definition

The neo-weberian perspective has focused on studying social mobility, and the extent that social position and the related distributions of rewards are explained by individual effort or performance (Goldthorpe et al. 1987, Goldthorpe 1992, Marshall et al. 1997, Breen 2005). It evaluates the fairness of the social system in terms of economic distribution or meritocracy. In economic terms it assesses the distribution of rewards, usually income, between social classes, rather than the actual capabilities people have by belonging to a particular class. The meritocratic analysis studies the processes of social mobility as the relation between education or performance, and social class destiny. Although the strength of this approach is to evaluate the meritocratic claim of liberal societies (Wright 2005b), it tends

to overlook changes in the social structure. The social class position is operationally defined by the Goldthorpe class schema, which has been criticized for not adapting to changes within the service sector over time, and the development of lower status jobs in this category in particular with regard to women's class position (Crompton 1998).

The second approach is the one carried out by Pierre Bourdieu (1984 [1979]). In his understanding of social position, Bourdieu combines the Marxist focus on economic resources as determinant of people's chances, incorporating other sources of inequality in a more Weberian way, such as social and cultural or symbolic capitals. Hence, resources and social relations are considered not just

economic, but also forms of cultural and social capital. Paths of social mobility are diverse, and not solely dependent on economic resources, but are also linked to sources of cultural capital. Bourdieu's focus concentrates on life style and the role of education and of cultural or symbolic capital in the reproduction of inequalities.

A key aspect in Bourdieu's analysis is the concept of 'habitus', which has important implications for the CA. 'Habitus' is understood as a system of dispositions to taste or to preferences shared by all the individuals who come from the same background (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]). Classes are for Bourdieu efficient agents of socialization; as a result, their members share dispositions, tastes and lifestyles (Grusky 2001). These systems of disposition to taste produce enduring orientations towards action that tends to reproduce the structure from which they originated (Cockerham et al. 1997).

This has two main consequences for the CA. Firstly, it implies that it is difficult to introduce the subjectivity of satisfaction or to only consider people's preferences in order to assess the achievement of capabilities. Secondly, and consequently, it might support defining a list of fundamental entitlements '*independent of the preferences that people happen to have*' since these can be affected by a person's class location (Nussbaum, 2003).

The third perspective is the post-class analysis represented by Jan Pakulski (2005). This perspective stresses the historic basis of class differentiation, highlighting the complexity of the current stratification systems. Pakulski

suggests that social class is a historical category characteristic of industrial societies, and not necessarily the social category that explains the distribution of chances and social formation, nor identity, nor antagonistic conflict, in current societies. He considers that the complexity of post modern societies has led to the end of class inequality as the main category of differentiation, generating instead complex and hybrid stratification systems. He considers that '*gender, occupational strata and market segments, as well as racial and ethno-specific "underclass" enclaves, are good examples of such hybrid configurations of inequality. If clustering is strong and social strata develop around the complex combination of positions, we are dealing with complex/hybrid stratification*' (Pakulski, 2005: 173). This interest on diverse social categories, understood as complex/hybrid stratification, is to a certain extent similar to Stewart's interest in social group inequalities. Groups might be potentially mobilized when inequalities in life chances or capabilities are poor, and they possess strong social consciousness and identity.

In sum, the study of social inequality in a broad sense is related to the distribution of life chances between social categories, commonly related to the notion of social classes or status groups. Life chances, from a narrow point of view have to do with distribution of rewards. However, in a broader sense, they are also linked to a social justice perspective. The sociological perspective gives particular attention to how social relations generate systematic, unintended inequalities between social groups, possibly linked to a group's consciousness, identity, and antagonistic conflict.



The CA acknowledges the complex processes of individual preferences and choices. The 'habitus' disposition toward action and preferences implies complex processes of production and reproduction of social inequality. One of the strengths and difficulties of the CA is the recognition of **differential preferences**. This challenges assumptions that there are developmental 'solutions' for particular groups that are often imposed from outside that group, and which are identified as what is best for them.

Instead CA attempts to give more emphasis to agency by acknowledging human diversity and the fact that people have different needs and preferences. This approach can be applied to the analysis of transitional labour markets to distinguish between the preferences of different groups and how these are linked inequalities both within and between societies. Nevertheless, this approach entails a number of problematic issues related to the operationalisation of these concepts for empirical research of labour market transitions.

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE CA & TLMs

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### CA: Measuring achieved functionings & choice

These conceptual problems related to preferences and constraints also create quite substantial issues in relation to operationalisation for empirical analysis (Atkinson and Bourguignon 2000). Robeyns (2000:12) has argued '*to gain the academic status of not only being a philosophical theory*' it is necessary to formalise these concepts empirically and definitively. She argues that a list of key capabilities could provide the basis for citizenship rights (Robeyns, 2005) and as such a measure to evaluate to which extent they have been achieved by individuals, groups and societies. Sen (2004), whilst acknowledging these arguments, is also resistant to defining capabilities in this way, arguing that the very basis of the CA was to go beyond a rights based analysis to focus on agency and individuals' abilities to realise and practice these rights repeatedly.

One of the main methodological problems arises in relation to the question of whether to focus on capabilities or functionings? (Roche 2006). Functionings are easier to examine as they can be empirically observed (either directly or indirectly). An examination of capabilities needs to include all available opportunities to an individual and identify those that were not chosen (unobservable facts) (Robeyn 2000). One way around this is to focus on *achieved functionings* as a vector of actual 'beings' and 'doings'. A capability is a combination of potential 'beings' and 'doings'. But it is not obvious how this set should be measured, let alone evaluated. (Robeyns,

2000: 11). "*Refined functionings*" are concrete states, chosen as indicators of people's life chances. Transition from achieved functionings to capabilities involves processes of **choice**, but raises problem in how these choices should be examined and evaluated. Large scale surveys can measure functionings and commodities, but cannot observe processes of choice or opportunity; Lipton and Ravillion (1995: 2567) point out '*we rarely observe capabilities, but rather certain "achievements"*'. What we do know from occupational choice research is that the range of viable alternatives from which individuals make work-related decisions tends to be fairly homogenous, and develops over time as a function of socialisation. Individuals develop cognitive maps of available choices, matched to their own self-concept (based on their perceived status, gender, socio-economic background etc.). They will therefore usually make selections from fairly restricted, 'suitable' options (Gottfredson 1981; Radford, 1998); as our research will indicate these perceived options vary between countries.

In trying to evaluate the existence of a range of capabilities or functionings raises two problems. First, there is the debate about whether we need to agree a common list of capabilities or even achieved functionings. Second, functionings tend to be measured as categorical variables, (ordinal scales or nominal variables), where there is no equivalent metric to aggregate the total number of functionings. There is no common unit of measurement, or natural aggregator, such as the use of prices in

welfare economics, to allow us to compare over a range of dimensions (Kuklys, 2005). This raises additional difficulties for using conventional statistical techniques in order to determine and measure relations of causality. The CA raises considerable issues of conceptual complexity (Chiappero Martinetti, 2004). The solutions given to these issues are diverse and not only based on practicalities as well as on analytical considerations.

### **Attractions of the approach**

Nevertheless, despite these difficulties one of the attractions of the CA is that it differentiates means from ends: having more money does not necessarily equate with a higher degree of happiness or life/satisfaction. Having more time, financial resources or childcare does not necessarily result in people having more children; but it certainly makes these options between choosing different 'ways of life' more affordable; it is a complex relationship and one that is not necessarily linear.

Secondly, the CA draws our attention to the variety of preferences and needs and the fact that people and groups vary in their ability to convert commodities into well-being (Robeyns, 2005; Woodfield 2007). These opportunities or constraints can come from macro social factors, or from individual circumstances. For example, someone with a high level of education may want to work but live in a region with high unemployment (eg: Eastern Germany, Southern Italy or Spain, or Poland); or they may have a job and want children but their partner doesn't share the same preferences.

Additionally, the concept of freedom is assessed on the effective capability people have to choose a 'way of life' they have reasons to value, although this is a very difficult concept to operationalise. This gives greater weight to agency approaches that may allow us to address some of the controversial issues about what women, men and families want (Hakim 1991, 1995, Ginn et al. 1996, Crompton 2006, Woodfield 2007). Although much evidence suggests that work-related choices are shaped and constrained for individuals by a range of extra-individual factors (family, peers, teachers, careers advisors, discrimination etc.) (Fassinger 1996; HMSO 2005; MacKenzie 1997; Miller *et al.* 2004), there remains a pressing theoretical need to account for why some individuals do buck pervasive trends.

### **Transitional labour markets: Measuring and evaluating preferred transitions**

We build on the approach developed in earlier work related to the concept of transitional labour markets (Schmid and Gazier 2003; O'Reilly et al. 2000 and O'Reilly 2003). This work focused on the dynamics of labour market transitions, and the policies, which affect such transitions into and out of employment (Giddens 2007). One of the key issues in this research has been to emphasise a flow analysis of economic and social life between the boundaries of paid activities and unpaid activities. Analytically this approach has sought to distinguish between the quality of maintenance, integrative and exclusionary transitions in the labour market (O'Reilly 2001, Schmid 2002). We know that those in higher status

occupations have higher participation rates, resulting from both a lower risk of exiting paid employment and a higher probability of re-entry after interruptions. However, research has revealed a different impact of partners' resources (Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001) and institutional features (Blossfeld and Hofmeister 2006) across countries. We can use cross-country differences to test some of these.

However, there are four main analytical problems in developing a research methodology to understand care related labour market transitions adequately. The first is that because both generational (life course) and period (general social change) effects are in operation cross-sectional data is of limited use. It gives us information about the later stages of the life course for older respondents whose labour market and family careers started in earlier periods, combined with data on the early life course stage of younger respondents growing up at a later period. This is accentuated by the fact that such 'period' change has occurred at different rates and from different starting points in different states. This makes comparative data at any point in time even more difficult to interpret, especially when at first sight, it appears to provide 'promising' results such as the reversal in the sign of the cross country correlation between women's employment and fertility (Ahn & Mira 1998, Castles 2003).

The second is that the relationship between employment and care is contradictory. Employment and care activities are mutually exclusive in the sense that each decreases the time available for, and complicates the

scheduling of, the other. But they are mutually interdependent, at an individual family level in the sense that employment is the main source of resources for caring activity, and at a social level in the sense that only care activity (generationally and immediately) reproduces individuals able to participate in the labour market. How this contradiction is resolved is also difficult to trace cross-sectionally since the resolution (as our emphasis on transitions makes clear) is usually achieved over time. Intensive and extensive (in terms of volume of hours) childcare is confined to the first years of life and occupies a decreasing proportion of parents (lengthening) lives. The adjustments made by parents are ones made across a life course within which many transitions may be seen (and foreseen) as temporary.

The third is that while 'money' is a relatively straightforward resource to measure (although complicated in practice by the need to supplement knowledge of current resources with future potential ones, and by assumptions made about the substitutability of income and wealth), time is an altogether more complicated phenomenon. Time is not a resource as such, although it is conventionally discursively treated in this way. No individual 'has' more or less time than any other: days always have 24 hours. What individuals, families or firms do have is different ranges of alternatives for the purposive use of such time. This makes 'time stress' a difficult concept to measure. At one level it refers to widening *opportunities* to use time in different ways, while at another level it may refer to widening *obligations* to perform different activities within a

given amount of time. Both can be understood in terms of the 'price' of time, but only insofar as it can be seen to have an opportunity 'cost' (Becker 1965; Linder 1970). Time use, therefore inevitably leads us to look at 'preferences' which may be intrinsically hard to measure and to dissociate from norms and choice of social comparators. For example, while people report ever increasing levels of time-stress (an intuitively attractive concept that nevertheless defies definition) it can be shown that both in the USA and Europe, working hours are in clear trend decline and leisure time has steadily increased (Robinson and Godbey 1999; MacInnes 2005).

This is further complicated by what Baumol (1967) referred to as the 'technologically non progressive' nature of activity (whether consumption, production or reproduction) that requires real time human interaction (as in almost all caring work and more generally in most service work). By remorselessly cheapening things relative to services, technological innovation has the perverse effect of making the latter appear relatively more costly. Baumol's argument was developed to explain deindustrialisation and the fiscal squeeze on the state produced by its responsibility for public services. However, it also has tremendous implications for the care work, analagous to 'service' work, undertaken within households and families, and the consequent range of functionings and capabilities they may aspire too.

**Evaluating differential outcomes - a result of preferences or the constraints of class structures & societal norms?**

Atkinson and Bourguignon (2000) argue that within the CA *'differences in economic outcomes attributable to differences in preferences must thus be considered essentially as the expression of individual liberty and diversity in society rather than a sign of inequality'*. This is problematic. It implies that everyone has realised their preferences. Implicitly this attributes economic outcomes solely to individual's preferences, as if individuals would choose and act alone in the vacuum without negotiations & constraints (see discussion of Major 1989, 1993 and Sen 1992). Nussbaum (2003: 34) has argued that the focus on individual preferences to this extent is problematic as this can lead to ignoring how *'unjust background conditions'* have shaped these preferences. In other words: people develop preferences for what they have, are familiar with, or what they know they can realistically achieve. Additionally, further inequalities arise as a result of differential capacities to convert commodities into well-being (Lipton and Ravallion, 1995). Households with the same income will not necessarily be able to achieve the same levels of satisfaction because of particular differences, some of which have been discussed in the previous section (Sen, 2000). Further, preferences for themselves and those considered suitable at a societal level may not cohere (Daly and Rake 2000, OECD 2001a). What is seen as preferable at a particular phase in the lifecycle, can change over time, depending on how life chances work out.

On one hand the CA approach could imply the impossible task of needing to know what the alternative options were available to an individual that affected

the preference they expressed for a particular 'way of life'. On the other hand, the work of Folbre (1994) allows us to think about operationalising this analysis in terms of the concept of 'constrained choice'. She argues that this is constituted by: *asset distribution* (financial, biological, human capital), *political rules* (specified by statute or contract), *cultural norms* (implicit societal rules) and finally *personal preferences*. These constraints set '*certain boundaries of choice*' (Folbre

1994:51). We propose to build on this proposal of Folbre by identifying normative gender regimes and map these characteristics on to expressed preferences and realised transitions. This allows us not only to compare the characteristics of household transitions between work and care in different countries, but also to be able to evaluate these in terms of the perceived constraints or opportunities individuals' experience.

### 3. HOUSEHOLD ORGANISATION OF WORKING TIME AND CARE: CAPABILITIES AND TRANSITIONS

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How do households with children manage care and work obligations, and how do they vary across countries and class? We examine households around the time of family formation and increased caring responsibilities to see how this impacts on the declining male breadwinner system as a reproductive and employment regime (MacInnes 2005; Nazio and MacInnes 2007). The value of such an approach is to allow us to give more emphasis to how actors within particular societies are capable of facilitating, or circumventing, existing institutional provisions, or the lack of them, in order to achieve a particular work-life balance.

Our focus on households as a unit of analysis has three advantages. First, it allows us to examine the affect of interdependence between the characteristics, activities and choices of both members of the couple (Mincer and Polachek 1974, Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001, Aassve et al. 2004). Secondly, household patterns tend to have long term consequences for the life chances of individuals and their future agency (e.g. independent income, saving opportunities, entitlement and amount of retirement and/or unemployment benefits, etc.) Third, from a cross-national comparative perspective it allows us to link the characteristics of national welfare regimes and their impact on individual household types. At the individual level interruptions to employment continuity may result in adverse outcomes later in life. However, at the societal level, given that educational homogamy is high and persistent (Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001),

there is a risk of a polarisation of opportunities and life-chances between highly educated women (in high income double breadwinning couples) and lower educated women (more likely to be found in couples with lower household income more exposed to unemployment,) or single earner households.

There is still an unequal gender division of paid employment and unpaid caring (and domestic) work between spouses within households which is resistant to change (Gershuny et al. 2005, Breen and Cooke 2005) despite increasing participation of women in paid employment. Men seem to be reacting very slowly to women's increasing burdens. Preliminary evidence for Germany shows that married couples tend to converge to a traditional division of work with time (Thiessen et al. 1994). When there is an increasing demand for care, women still more often reduce their time in paid employment, only re-entering employment when the need for care is reduced (Gershuny et al. 2005). The presence of young children is significantly related to women's reduction of paid work, though institutional contexts and labour market structures matter in the strength/shape of these effects. Higher occupational resources tend to result in higher participation for women, resulting from both a lower risk of exiting paid employment and a higher probability of re-entry after interruptions. However, research has revealed a different impact of partners' resources on the degree of women's employment (Blossfeld and Drobnic 2001) and institutional features

(Blossfeld and Hofmeister 2006) across countries. For the USA and Australia, evidence confirm exchange-bargaining theory (women decrease their amount of unpaid housework with increasing earnings). But after the point where both

contribute equally, for couples where women earn more, they also seem to compensate for a deviation in traditional expectation by contributing a higher share of unpaid domestic work (Bittman 2003).



## 4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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The analysis we have conducted to date is based on three sources of quantitative survey data: ESS, ECHP and ISSP. In the first part we examine the European Social Survey (ESS) to evaluate characteristics of normative gender regimes at an individual and perceived societal level; we also examine the degree to which individuals perceive their scope for autonomy, recognition and freedom within these. In the second part we plot the transitions made by different households in their organisation of work and care arrangements based on data from the European Community Household Panel survey (ECHP). Finally, we briefly examine preferred and realised transitions using data from the ISSP.

### Normative Gender Regimes

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#### European Social Survey: UK, Denmark, Poland and Spain

The analysis in this part of the paper is based on the Third Round of the European Social Survey (ESS-2006) fielded in 2006/2007.<sup>2</sup> The fieldwork has a minimum target response rate of 70% and rigorous translation protocols. The total sample for the ESS-2006 is

constituted of 43,000 individuals.<sup>3</sup> The survey is based on an hour face-to-face interview that includes questions on a variety of topics. The core modules include repeated questions from previous rounds on a range of variables, including media and social trust, politics and attitude, subjective well-being, social exclusion, and socio demographic profile. Two additional modules are developed for Round Three (ESS-2006) covering personal and social well being and the organization of the life course in Europe.

#### Why the choice of countries:

We chose to examine developments in the UK, Denmark, Poland and Spain as four countries that represent quiet different types of employment regimes and welfare arrangements but at the same time share some similarities: Poland and Spain tend to have more conservative and catholic values whilst at the same time representing two very different political traditions about the role of women in employment in a former communist and fascist country. Denmark and the UK are also often

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<sup>2</sup> Edition 3.1 release in April 2008. The ESS is a biennial cross-national attitudinal survey covering over 30 nations across Europe, which is coordinated by of the Centre for Comparative Social Surveys at City University in London, with the participation of partner institutions in Europe. The ESS is founded jointly by the European Commission, the European Science Foundation and academic funding bodies in each participating country. The sample is a strict probability sampling of individuals within the universe of all persons aged 15 and over resident within private households, regardless of their nationality, citizenship, language or legal status at the countries under studies. Countries included are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Cyprus, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, United Kingdom, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Ukraine.

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<sup>3</sup> 1,505 for Denmark, 1,875 for Spain, 2,394 for united Kingdom, and 1,721 for Poland.

considered as quiet distinct welfare regimes: social democratic and liberal. Nevertheless, they also share common characteristics of relatively high levels of female employment and part-time work as well as a more permissive culture around issues related to gender equality.

### **Our central question**

We were interested in comparing the characteristics of social norms related to gender equality in these countries as internalised by individual responses to a number of questions in round 3 of the ESS that ask about lifestyles and timing of key life events, as well as the acceptability of non-traditional practices related to gender norms. Second we wanted to draw on questions that would allow us to examine one aspect of the capabilities approach related to the sense of autonomy and control people had over their lives. In this analysis we distinguish between parents and non-parents.

### **Comparing societal norms on gender**

There are a number of questions in round 3 that ask respondents about their attitudes to the ideal age for particular life events such as having a child, getting married/living together. There are also a range of questions that ask about how acceptable particular practices would be both to the individual and to their perception of social approval of these either explicitly or implicitly. As with much attitudinal research there are a number of problems of extrapolating these individual responses as given social norms. In particular the interpretation of these responses needs to be highly sensitive to the structure of the sample and the way in which the questions are both asked as well as where they come in the questionnaire. Nevertheless, the reliability and the

robustness of the ESS has been of central importance in the construction of this survey, and the data is usually considered to be of very high quality. One of the major advantages is the comparative design that allows us to make cross-national comparisons around similar measures. As our results indicate there are a number of striking differences both between countries, as well as similarities in the differences between the sexes in particular attitudes. We explore these dimensions here in relation to personal and societal attitudes about the importance of living together and decisions related to work and fertility.

### **Living together: Marriage, cohabitation and divorce**

Respondents were asked when they thought the ideal age to live with someone without being married (Table 1a).<sup>4</sup> In Poland over 15% thought you should never live together without being married compared to around 6% in Spain, approximately 4% in the UK and a negligible number in Denmark. In the UK and Denmark people thought the ideal age to live with someone was much younger than in Poland and Spain. But the ideal age to get married was lower in the UK and Poland, than Denmark and Spain (Table 1b). Men were more likely than women, in all countries, to think that the ideal age to live with someone

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<sup>4</sup> Split ballot refers to questions that are only answered for half off the sample, while the other half is asked a different group of questions. The whole sample is therefore spited by a randomized method generating two groups, each containing similar number and proportion of men and women. The split ballot questions correspond to similar questions in the module on life course where some interviewers were asked about girls/women, while the other group is asked about boys/men (for that reason the detail in the label in the column).

should be older, while women thought the ideal age to get married was younger (particularly in Denmark).

Respondents were also asked if they personally approved or disapproved of living together unmarried, having a child outside of marriage, or divorcing before that child was 12 (Table 2). In Poland nearly a quarter of the sample personally disapproved of living together unmarried, which was much higher than in the other countries; in Denmark disapproval was very low, with over 90% saying they personally approved or strongly approved of people living together unmarried. A similar pattern was found when asked about children born in couples who were not married. On both questions around 60% of UK respondents expressed neither approval nor disapproval; and the Spanish respondents were more likely to be found approving. There do not appear to be any noticeable gender differences.

When asked about couples divorcing before the child was 12 there was quiet a high level of disapproval, which tended to be higher amongst men than amongst women. Disapproval of divorce when the children are young is higher in

Poland, than Spain and lowest in Denmark. In all of these questions the British respondents were very non-committal.

Additionally a series of questions asked respondents how they thought most people would react to a unmarried couples living together and if they had a child or got divorced before the child was 12 (Table 3a & b). On the dimensions we have discussed above we found that perceptions of societal disapproval for cohabitation were much higher in Poland and Spain, while there is nearly no disapproval in Denmark (where most people 60%, strongly approve it). The only noticeable gender difference seems to be only clear in Spain, with more disapproval amongst women, otherwise there is not much difference between men and women on this issue. A similar pattern was also observed in terms of disapproval of children born in non-married couples. Disapproval of divorce where there are children under 12 was high in all countries, but less severe in Denmark where an important percentage would strongly approve it. The disapproval is always higher for men than for women.

**Table 1a What is the ideal age to start living with a partner you are not married to ?**

		Country							
		Denmark Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Spain Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		United Kingdom Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Poland Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	
		Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men
Start living with partner not married to, ideal age	No ideal age	16.9%	12.1%	10.3%	9.9%	12.9%	10.8%	10.2%	9.4%
	Less than 18	1.6%	.7%	.9%	.6%	3.6%	3.1%	.7%	
	18	11.4%	6.2%	5.6%	3.3%	21.4%	12.1%	7.5%	3.0%
	19	3.1%	3.0%	.9%	.4%	3.5%	1.7%	3.7%	1.1%
	20	<b>23.9%</b>	<b>25.1%</b>	15.0%	10.7%	16.3%	15.1%	<b>21.4%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>
	21 - 24	<b>25.3%</b>	<b>25.9%</b>	<b>21.9%</b>	<b>17.2%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>23.2%</b>	<b>23.5%</b>
	25	12.9%	19.2%	<b>24.7%</b>	<b>26.5%</b>	11.6%	17.6%	13.3%	22.6%
	More than 25	3.3%	6.9%	15.0%	<b>24.4%</b>	4.2%	8.4%	4.9%	10.6%
	Should never live with partner not married to	1.6%	.9%	5.6%	6.8%	5.2%	3.2%	15.1%	16.0%
<b>Mean ideal age</b>	<b>21.60</b>	<b>22.26</b>	<b>23.52</b>	<b>24.57</b>	<b>20.95</b>	<b>22.09</b>	<b>21.87</b>	<b>23.43</b>	
Get Married and live with husband/wife, ideal age	No ideal age	14.1%	13.9%	11.9%	10.9%	12.0%	8.8%	4.6%	4.0%
	Less than 20	4.0%	1.1%	2.1%	1.4%	12.8%	6.6%	5.8%	.8%
	20 - 24	26.7%	19.9%	22.7%	16.0%	33.8%	26.1%	54.9%	33.7%
	25 -29	<b>46.5%</b>	<b>49.9%</b>	<b>46.4%</b>	<b>48.8%</b>	<b>33.6%</b>	<b>42.9%</b>	<b>31.7%</b>	<b>53.5%</b>
	30 -34	7.2%	14.5%	15.0%	19.5%	6.6%	14.0%	2.9%	7.5%
	More than 35	.8%	.7%	1.4%	2.5%	.9%	1.5%		.4%
Should never get married	.6%	.1%	.6%	.9%	.3%	.2%			
<b>Mean ideal age</b>	<b>21.60</b>	<b>22.26</b>	<b>23.52</b>	<b>24.57</b>	<b>20.95</b>	<b>22.09</b>	<b>21.87</b>	<b>23.43</b>	

**Table 2 Personal level of approval or disapproval**

		Country							
		Denmark Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Spain Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		United Kingdom Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Poland Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	
		Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men
Approve if person lives with partner not married to. SPLIT BALLOT	Strongly disapprove	1.5%	.9%	3.0%	4.2%	4.4%	4.1%	8.8%	8.7%
	Disapprove	3.6%	3.2%	12.2%	12.2%	9.7%	10.1%	26.6%	24.1%
	Neither approve nor disapprove	1.7%	3.2%	29.3%	26.9%	60.2%	61.0%	21.6%	21.4%
	Approve	32.5%	30.5%	38.8%	40.0%	18.1%	20.4%	38.7%	42.3%
	Strongly approve	60.6%	62.2%	16.8%	16.7%	7.6%	4.4%	4.4%	3.5%
<b>Mean score*</b>		<b>4.47</b>	<b>4.50</b>	<b>3.54</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>3.15</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.08</b>
Approve if person have child with partner not married to. SPLIT BALLOT	Strongly disapprove	1.7%	1.3%	3.2%	4.6%	5.9%	5.1%	8.0%	7.1%
	Disapprove	7.4%	7.1%	15.3%	13.3%	15.0%	14.9%	23.9%	22.4%
	Neither approve nor disapprove	2.5%	2.9%	28.5%	27.6%	57.1%	58.5%	23.7%	23.1%
	Approve	31.6%	34.9%	38.5%	39.2%	16.1%	17.7%	41.0%	44.3%
	Strongly approve	56.9%	53.8%	14.5%	15.3%	5.9%	3.7%	3.5%	3.0%
<b>Mean score*</b>		<b>4.35</b>	<b>4.33</b>	<b>3.46</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>3.01</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>3.14</b>
Approve if person gets divorced while children aged under 12. SPLIT BALLOT	Strongly disapprove	1.5%	2.6%	6.9%	8.1%	3.8%	5.5%	10.8%	14.1%
	Disapprove	8.6%	14.6%	25.7%	31.4%	19.2%	26.1%	35.3%	42.5%
	Neither approve nor disapprove	13.0%	16.0%	34.7%	33.6%	61.8%	58.0%	27.0%	25.5%
	Approve	41.1%	40.2%	25.3%	21.9%	12.6%	8.6%	24.8%	16.1%
	Strongly approve	35.8%	26.5%	7.5%	5.0%	2.6%	1.9%	2.1%	1.7%
<b>Mean score*</b>		<b>4.01</b>	<b>3.73</b>	<b>3.01</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>2.72</b>	<b>2.49</b>

\*Mean scores are based on a scale 1= Strongly disapprove; 5= Strongly approve

**Table 3a Perception of how most other people would react**

		Country							
		Denmark		Spain		United Kingdom		Poland	
		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	
		Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men
		Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %
Most people react if person became mother/father before age of 18. SPLIT BALLOT	Most people would openly disapprove	8.5%	13.6%	34.1%	35.0%	15.7%	21.1%	16.7%	20.9%
	Most people would secretly disapprove	50.4%	53.7%	41.6%	39.0%	55.5%	54.8%	45.7%	43.6%
	Most people would not mind either way	30.9%	24.0%	21.7%	24.0%	27.7%	22.2%	31.4%	30.3%
	Most people would approve	10.2%	8.7%	2.6%	2.0%	1.1%	1.9%	6.2%	5.2%
Most people react if person carried on working after age of 70. SPLIT BALLOT	Most people would openly disapprove	6.8%	3.6%	37.5%	28.1%	13.8%	8.7%	25.4%	17.7%
	Most people would secretly disapprove	17.5%	12.0%	30.9%	31.0%	20.6%	15.3%	30.1%	27.6%
	Most people would not mind either way	35.1%	40.3%	29.1%	37.8%	57.5%	64.9%	39.2%	44.8%
	Most people would approve	40.7%	44.1%	2.5%	3.0%	8.1%	11.1%	5.3%	10.0%
Most people react if person chose never to have children. SPLIT BALLOT	Most people would openly disapprove	1.0%	.4%	9.1%	11.9%	2.3%	3.3%	13.1%	12.1%
	Most people would secretly disapprove	15.2%	9.8%	24.6%	21.1%	17.2%	13.8%	33.1%	27.4%
	Most people would not mind either way	38.9%	42.0%	61.4%	62.8%	74.5%	78.2%	48.6%	53.3%
	Most people would approve	44.9%	47.7%	4.9%	4.2%	6.1%	4.7%	5.2%	7.1%
Most people react if person lived with partner not being married to. SPLIT BALLOT	Most people would openly disapprove	.4%		5.2%	7.3%	3.0%	2.1%	10.6%	10.1%
	Most people would secretly disapprove	1.3%	1.1%	26.3%	19.7%	13.2%	11.3%	37.5%	35.6%
	Most people would not mind either way	38.7%	39.3%	60.9%	63.3%	76.7%	79.2%	42.6%	43.2%
	Most people would approve	59.7%	59.6%	7.6%	9.7%	7.1%	7.4%	9.2%	11.1%

**Table 3a continued**

		Country							
		Denmark		Spain		United Kingdom		Poland	
		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	
		Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men
		Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %	Col %
Most people react if person had child with partner not married to. SPLIT BALLOT	Most people would openly disapprove	.7%	.5%	6.6%	8.1%	3.3%	3.1%	11.7%	9.6%
	Most people would secretly disapprove	3.4%	3.3%	29.9%	22.2%	19.7%	19.9%	39.3%	39.2%
	Most people would not mind either way	36.6%	36.2%	56.9%	61.2%	70.7%	71.4%	39.2%	40.4%
	Most people would approve	59.4%	60.0%	6.6%	8.5%	6.3%	5.7%	9.8%	10.8%
Most people react if person had full-time job while children aged under 3. SPLIT BALLOT	Most people would openly disapprove	1.5%	.1%	7.5%	3.7%	5.8%	1.1%	4.2%	1.3%
	Most people would secretly disapprove	9.1%	2.4%	23.4%	10.3%	37.7%	4.9%	18.9%	5.2%
	Most people would not mind either way	38.8%	30.5%	56.9%	54.7%	52.6%	51.6%	57.6%	42.9%
	Most people would approve	50.5%	67.0%	12.2%	31.3%	3.8%	42.5%	19.3%	50.6%
Most people react if person got divorced while children aged under 12. SPLIT BALLOT	Most people would openly disapprove	1.6%	2.0%	14.1%	18.0%	4.4%	7.3%	12.7%	20.2%
	Most people would secretly disapprove	14.1%	26.3%	39.1%	36.1%	31.1%	41.0%	39.4%	41.3%
	Most people would not mind either way	39.5%	35.3%	42.6%	41.6%	62.4%	49.3%	41.6%	33.2%
	Most people would approve	44.8%	36.4%	4.2%	4.3%	2.1%	2.4%	6.3%	5.3%

**Table 3b Mean scores of reaction**

	Country							
	Denmark		Spain		United Kingdom		Poland	
	Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	
	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men
Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	
Most people react if person became mother/father before age of 18. SPLIT BALLOT	2.43	2.28	1.93	1.93	2.14	2.05	2.27	2.20
Most people react if person carried on working after age of 70. SPLIT BALLOT	3.10	3.25	1.97	2.16	2.60	2.78	2.24	2.47
Most people react if person chose never to have children. SPLIT BALLOT	3.28	3.37	2.62	2.59	2.84	2.84	2.46	2.55
Most people react if person lived with partner not being married to. SPLIT BALLOT	3.58	3.59	2.71	2.75	2.88	2.92	2.51	2.55
Most people react if person had child with partner not married to. SPLIT BALLOT	3.55	3.56	2.64	2.70	2.80	2.80	2.47	2.52
Most people react if person had full-time job while children aged under 3. SPLIT BALLOT	3.38	3.64	2.74	3.14	2.54	3.35	2.92	3.43
Most people react if person got divorced while children aged under 12. SPLIT BALLOT	3.28	3.06	2.37	2.32	2.62	2.47	2.41	2.24

Overall this analysis indicates that the countries can be differentiated at several levels in terms of how individuals evaluate these issues related to living together and how they perceive the people around them would judge non-traditional arrangements. This can give us an indication of the perceived social stigma that may impinge on an individual's capacity to pursue particular lifestyle trajectories which we examine later in the paper. The data suggests that more traditional attitudes are particularly

prevalent in Poland and to a lesser degree in Spain. As we might expect Denmark shows signs of a more modernist or progressive normative framework where there is little perception of social stigma associated with non-traditional families; in fact there is at times strong approval. The UK also seems to share some elements of a more liberal normative framework, almost to the point where it is in fact very non-judgemental in either direction, whilst at the same time having more



polarised opinions between traditionalists and modernists. This becomes apparent when we focus on parenting and working.

### Parenting and Working

Across all countries women were much more likely than men to personally disapprove of mothers with children under three working full-time (Table 4). In particular a higher proportion of British women disapproved (37.8%) compared to 28.9% in Poland, 23% in

Spain and 14.9% in Denmark. In contrast disapproval from men was negligible across countries. The highest rates of approval were found in, Denmark, Poland and Spain: over 60% of Danish women, and 50% of Polish women and 40% of Spanish women approved of full-time employment for women with small children, compared with 15.7% in the UK. The largest proportion of women in the UK (46%) was non-committal.

**Table 4 Personal Approval of mothers with small children under three working full-time**

		Country							
		Denmark		Spain		United Kingdom		Poland	
		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	
		Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men
Approve if person has full-time job while children aged under 3. SPLIT BALLOT	Strongly disapprove	2.5%	.5%	2.2%	.5%	6.4%	.7%	3.9%	1.3%
	Disapprove	12.4%	1.7%	20.8%	8.7%	31.2%	2.5%	25.0%	3.6%
	Neither approve nor disapprove	10.0%	3.7%	32.9%	22.4%	46.5%	37.4%	20.9%	11.1%
	Approve	38.1%	39.3%	35.9%	44.5%	12.7%	36.1%	46.3%	60.4%
	Strongly approve	37.1%	54.8%	8.3%	23.9%	3.2%	23.3%	3.9%	23.5%
<b>Mean Score</b>		<b>3.95</b>	<b>4.46</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>3.83</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>3.79</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>4.01</b>

As shown in Table 3a& b above respondents reported how they thought other people would judge full-time working mothers with children under three. We present these here in Table 5 (as Table 3 needs editing). Not surprisingly over 90% of male and female respondents in Denmark thought others would judge these mothers approvingly. Again men were more positive than women. In Poland 25% of women thought that this would meet with approval compared with 14% in

Spain and only 5.9% in the UK. The majority in the UK, as in Poland and Spain thought most people wouldn't mind either way. It is interesting how this question evokes extremes and at the same time non-committal responses in the different countries. One of the key questions to explore in the subsequent analysis is how these stigmas or lack of them impact on individuals perceptions of autonomy and recognition of their competences.

**Table 5 Perception of how other people react to mothers with small children under 3 working full-time**

		Country							
		Denmark Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Spain Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		United Kingdom Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Poland Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	
		Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men
Most people react if person had full- time job while children aged under 3. SPLIT BALLOT	Most people would openly disapprove	1.5%	.1%	7.5%	3.7%	5.8%	1.1%	4.2%	1.3%
	Most people would secretly disapprove	9.1%	2.4%	23.4%	10.3%	37.7%	4.9%	18.9%	5.2%
	Most people would not mind either way	38.8%	30.5%	56.9%	54.7%	52.6%	51.6%	57.6%	42.9%
	Most people would approve	50.5%	67.0%	12.2%	31.3%	3.8%	42.5%	19.3%	50.6%
	Most people would approve	44.8%	36.4%	4.2%	4.3%	2.1%	2.4%	6.3%	5.3%
<b>Mean Score</b>		<b>3.38</b>	<b>3.64</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>2.54</b>	<b>3.35</b>	<b>2.92</b>	<b>3.43</b>

Additional questions related to fertility choices and pregnancy can also indicate the strength of the traditional family and how respondents approved or not of those who transgressed this norm or having children in mid-life. The results

of these questions are included in Tables 6 & 7( also in Table 3a&b to be edited out which presents the results of attitudes to teenage parenthood and those who actively choose to be childless.

**Table 6 Personal approval of fertility decisions**

		Country							
		Denmark Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Spain Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		United Kingdom Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female		Poland Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	
		Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men
Approve if person chooses never to have children. SPLIT BALLOT	Strongly disapprove	1.7%	1.7%	4.8%	6.1%	1.2%	2.4%	11.3%	11.7%
	Disapprove	4.3%	4.4%	17.8%	22.3%	6.1%	5.6%	40.0%	43.1%
	Neither approve nor disapprove	3.8%	4.4%	40.4%	40.4%	67.9%	72.9%	24.9%	20.7%
	Approve	37.2%	41.6%	29.1%	24.0%	15.6%	13.7%	21.2%	22.5%
	Strongly approve	53.1%	48.0%	7.8%	7.2%	9.3%	5.4%	2.7%	1.9%
<b>Mean score</b>		<b>4.36</b>	<b>4.30</b>	<b>3.17</b>	<b>3.04</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>2.60</b>

The decision not to have children is personally disapproved of in Poland by over 50% of both male and female respondents and approximately 20% of Spanish respondents (Table 6). The Danes are more positive with over 80% of both men and women approving childlessness, while the British are yet again predominantly of no fixed strong opinion (approximately 70%) with a remaining 20% approving.

A similar picture is also found in these respondents' perception of how others would view the decision to be childless: in Poland 46% of women and 39% of men thought most people would either openly or secretly disapprove of the decision to be childless (Table 7). In Spain the societal perception of disapproval was higher than the personal opinions of the respondents with 33% stating that others would disapprove. The results for Denmark and the UK are similar to those held at the personal

level. Gender differences are not so clear, although the degree of approval tends to be lower for women.

Teenage parenthood was viewed negatively across the board: in all countries nearly 50% of respondents thought that becoming a parent before the age of 18 would be secretly disapproved of by others (Table 7). Spain stands out with over 30% of people who felt that this would be viewed with open disapproval. Only in Denmark did around 10% feel that it would be approved of by others; and in Poland this acceptance was also higher than in the UK or Spain; but in Poland people expect to become parents earlier than in the other countries (could add the data here to this table from original 3a) Age to become a parent 3a Polish women more likely to say ideal when younger 20-24 than other groups – Otherwise vast majority in other countries all thought between 25-29.

**Table 7 Perception of how others react to teenage parents and choosing to be childless**

		Country							
		Denmark		Spain		United Kingdom		Poland	
		Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female	Interviewer code, split ballot, ask about male or female
		Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men	Ask about girls, women	Ask about boys, men
Most people react if person became mother/ father before age of 18. SPLIT BALLOT	Most people would openly disapprove	8.5%	13.6%	34.1%	35.0%	15.7%	21.1%	16.7%	20.9%
	Most people would secretly disapprove	50.4%	53.7%	41.6%	39.0%	55.5%	54.8%	45.7%	43.6%
	Most people would not mind either way	30.9%	24.0%	21.7%	24.0%	27.7%	22.2%	31.4%	30.3%
	Most people would approve	10.2%	8.7%	2.6%	2.0%	1.1%	1.9%	6.2%	5.2%
<b>Mean Score</b>		<b>2.43</b>	<b>2.28</b>	<b>1.93</b>	<b>1.93</b>	<b>2.14</b>	<b>2.05</b>	<b>2.27</b>	<b>2.20</b>
Most people react if person chose never to have children. SPLIT BALLOT	Most people would openly disapprove	1.0%	.4%	9.1%	11.9%	2.3%	3.3%	13.1%	12.1%
	Most people would secretly disapprove	15.2%	9.8%	24.6%	21.1%	17.2%	13.8%	33.1%	27.4%
	Most people would not mind either way	38.9%	42.0%	61.4%	62.8%	74.5%	78.2%	48.6%	53.3%
	Most people would approve	44.9%	47.7%	4.9%	4.2%	6.1%	4.7%	5.2%	7.1%
<b>Mean Score</b>		<b>3.28</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>2.59</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>2.46</b>	<b>2.55</b>

On the basis of this analysis of attitudes towards gender norms in the four countries under consideration we can identify some striking similarities and differences. In Spain the perception of societal constraints or negative stigma associated with those who behave differently to the traditional norms appears to be stronger than the personal opinions held by individuals; whereas in Poland the reverse seems to be the case: individuals hold more conservative values than they perceive are held by others in their society. Denmark is characterised by very progressive values to non-traditional behaviour with little stigma been associated with it either by the individual values held or perceived of others. Britain is also fairly progressive in a very laissez-faire sense where progressive views do not appear to be held so strongly and respondents

appear to take a very arms length approach to making moral judgements about non-conventional behaviour, albeit except for the disapproval of mothers of small children working full-time.

As we indicated in the introduction and in earlier work for this project, there are a number of ways of operationalising capabilities (Roche 2006). One of the advantages of the ESS round 3 is that it was designed very much in mind with exploring this debate and those related to issues of well-being. We begin this analysis by looking at three questions on how individuals feel about the freedom they have to decide how they live, whether they have the chance to show how capable they are, and if they feel they get the recognition they deserve for what they do (Table 8).

Table 8

	Denmark	Spain	United Kingdom	Poland
Free to decide how to live my life				
Agree strongly	31.9%	23.5%	26.9%	18.0%
Agree	51.1%	51.5%	54.5%	56.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	10.3%	15.8%	9.5%	15.8%
Disagree	5.9%	7.9%	8.2%	8.9%
Disagree strongly	8%	1.2%	.9%	1.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Little chance to show how capable I am				
Agree strongly	2.5%	2.8%	2.8%	2.5%
Agree	10.2%	28.7%	21.6%	33.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	15.6%	25.0%	25.8%	28.7%
Disagree	55.1%	39.7%	44.3%	31.6%
Disagree strongly	16.7%	3.8%	5.5%	3.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Feel you get the recognition you deserve for what you do				
Not at all	.3%	1.5%	2.8%	2.5%
1	8%	2.5%	2.8%	4.4%
2	3.0%	6.8%	9.7%	8.4%
3	10.1%	21.7%	25.0%	25.9%
4	25.5%	25.6%	28.0%	25.1%
5	45.7%	28.8%	22.9%	24.8%
A great deal	14.6%	13.1%	8.8%	8.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The majority of respondents felt that they were free to decide how they lived; but the Danish were more likely to say they strongly agreed to this question than the Polish. Similar results came through on the question of being able to show how capable they were: nearly 71% of the Danes felt they were able to show this compared to 49% of the British, 42% of the Spanish and 34% of the Polish. And again in terms of feeling

they were recognised for what they did the Danish came out towards the top of the scale with 59% responding that they did feel recognised compared with 41% of the Spanish, 32% of the Polish and 30% of the British. When we broke this down by gender there did not appear to be any significant differences between men and women in each of these countries as their scores were fairly similar to each other.

		Country												
		Denmark			Spain			United Kingdom			Poland			
		Gender		Total	Gender		Total	Gender		Total	Gender		Total	
		Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female		
Free to decide how to live my life	Agree strongly	%	31.6%	32.1%	31.9%	26.9%	20.2%	23.5%	28.4%	25.6%	26.9%	18.0%	18.0%	18.0%
	Agree	%	52.2%	50.0%	51.1%	52.1%	51.0%	51.5%	53.4%	55.6%	54.5%	58.9%	54.0%	56.3%
	Neither agree nor disagree	%	9.3%	11.2%	10.3%	14.3%	17.3%	15.8%	9.2%	9.7%	9.5%	15.3%	16.2%	15.8%
	Disagree	%	6.2%	5.7%	5.9%	5.8%	9.9%	7.9%	8.5%	8.0%	8.2%	6.9%	10.7%	8.9%
	Disagree strongly	%	.7%	.9%	.8%	.9%	1.5%	1.2%	.5%	1.2%	.9%	.8%	1.1%	1.0%
Total	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Little chance to show how capable I am	Agree strongly	%	2.5%	2.4%	2.5%	3.3%	2.4%	2.8%	3.4%	2.3%	2.8%	2.4%	2.7%	2.5%
	Agree	%	9.1%	11.3%	10.2%	30.3%	27.1%	28.7%	22.3%	20.9%	21.6%	31.0%	36.1%	33.6%
	Neither agree nor disagree	%	14.1%	17.0%	15.6%	22.7%	27.2%	25.0%	24.3%	27.2%	25.8%	30.2%	27.2%	28.7%
	Disagree	%	56.3%	54.0%	55.1%	39.8%	39.6%	39.7%	43.5%	45.1%	44.3%	33.2%	30.2%	31.6%
	Disagree strongly	%	18.1%	15.2%	16.7%	3.9%	3.7%	3.8%	6.6%	4.5%	5.5%	3.3%	3.8%	3.6%
Total	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Feel you get the recognition you deserve for what you do	Not at all	%	.3%	.4%	.3%	1.8%	1.2%	1.5%	2.7%	2.9%	2.8%	2.6%	2.5%	2.5%
	1	%	.6%	1.0%	.8%	1.7%	3.2%	2.5%	2.6%	3.0%	2.8%	4.4%	4.5%	4.4%
	2	%	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%	6.7%	6.8%	6.8%	9.0%	10.3%	9.7%	8.9%	8.0%	8.4%
	3	%	9.5%	10.6%	10.1%	19.7%	23.7%	21.7%	24.6%	25.3%	25.0%	26.9%	25.0%	25.9%
	4	%	27.3%	23.8%	25.5%	26.4%	24.9%	25.6%	30.1%	26.1%	28.0%	26.0%	24.3%	25.1%
	5	%	46.6%	44.8%	45.7%	29.2%	28.5%	28.8%	22.3%	23.5%	22.9%	23.1%	26.3%	24.8%
	A great deal	%	12.6%	16.4%	14.6%	14.5%	11.7%	13.1%	8.8%	8.9%	8.8%	8.2%	9.5%	8.9%
Total	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

		Borrow money to make ends meet, difficult or easy					Group Total
		Very difficult	Quite difficult	Neither easy nor difficult	Quite easy	Very easy	
		Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %	Row %
Denmark	Living comfortably on present income	2.1%	4.1%	8.8%	45.5%	39.5%	100.0%
	Coping on present income	3.2%	9.6%	22.9%	47.6%	16.8%	100.0%
	Difficult on present income	14.8%	16.4%	19.7%	42.6%	6.6%	100.0%
	Very difficult on present income	36.8%	21.1%	5.3%	21.1%	15.8%	100.0%
	Group Total	3.4%	6.3%	13.0%	45.6%	31.7%	100.0%
Spain	Living comfortably on present income	16.1%	26.2%	17.9%	30.5%	9.4%	100.0%
	Coping on present income	14.0%	36.2%	27.8%	18.9%	3.1%	100.0%
	Difficult on present income	18.0%	43.9%	21.9%	13.5%	2.7%	100.0%
	Very difficult on present income	49.0%	32.7%	8.3%	6.2%	3.8%	100.0%
	Group Total	16.2%	33.9%	23.1%	21.6%	5.1%	100.0%
United Kingdom	Living comfortably on present income	5.8%	10.5%	15.1%	36.9%	31.7%	100.0%
	Coping on present income	7.3%	21.2%	20.0%	35.0%	16.4%	100.0%
	Difficult on present income	18.9%	32.1%	16.5%	23.4%	9.1%	100.0%
	Very difficult on present income	41.5%	35.3%	7.1%	4.0%	12.1%	100.0%
	Group Total	9.0%	18.4%	17.2%	33.6%	21.8%	100.0%
Poland	Living comfortably on present income	7.5%	16.5%	21.0%	36.0%	19.0%	100.0%
	Coping on present income	7.2%	27.5%	26.7%	33.2%	5.3%	100.0%
	Difficult on present income	20.4%	45.7%	18.6%	13.9%	1.3%	100.0%
	Very difficult on present income	50.2%	31.6%	9.7%	8.5%		100.0%
	Group Total	13.0%	33.0%	23.1%	26.2%	4.7%	100.0%

Finally, we also decided to look at income distribution and how easy or difficult it was for respondents to borrow money. One of the characteristics coming from this analysis was that Danish respondents were more likely to be in higher income brackets, the Spanish were towards the middle, the British were polarised between the poor and the rich, and the Polish were located towards the lower income brackets. Not surprisingly, poorer people in all countries had much greater difficulty in borrowing money, than was the case for the richer deciles. And, as we might expect the differences in the income distribution between the countries meant that overall the Danish were less

constrained than the Polish; interestingly lower proportions of poorer people in the UK did not perceive the same constraints on borrowing money, which may in part be due to the very liberalised system of credit availability experienced in the UK in recent years.

In sum, these results indicate not only clearly distinct patterns of transitions in selected countries but also very distinct norms around gendered regimes of care and work. This analysis indicates that in countries like the UK there are a high number of transitions and labour market fluidity, within a relatively progressive gender regime. Transitions in the other countries tend to be more fixed: in

Denmark the most common transition is to dual earning households, whereas in Spain the male breadwinner dominates. The gender norms regimes are perceived as more conservative compared to the attitudes held by individuals in Spain; and in Denmark they are more markedly progressive with individuals having a strong sense of recognition, freedom and opportunity to show their capabilities. The situation in Poland is not so optimistic. We complement this attitudinal analysis with a comparison of

financial resources available to individuals as a means to measure a different dimension of capabilities: here poorer people do less well, and especially those in Poland. The benefit of this analysis is to situate the perceptions of individuals within particular normative gender regimes and examine their perceived capacity to realise their preferred lifestyles both in terms of approved behaviour as well as in terms of financial aspects. (This work is on-going and not fully finalised.)

### **Work history and attitude data in ISSP: What should women do around families and work?**

In the Family and gender roles surveys a series of retrospective work history questions are asked. Respondents are asked whether they worked ‘full time, part time or stayed at home’ during each of four stages:

After marriage but before the birth of a child

After the birth of a child but before the youngest child goes to school

After the youngest child is in school

After all children have left home.

They are asked the same question about their spouse or partner and also about what they think *women should* do at each of these four stages. While these questions have the virtue of simplicity they have several drawbacks, apart from their liability to recall bias given their retrospective character.

1 These stages are not necessarily consecutive in many actual life histories. People may marry after the birth of a first child; a ‘youngest child’ may be in

school before a second child arrives.

2 The question uses the term ‘marriage’ but it is unclear whether this relates only to marriage as such or to other relationships, such as cohabitation.

3 The question takes no account of divorce and separation. Respondents may have answered with respect to their own or partner’s experience in a previous relationship. The survey only collects information about the household in which they are currently living and their current civil status. In addition the household information is rudimentary: we know only the total number of children up to the age of 5/6 from 6/7 to 17 and adults aged 18 and over. We do not know such information as whether the respondent is a parent, and if



- so at what age(s) any child(ren) were born.
- 4 The question allows for only one work status at each of the four stages. In practice, respondents may well have transited between different labour market states during each phase.
- 5 Only transitions between working full time, part time and staying at home are measured: other possible transitions are not recorded (e.g. between different kinds of work, job or occupation).
- 6 No distinction is made between being at work and being employed but on maternity or paternity leave.
- 7 No account is taken of studying: e.g. being a 'full time' student outside the home.
- 8 As in any cross sectional survey the responses of those in later life stages (such as when children have left home) will be from older respondents, so that the period, cohort and generational effects cannot be easily distinguished.
- 9 No definition is offered of 'work' beyond that it takes place outside the home. This need not always constitute employment. Similarly the classification of those who are employed but working at home is ambiguous. The definition of what constitutes part time work is left to respondents.
- 10 Questions about attitudes towards what women

'should' do assume that respondents have some normative preference for a fixed work status associated with each life stage when this may not be the case. Respondents might believe that women should simply be free to choose for themselves. In addition it may be that respondents had in mind 'what women should *be able to* do (if they so choose) rather than what they should do as such.

11 No questions are asked about what men should do.

12 While we have information about spouses' work histories, we do not have any other information about them, except their current labour market status.

However, taking account of these weaknesses, the data allow us to make some general analyses of the work histories surrounding the birth and care of children of men and women, as well as respondents comparisons between respondents reported work histories and their view of what women 'should' do. In addition, for countries that also participated in the 1994 FGR II survey, we have directly comparable information for a period 8 years earlier, although not with the same set of respondents. Finally, the questions asked about 'ideal' behaviour come much earlier in the questionnaire (in the context of questions about gender roles and attitudes to work) than those asked about actual behaviour, so that we might expect this to reduce the bias towards simply reporting behaviour as a realised 'preference'.

Countries included (weighted by population aged over 17) are Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Rep., Denmark, Finland, Flanders, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.

In addition to the drawbacks listed above there are a number of other limitations encountered when using ISSP data to examine labour market transitions surrounding family formation. A significant number of cases record no information for one or more stages. Sometimes this is simply a right censorship effect because the respondents concerned have not reached the corresponding life course stage: e.g. if they have a pre-school age child, by definition their youngest child has not yet gone to school. However the slightly greater proportion of respondents recording no information for the stage when the youngest child was under school age raises the possibility that respondents found it hard to answer this question because of the rather broad nature of the categories presented to them (e.g. someone who took maternity leave, returned to work and then proceeded to have a further child before the first went to school or who changed their work status during what for many respondents may have been a fairly long phase – stretching from the birth of their oldest child to the point where their youngest child reached school age).

The sample size for each country means that the number of respondents who have reached the stage where their youngest child is at school is relatively small for any given age group. However simply taking the experience of all respondents

gives us a mixture of experiences stretching back fifty years or more (e.g. in the case of a respondent aged 70 whose child was born when they were twenty).

ISSP interviews individuals and asks them about their spouses work history. The transition information we have thus comprises a mixture of self reports and reports about spouse's behaviour. Investigation revealed very little difference between the data based on self and spouses reports, so that in what follows no distinction between these two sources has been made.

Given these issues it was decided to approach the data in the following way. First an analysis is presented for all women aged 25 or more (very few women under twenty five have a youngest child already at school) by age group for all European countries in the survey. This gives us an approximate picture at the European level of change over time. Data is weighted to each country's adult population as of 2002. This analysis is based on a total of 14359 cases (unweighted).

Second we examine the situation in each country for all women up to age fifty. This gives us as near as possible a representation of more recent labour market and care arrangements since it will be based on the activities taking place between approximately 1975 and 2002. This analysis is based on 6591 cases (unweighted).

### **Defining transitions**

The focus of our interest is on women (since we already know that labour market transitions associated with childbirth of the kind recorded by ISSP

are much less common for fathers) and on the three stages of (1) no children, (2) presence of child below school age and (3) youngest child at school. For each of these stages ISSP records women as having three possible work situations: Working full time outside the home, part time outside the home or not working outside the home. This gives us a total number of 27 potential transition paths. However some of these transition paths are either of limited analytical interest or empirically rare. For example in some countries significant number of women are recorded as working for the first time at stage 2. From our point of view, while it is not theoretically impossible that such a change of work status be linked to childbirth (e.g. the presence of a child increases the need to earn money) it is rather unlikely. It might be expected that the change of status is linked to such factors as high unemployment for young women, such that delayed entry to the labour market meant that this happened to coincide with childbirth rather than preceding it, or it could mean that these mothers were formally students, that did not work.

By an iterative process of combining theoretical interest and exploration of the data to reveal the incidence of different transition paths seven main pathways described below were defined. These accounted for over 99% of cases. The attempt was made, in constructing the groups to capture those whose work arrangements were not changed by the presence of school age children (**Continuous full time and Continuous**); those who made a temporary accommodation to this, either withdrawing temporarily from the labour market or reducing their work commitment from full to part time hours (**Part time transit and Not working transit**) and those who reduced (**Reduce Part time**) their commitment permanently or who withdrew altogether from work outside the home (**Withdraw**). Finally there were women who did not work at any stage (**Non workers**), and a group which did not make much theoretical or analytical sense, but which was substantial enough (especially amongst younger women) to merit inclusion as a separate category: women who worked only when a pre school age child was present (**Anomalous**).

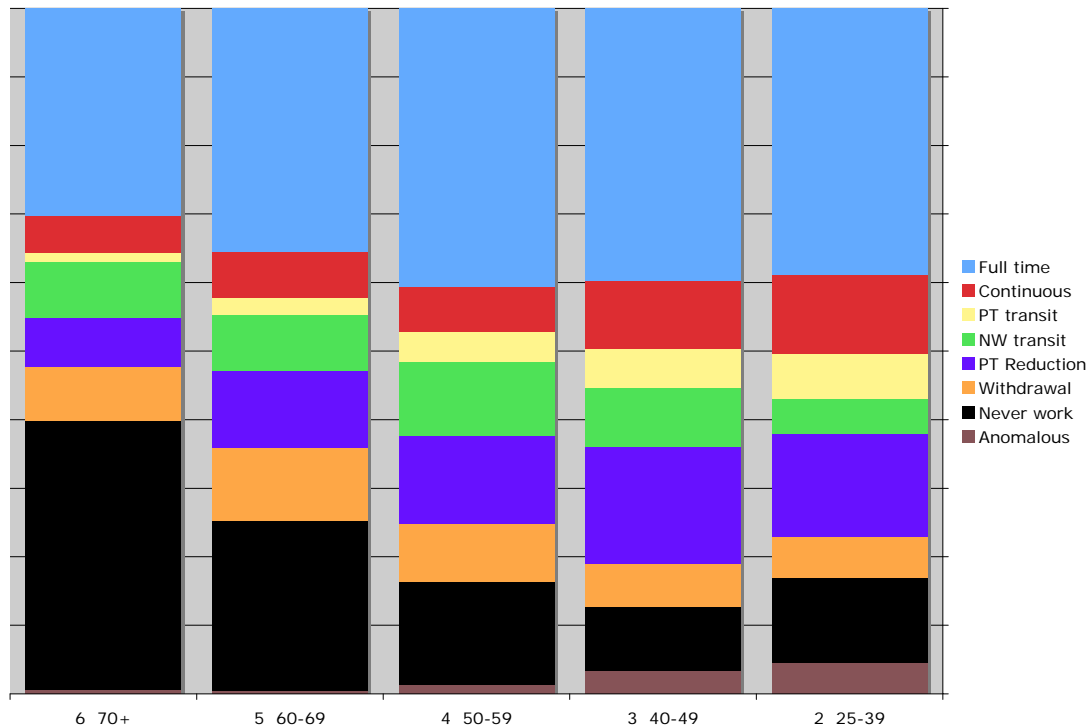
**Table 1 transition groups defined for the analysis**

<p><b>Continuous Full time workers</b> Women who are recorded as working outside the home full time (FT) at each of the three stages.</p> <p>i.e. FT1 FT2 FT3</p>
<p><b>Continuous workers</b> Women working FT before and when child is born, but switch to part time work outside the home (PT) once their youngest child is at school. Women working PT through all three stages. Women switching to FT from PT on birth of child or when youngest child at school. Women who move from not working NW to FT or to PT from not working (NW) when child is born and then stay in this status when youngest child goes to school.</p> <p>i.e. FT1 FT2 PT3; PT1 PT2 PT3; PT1 FT2 PT3; PT1 FT2 FT3; NW1 FT2 FT3; NW1 PT2 PT3.</p>
<p><b>Part time transit</b> Reduce from FT to PT when child is born then resume FT when child at school.</p> <p>i.e. FT1 PT2 FT3.</p>
<p><b>Not working transit</b> Reduce from FT or PT to NW when child is born and then resume FT or PT.</p> <p>i.e. FT1 NW2 FT3; PT1 NW2 PT3.</p>
<p><b>Reduce Part time</b> Reduce from FT to PT when child is born then continue PT when child at school or reduce to NW when youngest child goes to school (v few cases)</p> <p>i.e. FT1 PT2 PT3; FT1 PT2 NW3.</p>
<p><b>Withdrawal</b> Stop working when child is born and do not resume work when youngest child at school</p> <p>i.e. FT1 NW2 NW3; PT1 NW2 NW3.</p>
<p><b>Non workers</b> Do not work at any stage, plus small no of cases working only once youngest child is at school</p> <p>i.e. NW1 NW2 NW3; NW1 NW2 PT3; NW1 NW2 FT3.</p>
<p><b>Anomalous</b> Women who report working only when pre school child is present.</p> <p>i.e. NW1 FT2 NW3; NW1 PT2 NW3.</p>
<p><b>Other (Missing)</b> All other transition patterns</p>

Figure 1 shows the distribution of these transition groups for all European countries by ten year age group of respondent to provide an aggregate

picture of change in the distribution of types of transition pattern defined above over time.

**Figure 1 Transition groups: all European countries in survey (weighed by adult population 2002) by age of respondent**



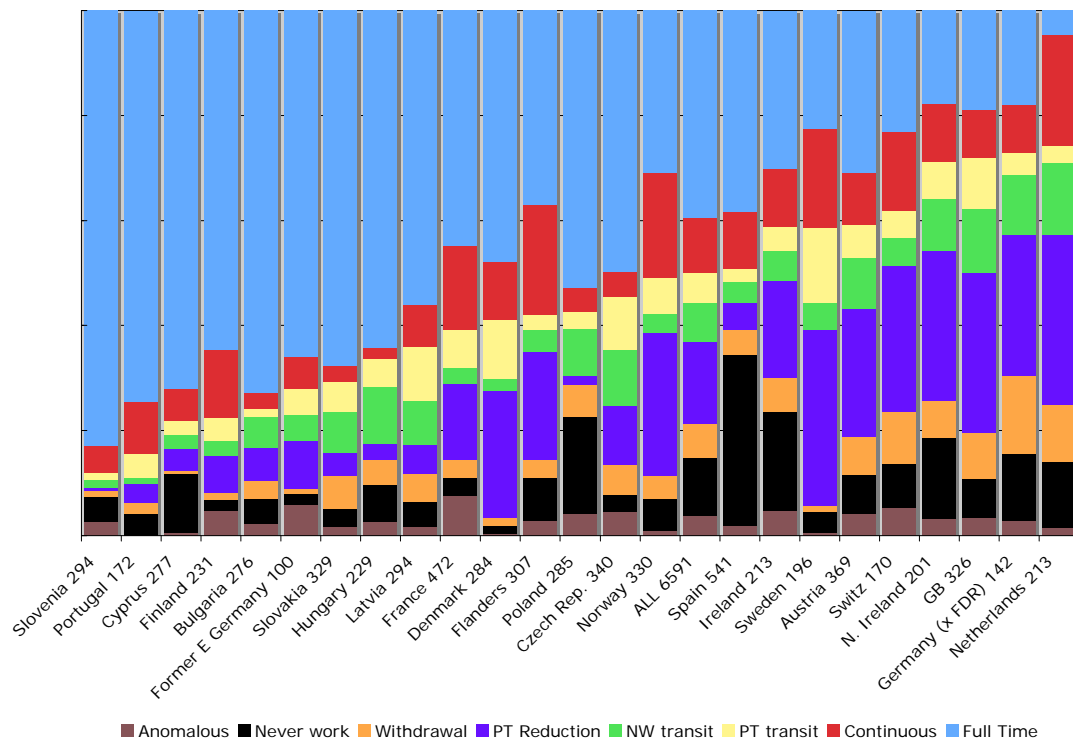
Three main features stand out from this figure.

- Almost one third, even of the oldest women, report that they worked full time outside the home at all three stages.
- There appears to be remarkably little change in the proportion of women who work full time at all three stages for women below sixty: nor in the proportion who did not work. One might have expected labour market change in Europe across this period to show rather more change.
- There has been a clear growth in the proportion of women changing their labour market status across the three stages

(represented by the colours other than light blue and black) associated with an increase in Part-time Reduction trajectories and a fall in those who never worked.

Figure 2 presents the same distribution by country for all respondents aged up to 50. Unweighted Ns are given after each country name, with the countries ordered according to the proportion of women who worked continuously outside the home (whether or not this was full time).

**Figure 2 Transition groups: all respondents up to age 50 by country**



- Fifty per cent of women worked continuously at all three stages. Four out of five of these women worked full time at all three stages.
- The next most common transition pattern was to reduce to part time work on childbirth and maintain this status when the youngest child went to school.
- It is very difficult to identify clear country groupings according to transition patterns. E.g. Portugal Cyprus and Finland share many characteristics with the E. European states, but these latter are themselves rather heterogeneous: Poland and the Czech Republic stand apart from Bulgaria, East Germany or Slovakia.
- Nor is it easy to identify clear relationships between the prevalence of different patterns, except that where continuous working is less common, PT reduction is more common rather than PT transit.
- Transitions that include not working, and permanent withdrawal from the labour market on childbirth are infrequent in all countries, but with the highest incidence in the former German Federal Republic.

One of the advantages of ISSP as a data source is that it includes a range of attitudinal data that permits us to investigate the relationship between these labour market patterns and views about the family and the labour market, or levels of personal satisfaction. Thus it is rather disappointing to have to report that although analysis is continuing, once age is controlled for, there appear to be only rather weak associations

between transition groups and such attitudes.

### An increase in continuous employment

**Table 1 Comparison of transition paths 2002 and 1994**  
(women up to age 50 with information for each stage)

	2002 GB	1994 GB	2002 Spain	1994 Spain	2002 Poland	1994 Poland
2002						
Full Time	19,0	13,0	38,4	24,1	52,6	49,0
Continuous	8,9	14,9	10,7	9,7	4,6	4,3
PT Transit	9,8	5,1	2,6	1,4	3,2	2,0
NW Transit	12,3	21,7	3,9	6,4	9,1	15,6
PT Reduction	30,4	19,9	5,2	3,4	1,7	1,3
Withdrawal	8,9	12,7	4,8	7,8	6,0	8,9
Anomalous	3,4		1,9	0,6	4,2	0,2
Never work	7,4	12,7	32,5	46,5	18,6	18,6
	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
	2002 Sweden	1994 Sweden	2002 W. Germany	1994 W. Germany	2002 E. Germany	1994 E. Germany
Full Time	22,5	16,9	18,3	13,0	66,0	68,9
Continuous	18,8	16,9	9,2	6,4	6,0	7,2
PT Transit	14,3	12,0	4,2	2,0	5,0	9,1
NW Transit	5,1	10,7	11,3	14,8	5,0	3,5
PT Reduction	33,6	34,7	26,8	18,9	9,0	10,1
Withdrawal	1,0	4,0	14,8	28,6	1,0	1,3
Anomalous	0,5		2,8	0,4	6,0	
Never work	4,1	4,9	12,7	15,9	2,0	
	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Increased, Decreased

The distribution of different transition paths for women aged up to 50 at the time of the surveys in 1994 and 2002 who gave information about each of the three stages covered is presented in Table 1. Although the previous ISSP survey to FGRIII (2002), was undertaken only eight years earlier: FGRII (1994) the distribution of

transition paths changes quite substantially in most countries. Everywhere except Austria, Northern Ireland, the Netherlands and East Germany, there is a substantial increase in the proportion of women reporting that they worked full time at all three

stages.<sup>5</sup> The proportion increased in Eastern European countries from an already high base. The proportion of women working continuously also increased substantially in the Western countries (except in GB) but changed little in the East European ones.

Except in Norway, 'PT transit' also became much more common in the Western countries. By contrast transition paths involving withdrawing from work while there were pre school-age children present became much less common everywhere. PT reduction paths also become more common in Western countries (except Sweden) apparently at the expense of withdrawal from the labour market when children arrived. The decline in the latter was especially marked in countries where this was a more common path in the reports collected in 1994: West Germany, Austria, Northern Ireland, Ireland and the Netherlands. In almost all Western European countries the proportion never working declined: especially in countries where it was higher: Spain, Ireland, West Germany and the Netherlands. In the East European countries the change was more mixed.

The overall shift seems to be away from either never working or either temporarily or permanently withdrawing from the labour market on the birth of children, towards transition paths that involve changing between different work statuses, and within those paths, towards paths involving more full time work.

However, this raises the question of the extent to which these shifts are preferred by women themselves, or driven by

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<sup>5</sup> Not all the results are presented here, but are available from the authors.

other factors. We can gain some insight into this by comparing women's reported ideal preferences for their work status at each stage with their reported behaviour for those for whom we have information about both behaviour and practices. As the introductory discussion highlighted, the nature of the information ISSP collects about both behaviour and preferences is rather general and the question wording far from ideal, but it does have the merit of allowing us to make a rough estimate of the proportion of women in each country whose transition behaviour matched their reported preferences.

In what follows we look first at the distribution of preferences and their relationship to behaviour reported in 1994 and then look at how this changes by 2002, each time for women up to age fifty at the time of the survey. In what follows it is important to remember that ISSP only allows us to compare preferences at the time of the survey with behaviour at the point in time when the relevant life course stage was reached. For later life course stages and for younger women these points in time may be close, but for many older respondents we will inevitably be comparing preferences at the time of the survey with behaviour from up to twenty or twenty five years earlier.

### **Working Preferences around families**

In 1994 in all countries there were large majorities in favour of full time work before there are children (Table 2). When a pre school/age child is present countries split between those where most women favour part time work and those where not working outside the home is



the modal response. Here there are only five countries where there is a clear preference for one of these options: In East Germany and Sweden part-time is clearly the preferred option and in Bulgaria, Poland, and to a lesser extent, West Germany, staying at home is clearly preferred. Once the youngest child is at school, part time work becomes the preferred option in all countries except Poland. Once children are present rather few respondents say they would prefer to work full time (which begs the question of what they mean by this: it might be that they have in mind that there ought to be some kind of balance between childcare obligations

and paid work rather than, say, favouring a very substantial reduction in hours of paid work). Even once the youngest child is at school in most countries less than a quarter of women say that women ought to work full-time.

These views may also reflect not just preferences about each life course stage taken on its own, but also an assessment of the difficulties of changing between different work statuses. Otherwise it is difficult to explain the modal preference for part time work in Ireland and Spain, given the low employment rate of women there in the mid 1990s.

**Table 2 Preferences 1994 Women up to age fifty with work history information for corresponding life course stage.**

	Before child is born				Pre school-age child				Youngest child at school			
	FT	PT	NW	(n)	FT	PT	NW	(n)	FT	PT	NW	(n)
D-W	<b>85</b>	13	2	337	1	38	<b>61</b>	330	5	<b>71</b>	24	230
D-E	<b>97</b>	2	1	214	19	<b>68</b>	12	227	28	<b>69</b>	2	169
GB	<b>96</b>	4	0	196	8	39	<b>54</b>	187	18	<b>72</b>	10	152
NIRL	<b>94</b>	4	2	126	9	36	<b>55</b>	132	18	<b>78</b>	5	103
AU	<b>91</b>	9	1	160	4	47	<b>49</b>	164	9	<b>81</b>	10	119
HU	<b>89</b>	9	3	370	6	38	<b>55</b>	359	19	<b>62</b>	20	247
IRL	<b>90</b>	9	1	211	13	<b>47</b>	41	208	24	<b>60</b>	15	156
NL	<b>94</b>	5	1	432	17	<b>46</b>	37	427	26	<b>71</b>	3	333
Nor	<b>95</b>	4	1	418	7	<b>60</b>	34	464	24	<b>70</b>	6	302
Swe	<b>95</b>	4	1	281	6	<b>72</b>	22	283	18	<b>80</b>	2	189
CZ R	<b>84</b>	12	5	266	6	45	<b>49</b>	252	23	<b>60</b>	17	210
SLO	<b>84</b>	11	4	250	8	42	<b>49</b>	253	36	<b>47</b>	17	223
PL	<b>78</b>	6	16	324	14	16	<b>69</b>	320	30	32	<b>38</b>	275
BG	<b>80</b>	16	4	257	12	29	<b>60</b>	253	25	<b>42</b>	32	210
Esp	<b>69</b>	24	7	433	11	<b>47</b>	42	431	36	<b>50</b>	14	390

In order to compare work histories with preferences it is necessary to combine countries together to avoid small cell sizes distorting the results. We have grouped countries together, on the basis

of known information about the pattern of employment and caring for women in these countries and the pattern of preferences shown in table 1.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
D(W), AU, GB, NIRL.	NOR, SWE, NL.	IRL, ESP	DE HU CZ SLO	PL, BG.

Since the interest is in the performance of different country systems, weights by country population were *not* applied, nor was any adjustment made to the varying sample sizes from different national surveys as initial exploration showed this to have little effect on the results. In each of the following three tables women's reported preferences are shown in the columns and behaviour reported in the rows. The cell percentages report the proportion of all women in that country group with the corresponding combination of preference and behaviour. Figures in bold represent respondents whose preference and behaviour coincided at that life course stage. Finally the percentage in italics at the left indicates the proportion of women at that life course stage in that country group whose preference

matched their behaviour. The tables thus allow us to see not only how far preferences matched behaviour but also what the nature of the matches and mismatches were.

Before a child is born (Table 3) the fit between preferences and histories is rather high, although this mostly reflects the fact that in all except the group 3 countries (Ireland and Spain) most women who wanted to work full time were indeed able to do so. In no group of countries did a majority of women who wanted to work part-time actually do so. In all country groups women who wanted to work part time were more likely to be working full time. This was also true of the small number of women who said their preference was to stay at home but who were working.

**Table 3 Women aged up to fifty with information on both behaviour and preferences for all three life course stages: stage 1 ‘After marriage, before children are born’ 1994**

Country group	Behavior	Preference			
		FT	PT	NW	(all)
1 76.7	FT	<b>74,9</b>	6,0	0,4	81,3
	PT	5,7	<b>0,9</b>	0,2	6,8
	NW	9,4	1,7	<b>0,9</b>	11,9
	(all)	90,0	8,5	1,5	100,0
2 73.0	FT	<b>71,2</b>	2,2	0,4	73,8
	PT	13,3	<b>1,5</b>		14,8
	NW	10,3	0,9	<b>0,3</b>	11,4
	(all)	94,8	4,6	0,6	100,0
3 43.8	FT	<b>37,7</b>	7,3	1,2	46,3
	PT	7,5	<b>2,8</b>	0,5	10,7
	NW	30,7	9,0	<b>3,3</b>	43,0
	(all)	75,9	19,1	5,0	100,0
4 83.2	FT	<b>82,1</b>	7,6	2,0	91,7
	PT	1,2	<b>0,2</b>	0,2	1,5
	NW	4,8	0,9	<b>1,0</b>	6,7
	(all)	88,1	8,7	3,2	100,0
5 74.0	FT	<b>68,0</b>	8,3	5,9	82,2
	PT	0,3	<b>1,2</b>	0,0	1,6
	NW	10,7	0,7	<b>4,8</b>	16,2
	(all)	79,1	10,2	10,7	100,0

**Table 4 Women aged up to fifty with information on both behaviour and preferences for all three life course stages: stage 2 ‘When pre school-age child present’ 1994**

Country group	Behavior	Preference			(all)
		FT	PT	NW	
1 59.9	FT	3,2	11,3	6,5	21,0
	PT	0,9	17,0	9,7	27,5
	NW	0,4	11,4	39,7	51,5
	(all)	4,4	39,7	55,9	100,0
2 57.3	FT	3,3	10,1	1,9	15,3
	PT	4,1	31,3	7,7	43,0
	NW	2,8	16,2	22,7	41,7
	(all)	10,2	57,6	32,2	100,0
3 47.6	FT	6,6	9,7	7,4	23,6
	PT	1,7	10,3	3,3	15,3
	NW	3,4	26,9	30,7	61,0
	(all)	11,7	46,9	41,3	100,0
4 30.9	FT	7,8	32,5	24,3	64,6
	PT	0,6	8,2	4,3	13,2
	NW	1,0	6,2	14,9	22,2
	(all)	9,4	47,0	43,5	100,0
5 41.3	FT	9,2	15,0	32,1	56,3
	PT	0,3	2,1	3,1	5,6
	NW	3,5	4,7	30,0	38,2
	(all)	13,1	21,8	65,2	100,0

When a child is born (Table 4) the fit becomes much poorer, and in all countries the majority of women whose preferences and behaviour coincide do so because they are not working. The exception is for the group 2 countries which are the only ones where a majority of women who want to work part time were actually able to do so. By contrast in country groups 3,4 and 5 as few as one in ten women who said they would

ideally like part time work at this life course stage actually did so, in group 3 because they did not work or in groups 4 and 5 because they worked full-time.

Once the youngest child has gone to school groups 1 and 2 achieve the highest level of fit because of the majority of women who want to work part time were able to do so (Table 5).

**Table 5 Women aged up to fifty with information on both behaviour and preferences for all three life course stages: stage 3 ‘When youngest child is at school’ 1994**

group	Once the youngest child is at school 1994				
		FT	PT	NW	(all)
1 57.1	FT	<b>8,4</b>	<b>14,7</b>	1,3	24,5
	PT	2,0	<b>38,4</b>	2,5	42,9
	NW	1,0	<b>21,4</b>	<b>10,3</b>	32,6
	(all)	11,4	74,5	14,1	100,0
2 54.6	FT	<b>10,8</b>	<b>12,2</b>	,2	23,2
	PT	8,9	<b>41,2</b>	1,2	51,3
	NW	3,4	<b>19,5</b>	<b>2,6</b>	25,4
	(all)	23,1	72,9	4,0	100,0
3 40.7	FT	<b>15,8</b>	11,2	1,6	28,6
	PT	6,8	<b>13,9</b>	1,6	22,3
	NW	10,1	<b>28,0</b>	<b>11,0</b>	49,1
	(all)	32,6	53,1	14,3	100,0
4 36.0	FT	<b>24,6</b>	<b>45,9</b>	10,6	81,2
	PT	0,6	<b>8,2</b>	1,1	9,9
	NW	1,2	4,6	<b>3,2</b>	9,0
	(all)	26,4	58,8	14,8	100,0
5 39.0	FT	<b>23,3</b>	<b>27,8</b>	<b>21,4</b>	72,6
	PT	1,0	<b>3,1</b>	1,6	5,8
	NW	3,7	5,4	<b>12,6</b>	21,6
	(all)	28,0	36,3	35,7	100,0

The main changes in the distribution of preferences, comparing 2002 to 1994, is a substantial reduction in all countries in the proportion of women saying that women should stay at home when a pre school-age child is present along with more modest increases in those saying that women should work full time when there is a child of any age (Table 6).

Compared to 1994 the level of fit between preference and behaviour declines slightly in groups 4 and 5, mostly because fewer women who wanted to work full time were actually doing so, however in group 3 (Ireland and Spain) the increase in full time working women (from what had been a very low base) improves the fit (Table 7).

**Table 6 Preferences 2002 Women up to age fifty with work history information for corresponding life course stage.**

	Before child is born				Pre school-age child				Youngest child at school			
	FT	PT	NW	(n)	FT	PT	NW	(n)	FT	PT	NW	(n)
D-W	<b>95</b>	5		131	6	<b>70</b>	24	81	9	<b>81</b>	9	86
D-E	<b>99</b>	2		68	16	<b>79</b>	6	70	35	<b>62</b>	3	69
GB	<b>95</b>	4	1	324	10	<b>61</b>	29	201	14	<b>81</b>	5	260
NIRL	<b>96</b>	4	1	201	8	<b>68</b>	24	132	19	<b>68</b>	13	180
AU	<b>96</b>	4	0	291	8	<b>62</b>	29	194	9	<b>76</b>	15	233
HU	<b>96</b>	2	2	217	10	<b>54</b>	36	141	31	<b>53</b>	16	175
IRL	<b>91</b>	6	3	164	16	<b>65</b>	19	112	27	<b>64</b>	9	132
NL	<b>92</b>	8	1	181	15	<b>74</b>	11	117	17	<b>82</b>	1	157
Nor	<b>96</b>	4		256	18	<b>68</b>	15	240	34	<b>61</b>	5	209
Swe	<b>94</b>	6		155	14	<b>73</b>	12	154	26	<b>72</b>	2	118
CZ R	<b>89</b>	8	3	223	16	<b>57</b>	27	155	20	<b>66</b>	14	210
SLO	<b>87</b>	10	2	183	27	<b>53</b>	20	192	<b>46</b>	45	9	185
PL	<b>86</b>	8	7	186	26	29	<b>45</b>	137	<b>46</b>	36	18	199
BG	<b>88</b>	7	5	184	18	<b>43</b>	39	166	28	<b>54</b>	18	166
Esp	<b>80</b>	18	2	349	25	51	24	292	40	<b>53</b>	7	354

At the second life course stage the overall fit does not change substantially in groups 1, 2 and 3, but the reason for the level of fit changes since there is a large shift towards women preferring to and reporting that they did work part-time, rather than not working. A similar

change occurs in groups 4 and 5 but here the shift is more often from not working to working full-time (Table 8). The pattern at life course stage 2 is repeated, but less strongly, for all country groups for the final stage, with the exception of group 4 countries (Table 9).

**Table 7 Women aged up to fifty with information on both behaviour and preferences for all three life course stages: stage 1 ‘After marriage, before children’**

Group		Before children 2002			
		FT	PT	NW	(all)
1 74.1	FT	<b>73,1</b>	1,9	,2	75,2
	PT	4,6	<b>,6</b>		5,3
	NW	17,5	1,6	<b>,4</b>	19,5
	(all)	95,3	4,1	,6	100,0
2 73.9	FT	<b>72,0</b>	2,4		74,3
	PT	13,5	<b>1,7</b>		15,2
	NW	8,6	1,7	<b>,2</b>	10,5
	(all)	94,1	5,7	,2	100,0
3 53.1	FT	<b>48,5</b>	4,9	,4	53,8
	PT	6,0	<b>2,5</b>		8,6
	NW	28,8	6,6	<b>2,1</b>	37,6
	(all)	83,4	14,0	2,5	100,0
4 78.0	FT	<b>77,0</b>	4,3	1,6	82,9
	PT	,7	<b>,3</b>		1,0
	NW	13,7	1,6	<b>,7</b>	16,1
	(all)	91,5	6,2	2,3	100,0
5 72.5	FT	<b>69,0</b>	5,9	3,0	77,9
	PT	1,6	<b>,5</b>		2,2
	NW	15,9	1,1	<b>3,0</b>	19,9
	(all)	86,5	7,5	5,9	100,0

**Table 8 Women aged up to fifty with information on both behaviour and preferences for all three life course stages: stage 2 ‘When pre school-age child present’**

group		Pre school-age 2002			
		FT	PT	NW	(all)
1 54.1	FT	<b>7,6</b>	20,4	8,4	36,3
	PT	1,0	<b>41,9</b>	14,1	57,1
	NW		2,0	<b>4,6</b>	6,6
	(all)	8,6	64,3	27,1	100,0
2 62.3	FT	<b>9,4</b>	18,4	2,5	30,3
	PT	6,8	<b>50,7</b>	8,4	65,9
	NW		1,6	<b>2,2</b>	3,7
	(all)	16,2	70,6	13,1	100,0
3 47.2	FT	<b>15,1</b>	20,7	5,4	41,2
	PT	4,0	<b>20,0</b>	4,9	28,9
	NW	3,7	14,1	<b>12,1</b>	29,9
	(all)	22,7	54,8	22,5	100,0
4 29.4	FT	<b>16,5</b>	45,7	16,7	78,9
	PT	1,4	<b>9,7</b>	4,3	15,4
	NW	,2	2,3	<b>3,2</b>	5,7
	(all)	18,1	57,7	24,2	100,0
5 32.9	FT	<b>19,4</b>	28,3	30,6	78,3
	PT	,7	<b>5,6</b>	3,0	9,2
	NW	2,0	2,6	<b>7,9</b>	12,5
	(all)	22,0	36,5	41,4	100,0



**Table 9 Women aged up to fifty with information on both behaviour and preferences for all three life course stages: stage 3 ‘When youngest child is at school’ 2002**

Group		Once youngest child is at school			
		FT	PT	NW	(all)
1 57.8	FT	<b>8,4</b>	16,5	1,7	26,6
	PT	3,7	<b>43,3</b>	2,6	49,6
	NW	1,2	16,5	<b>6,1</b>	23,7
	(all)	13,3	76,3	10,4	100,0
2 64.7	FT	<b>16,7</b>	14,5		31,2
	PT	8,3	<b>46,1</b>	1,0	55,4
	NW	1,7	9,9	<b>1,9</b>	13,4
	(all)	26,7	70,5	2,9	100,0
3 45.1	FT	<b>21,5</b>	15,2	,6	37,3
	PT	5,7	<b>17,0</b>	,6	23,4
	NW	9,0	23,8	<b>6,6</b>	39,3
	(all)	36,3	55,9	7,8	100,0
4 37.0	FT	<b>27,6</b>	40,0	7,1	74,6
	PT	1,3	<b>5,5</b>	,8	7,5
	NW	3,1	10,8	<b>3,9</b>	17,9
	(all)	32,0	56,3	11,8	100,0
5 42.6	FT	<b>31,0</b>	30,2	10,4	71,7
	PT	2,5	<b>3,6</b>	1,4	7,4
	NW	4,4	10,4	<b>6,0</b>	20,9
	(all)	37,9	44,2	17,9	100,0

**Summary**

Overall we might draw the general conclusion that, comparing reports from 2002 and 1994, the rather substantial gap between preferences and behaviour visible when children are present remained unchanged but its composition

changed. In 2002 the gap mostly comprised women who were working full-time when their reported preference was to work part-time or (much fewer in number) who would prefer not to be working.

## Household Transitions

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In our most recent research we have been interested in tracing the movement between different types of households. We know that the “stock” of households to be found in certain breadwinning arrangements in a certain year in the population will not only depend on their relative frequency, but also on the transitory or longer lasting character of certain states (the shorter the duration and the higher the likelihood of being underrepresented in a cross-sectional sample). Here we summarise some of our results from the ECHP examining eight years of data for the sequences in different patterns of the household division of paid work in the population 25-45 years<sup>6</sup> and, in a second set, 18-45 years<sup>7</sup> following the birth of a child.

By comparing sequences of household structures for the UK and a number of other European countries we found some quiet distinct differences in transition patterns in general and in those associated with the birth of a child. First the pattern of dual full-time earner households was much stronger and widely found in countries like Denmark and Finland, as we might expect. More traditional male breadwinner patterns were observed in Spain and Italy. In the

UK we found more eclectic pattern of transitions.

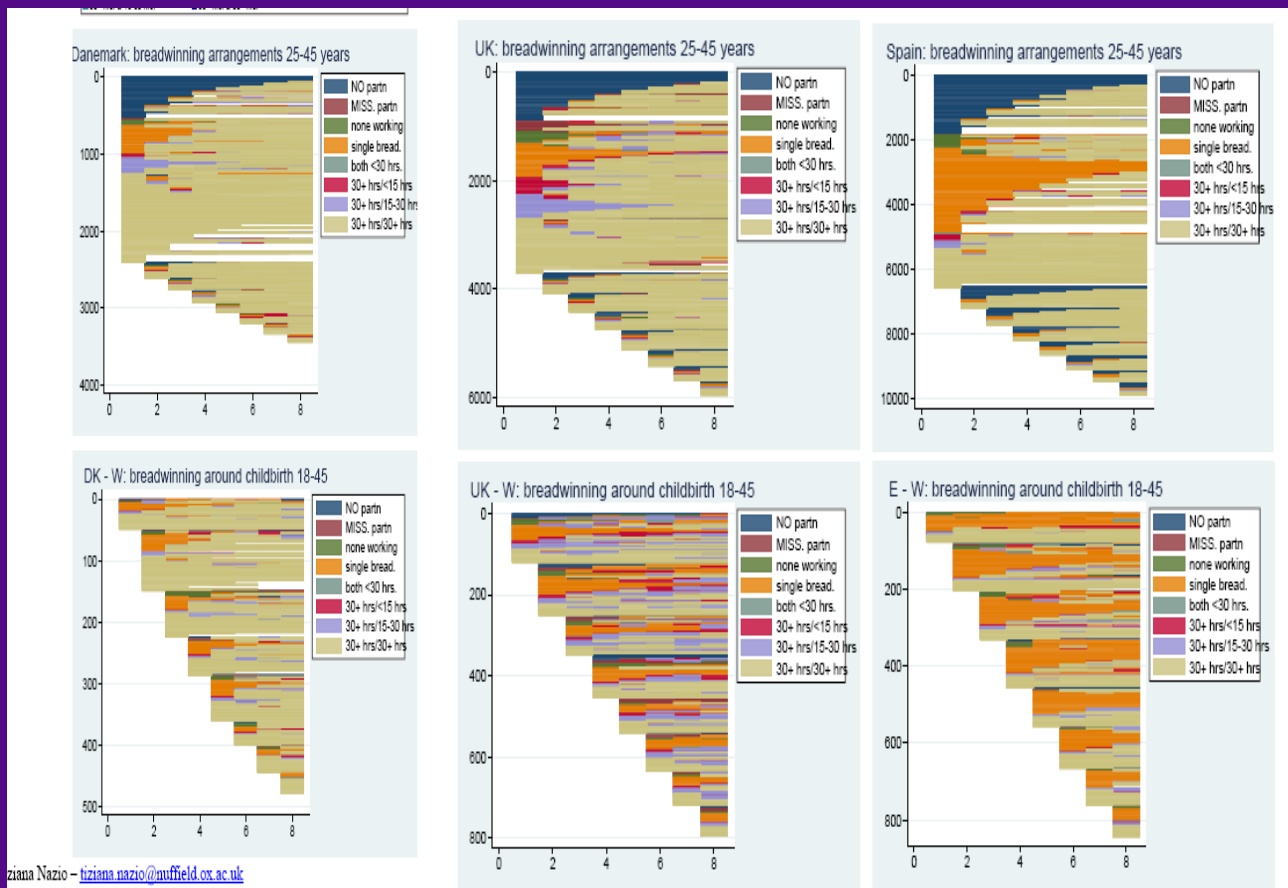
After the birth of a child it was quiet common for Danish couples to revert to a dual full-time earner household. In Spain, the arrival of a child usually resulted in the formation of a traditional male breadwinner household, which was unlikely to change over the period of eight years of observation. There were also a small minority of households in Spain where both parents either maintained or were able to return to full-time employment. In the UK after the birth of a child couples more often moved towards a male breadwinner division of labour. However, this was then peppered with periods of part-time employment on short hours, returns to the male breadwinner and sometimes dual full-time earners. But compared to all other countries the UK had the most eclectic and erratic pattern of transitions for individual households. In other countries couples tended to veer towards a particular type and then settle in that one.

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<sup>6</sup> To avoid duplication of information, only the female members of the couples were selected (together with single or divorced/widow women). Only the sequences of those women observed across all the 8 waves of the panel are reported in these graphs which are available from the authors on request.

<sup>7</sup> Only for women, and those sequences longer than 3 years after a birth has taken place are reported. (These births need not to be first births and that subsequent births may have taken place during the course of the reported sequence).

# Breadwinning after childbirth



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Interestingly, and somewhat unexpectedly, it was only with France (not shown here) that some commonality was observed in a pluralist, “flexible” series of short lasting states between different caring and working arrangements. In both France and the

UK, less than a half of dual full-time and single breadwinner couples were in the same state 4 years later. Periods of reduced working hours after childbirth for one of the parents (usually the mother) tend to last longer in the UK than in France, where part-time

employment is less popular. These analyses of labour market transitions emphasise the importance of developing

a relational analysis to situate how individual economic autonomy is dependent on others in the household.

## CONCLUSIONS

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In this paper we have set out to discuss how the capabilities approach could be used to examine labour market transitions. One of the advantages of the capabilities approach is to focus on preferred 'ways of life' and the values individuals attribute to these as well as whether they are able to realise them. What we have sought to do is to illustrate the differentiated characteristics of the normative gender regimes in four countries. The aim of this analysis is to indicate what Folbre (1994) has described as 'constraint choice' and how this varies between countries. Secondly, from our analysis of the ISSP data we have been able to identify both preferred and realised transitions around the early stages of family formation. What this has indicated is the growing preference for part-time employment, which is not always realised. Finally, we have also been able to map the transitions households make between different work and care options. What this illustrates is how in some countries dominant

transitions are visible for example in Denmark with the prevalence for dual earners. However, in other countries, such as Spain it would appear very difficult for women to move out of traditional breadwinner households allowing them to take up paid work. What is also interesting from this analysis is the presence of those households that do not conform to the dominant national model. In further research we intend to examine the characteristics of these groups in terms of class analysis and to combine this with an assessment of satisfaction levels to see how they evaluate the options available to them, and what policies facilitate this. One of the key issues to emerge from this early analysis indicates how the preference for part-time work is valued, but at the same time this also leads us to ask about the consequence of the long-term penalties associated with this option in terms of the gender pay gap, career progression and ultimately pension entitlement.

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