How Mothers and Fathers Share Childcare in USA, Australia, Denmark, France and Italy: a comparative time-dairy analysis

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INTRODUCTION

As mothers' workforce participation steadily increased over the last half-century, it was expected that the care of children would become more equally shared between mothers and fathers within households (Bergmann 2005). Although there has been movement in this direction, it is still most usually the case that in families with young children fathers spend more hours in paid work while mothers spend more time performing childcare (Bianchi et al. 2006, Coltrane & Adams 2008, Monna & Gauthier 2008). The average depth of the gendered division of labor within households varies cross-nationally, however, which many attribute to policy differences (entwined with cultural and social norms about motherhood, fatherhood and family care) between countries (Crompton 2006, Geist 2005, Gornick & Meyers 2009, Hobson 2002, Hook 2006, Leira 2002, Lewis 2009, O'Connor et al. 1999). Scandinavian countries enjoy a reputation for facilitating more gender equality in paid and unpaid work by promoting both mothers' workforce participation and greater father care of children through measures such as universal public day care, generous parental leave entitlements including a specific component for fathers, and the right to request part time hours (Crompton 2006, Gornick & Meyers 2009, Hobson 2002, Leira 2002, O'Connor et al. 1999). France too has been identified as a country in which women's workforce participation is supported by a range of family and employment policies (Lewis 2006, Milkie et al. 2009). In comparison, the liberal democracies such as Australia and USA have fewer state-supported measures to assist families balance work and care, and broadly speaking the gender division of labor is more pronounced than it is in France or Scandinavia (Craig & Mullan 2009a, Hook 2006, O'Connor et al. 1999). Mother's and father's time allocation to work and care is even more unequal in conservative familialist welfare regimes such as Spain and Italy (de Laat & Sevilla Sanz 2004, Lewis 2009).

Little research, however, has investigated cross-national differences in how childcare is actually shared between spouses within households, or the extent to which fathers participate across the range of activities that comprise childcare. Research within single countries suggests that mothers not only spend more time in total caring for children than fathers, but that also, more of the childcare they do is routine and physical care, and that they take more sole responsibility for childcare than fathers (Craig 2007a). That is, fathers are more likely to read and play with their children than to do the more laborious care activities, or those which need to be done regularly or to a timetable, and are more likely to "join in" rather than to "take over" childcare (Craig 2006a, Fuligni & Brooks-Gunn 2004, Lamb 1997). Are these gender differences in care composition consistent cross-nationally? Or, in countries in which parental childcare is more gender-equal in amount, is it also more similar in composition? To find out, we conduct a comparative study of mothers' and fathers' absolute and relative time in childcare, divided into routine and non-routine activities, and in caring for children in sole charge, in the USA, Australia, Denmark, Italy and France.

BACKGROUND

Involving men in the care of children is widely regarded as desirable. The benefits of father involvement include positive effects on children's psychological, emotional and social development (Flouri 2005), family relationships (Amato 1994), social capital (Coleman 1988) and financial well being (Cabrera et al. 2000). Children with involved fathers have been found to form stronger friendships and to enjoy better adult relationships than children with uninvolved fathers (Flouri & Buchanan 2002). Father involvement in intact families is associated with greater

contact post-separation (Smyth 2005), and fathers themselves value the opportunity to spend more time with their children and gain emotional benefits from doing so (Amato & Rivera 1999, Russell & Hwang 2004).

An additional potential benefit of father involvement in childcare is that it could promote gender equity in the home. Indeed, it was thought that as mothers entered the workforce, the family form in which mothers and fathers share paid work and care work equally (the dual-earner/dual carer household) would become more common (Bergmann 2005, Crompton 2005, Gornick & Meyers 2009, Orloff 2006). Despite this expectation, on average the gender division of labor is still very unequal (Monna & Gauthier 2008). Men have increased their domestic participation over recent years, but not to the same extent as women have taken up market work (Fisher et al. 2007, Sayer 2005, Sullivan 2006). The gender division of domestic labor has converged somewhat, largely because women do not do as much housework as formerly (Baxter 2002, Bianchi et al. 2006).

The same is not true of childcare, which seems, rather, to have gone up over time for both mothers and fathers (Bianchi et al. 2006, Craig et al. 2010, Gauthier et al. 2004, Gray 2006, Sullivan 2006). This may be because social expectations of what constitutes adequate parenting have grown (Coltrane 2007). Compared with times past, parents are now involved in more aspects of their children's lives, such as their education and their friendships, and also are less likely to let them play unsupervised (Furedi 2001, Hays 1998, Hewlett et al. 2002). "The amount of time necessary to produce a "good" childhood has ratcheted up tremendously" (Sayer et al. 2004a). Because both mothers and fathers' time has increased, however, this does not mean that the average distribution of care has become more gender-equal.

Much of the literature on the persistence of an unequal gender division of care focuses on three possible causes: limited male time availability, unequal relative resources, and conforming to traditional gender ideology (Brines, 1994; Coltrane, 2000; Greenstein, 2000). That is, care is assigned to women because men are more committed to market work, can earn more than women, or because people believe that is the right way of doing things. Factors associated with greater father care, and with a more equal gender division of care, have, however, been identified. Fathers spend more engaged time with children on the weekends than during the working week (Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001), and to contribute a higher proportion of household care time when children are older (Craig & Sawrikar 2009). Housework and care is shared more equally in couples who have progressive gender attitudes (Baxter, Hewitt, & Western, 2005). More highly educated parents of both sexes devote more time to childcare than less-educated parents, particularly to the focused interactive activities thought to foster children's human capital development (Craig 2006b, Deding & Lausten 2006, Sayer et al. 2004b). This may reflect class differences in ideas about the inputs children need from parents to do well in life (Lareau 2003). Research into factors which might increase women's bargaining power within the home shows a mixed picture, with results differing for housework and care, and whether they affect men's behaviour or that of women themselves (Bittman et al. 2003, Deding & Lausten 2006, Gupta & Ash 2008, Kan 2008). Female employment generally predicts they will themselves do less childcare (though not on a one for one basis) but studies of the relationship between maternal employment and paternal childcare have generally found no significant association (Bianchi et al. 2006, Bittman et al. 2004, Bryant & Zick 1996, Craig 2007b, Craig & Mullan 2009b). Some find, however, a positive association between mothers' employment and the time fathers are alone with children (Kitterød & Pettersen 2006), especially if the mother works non-standard hours (Powell and Craig 2010).

The body of research investigating the effects of time availability, relative resources and gender attitudes on the gendered division of labor highlights individual beliefs or household circumstances, and has mostly been carried out within single countries. It is recognised, however, that social context matters too and that there are substantial cross-national differences in how couples (can) manage work and care (Folbre 2007, Geist 2005, Lewis 2009, Orloff 2009). Household gender inequality in paid and unpaid work has been found to be related to macro-level gender inequality (Cooke 2006, Fuwa 2004). Individual and household decisions are mediated through cultural norms and values, which are in turn reflexively influenced by institutional and workplace structures and by social and family policy (Crompton 2006, Gornick & Meyers 2009). The relationship between policy, attitudes and behaviour is not straightforward. Rather, it is multidirectional and iterative; particular policy measures are likely to reflect existing social norms, but may also encourage or legitimise new behaviours (Himmelweit & Sigala 2004, Lewis 2009). Although the effect of specific measures is hard to isolate, however, broad policy context has been linked to the gender division of labor within households, with the Scandinavian countries showing comparatively high gender equality in both the public and the private sphere (Geist 2005, Gornick & Meyers 2003, Hook 2006).

Behavioural practices and ideas about child-raising are also likely to both reflect and influence policy development in different countries (Morgan 2005). The normative view that young children need constant and sustained parental attention, and that non-parental care may be detrimental to their wellbeing, seems particularly strong in Anglo countries such as the USA, Australia and the UK (Belsky 2001, Duncan & Edwards 2003). Also in these countries, legislators generally regard childcare is a private responsibility for households, rather than a matter for public policy (O'Connor et al. 1999). In other countries, including France and the Nordic social democracies, raising children is viewed as a shared social concern as well as a personal responsibility (Fagnani & Boyer 2007, Morgan 2003, Neyer 2006). There are generous mandated parental leaves, paid working hours are short by international standards, and parental care is supplemented by state provision of childcare and early education services (Leira 2002, Morgan & Zippel 2003, OECD 2007). This type of institutional framework facilitates work-family reconciliation, and has been shown to be associated with higher average maternal employment and more equitable gender division of childcare time (Craig & Mullan 2009a, Gornick & Meyers 2003, Lewis 2009, Pettit & Hook 2005).

What is not known is whether this type of institutional framework is also associated with differences in how within-household care is shared between spouses in relative terms, or in what fathers do when they are with children. This is important, because gender differences in the type of care provided have implications for gender equity which compound those arising from disparity in overall time spent in care (Craig 2006a). It is not just that mothers allocate more time to childcare, but that they perform more of the essential routine physical and logistical care, and that for much of the time they are the sole carer of the child which creates inequities. A much higher proportion of fathers' than of mothers' care is spent in educational and recreational activities than in other care tasks, and much more of it is done when their spouse is also present (Bittman et al. 2004, Craig 2007a, Lamb 1997).

If men's care consists mainly of recreational activities performed alongside their partner, it means that childcare involves harder work for women, and that it is more typically a family leisure experience for fathers than it is for mothers (Hilbrecht et al. 2008, Shaw 2008). Also, it means fathers are not substituting for mothers' time and thereby freeing them for other pursuits (Craig 2007a). Furthermore, some types of childcare activity are more of a barrier to workforce participation than others. The ability to do paid work, particularly to work fulltime hours, is affected more by having to do routine tasks at certain times of the day, than it is by non-routine activities like talking or playing with children, which can be fitted around parents' own schedules

(Craig 2006a). Even if mothers are in the workforce, being disproportionately responsible for routine and logistical care is demanding and constraining. Having to leave work at a certain time to take children home from day-care, and then feed, bathe and put them to bed not only means a long day, but also precludes (for example) staying late to finish an assignment or network with colleagues. Like part time work, this lack of flexibility for mothers limits career advancement and promotions prospects (Rubery et al. 1999).

There is evidence that mothers discriminate about the type of father care that constitutes meaningful sharing. Fulgini and Brooks-Gunn (2004) find that fathers' participation in routine activities raises mothers' perception that care is shared more than their participation in talk-based activities does. They also find that higher male care on a weekend, including more time spent caring together, is not associated with higher female perceptions of shared care (Fuligni & Brooks-Gunn 2004).

It is clear that involving fathers in care and sharing care more equally between men and women, are not the same thing. Fathers can intensify their family participation without necessarily lightening women's loads. Conversely, the gender division of care could be made more equal by mothers using out-of-home substitute care, without altering fathers' care at all. The implication is that to move towards gender equity in care requires more than simply getting fathers to increase the time they allocate to childcare overall but to increase both the amount of routine care they provide and to take on a larger share of childcare as the sole carer. That is, to alter the composition, and well as the amount, of time fathers spend with children. Does this happen in countries in which paid work and care are more gender-equal at a macro-level? To find out, we conduct a comparative study of mothers' and fathers' absolute and relative time in childcare, divided into routine and non-routine activities, and in caring for children in sole charge, in the USA, Australia, Denmark, Italy and France. We have chosen these five countries because they have different employment-time regimes, family policies, and cultural attitudes to family care provision and gender equality, and previous research has shown that they also differ in the amount of time fathers and mothers spend with children in total (Craig & Mullan 2009a).

We now give a brief overview of institutional context which may inform paternal time in childcare and the gender equality of care in each country.

Outline of institutional context

Denmark is an example of the Scandinavian "valued care" policy model, which has been defined as where both mothers and fathers are responsible for childcare and both government and employers are responsible for assisting (Haas 2003). Scandinavia has a reputation as being particularly "woman friendly" (Borchorst 2008), and Denmark is the only country we examine in which policy has been aimed to encourage equality in paid and unpaid work, and to involve men in care (Hobson 2002, Leira 2002). The policy orientation towards care differs according to age, in that it supports parental care in the first 6 - 12 months of a child's life and then shifts to a guarantee of public child care after age one (Koopmans & Schoippers 2003). After this age non-parental day care is regarded as a social right, and beneficial to children's development (Neyer 2006). State-funded parental leave to care for a new-born is 28 weeks, which can be topped up by employers, and parents have the right to request part time work until children are aged eight (Eydal 2005). However, most mothers return to fulltime employment after the leave period and although gender occupational segregation is comparatively pronounced, maternal workforce participation is high (OECD 2007, Orloff 2009). Specific leave for fathers was instituted in the 1990s but was discontinued, with one rationale being that increased benefit payments (to equivalence with maternity leave payment throughout, when before half the period of parental

leave was paid at 60 percent of maternity leave benefit) should induce more fathers to take up the gender-neutral entitlement (Moss & Deven 2006). Usual adult working hours (35 hours a week) are low by world standards (Anxo et al. 2007). Previous research has shown that, of the countries we examine, Denmark has the most gender-equal division of parental childcare in amount. This is largely because, due to more widespread use of substitute care, mothers' care is lower than in Australia and the USA, rather than because Danish fathers' care is higher (Craig & Mullan 2009a).

Like Denmark, France is regarded as supportive of maternal employment (Milkie et al. 2009). State intervention in family affairs is socially legitimized, and child-raising is regarded as a shared social responsibility (Barbier & Theret 2000). Average working hours are kept low by regulation, which should minimize work-family strain (Fagnani & Letablier 2004). The state provides a range of measures to assist mothers balance work and care, which means they have considerable choice about how to do so (Morgan 2003). However, in contrast to Scandinavia, French policy has not been explicitly aimed to promote gender equality in paid and unpaid work (Windebank 2001). The more consistent goal has been to boost the fertility rate, so some supports become more generous the more children a family has (Bettio & Plantenga 2004). For example, there is 16 weeks maternity leave for the birth of each of the first two children, paid at 100 percent of earnings (to a ceiling) and 26 weeks for third and subsequent children. Generously means-tested payments are made to families with more than one child until the youngest child reaches the age of three. For one-child families, the payment is made until six months after maternity leave expires (Fagnani & Boyer 2007). There is universal publicly-funded preschool for 3 – 5 year olds, with nearly 100 percent attendance. About 40 percent of 0 - 2 year olds also attend formal care or early education. Because of these extensive financial and care supports to families, France has been described as having a "collective care" policy model (Shaver 2002).

In the USA, there is a strong ideology of intensive and involved parenting, especially among the middle class (Lareau 2000, Warner 2005) and an active debate about whether non-parental care has harmful effects on children (Belsky 2001, Brooks-Gunn et al. 2002). In contrast to Denmark and France, work-family reconciliation and raising children are seen as private issues outside the responsibility of the state (Haas 2003, Hewlett et al. 2002). There is no national paid maternity leave, and although most employed women work fulltime, on average maternal workforce participation is low when children are young (Milkie et al. 2009). There is formal gender equality in the public sphere, and social change for US women has arisen from claims to be breadwinners in their own right rather than from claims to universal supports or public services for child-raising (Berggren 2003, Orloff 2009). Average fulltime paid working hours are long. There is no national policy aimed at involving men in father care in intact families (Wisensale 2003), but there is an active social discourse about the importance of father's input to child development (Amato & Rivera 1999, Flouri 2005). Options about how to manage work and care depend on private resources more than other countries, with almost all substitute care purchased through the market (Orloff 2009). Factors such as education and income may therefore have a larger influence on care division in the USA than is the case elsewhere.

In Australia, also, family and workplace policy does not promote father involvement or gender equality in care provision. More than in the USA, however, social policies tend to actively reinforce a traditional gender division of labor (Craig et al. 2010). Tax transfers to single income families create a financial disincentive to maternal employment, which is low compared to other western countries, with a very high proportion of mothers working part time (OECD 2006). As in the USA, in Australia fulltime paid working hours are long, there is no national paid maternity leave system (one is to be introduced in 2011), and there is a strong ideology of intensive parental

involvement in the care of children (Baird et al. 2002, Pocock 2005). Australia is also similar to the USA in that most formal early education and childcare is provided through the market, but differs in that it is highly regulated and generally of good quality. However, fees are high, and full time usage is low by international standards (Doiron & Kalb 2005, OECD 2006).

Italy is often grouped with Spain, Greece and Portugal as examples of a familialist welfare regime in which care is provided by families, rather than the state or private substitute carers (Arts & Gelissen 2002, Korpi 2000). Also in common with those countries, fertility rates are very low, which some attribute to their marked gender inequality in paid and unpaid labor (de Laat & Sevilla Sanz 2004, McDonald 2006). There are regional differences between north and south, but in general gender role attitudes are traditional and state policy does not directly encourage maternal labor force participation or promote fathers' care of children (Anxo et al. 2007, Haas 2003). There are few opportunities for part time work and Italian households with children tend to have a single male breadwinner (Miller 2004). There are few childcare places for under-three year olds, fees are high and daily hours are limited. So for women working fulltime, public childcare is not a ready option (OECD 2002). Only six per cent of children under the age of three are in fulltime childcare, which means that although in accordance with European Union (EU) directives maternity leave of 20 weeks is compulsory, payment is low, and after that time mothers either withdraw from the paid work force or rely on extended family for childcare assistance (Miller 2004). There is extensive early education for 3 - 6 year olds, but hours are short and it is not associated with re-entry of mothers to paid work (OECD 2007).

Research focus

We are interested in whether these different institutional and cultural contexts are associated with differences in how care is shared between couples within households and in whether fathers participate across the range of childcare activities. In countries in which parental childcare is more gender-equal in amount, is it also more gender-equal in composition? Does the extensive state support to families in Denmark and France mean that what mothers and fathers do when with children is more similar than it is in the other countries? Do high normative expectations about intensive parenting mean that Anglo fathers participate in a wider range of activities than European fathers? In exploring these questions we build on a previous study in which we found that the average time mothers and fathers jointly allocate to childcare activities is higher in the USA and Australia than in Denmark, France and Italy, and that of the five countries, the amount of care provided is most gender-equal in Denmark (Craig & Mullan 2009a). Here we look more closely at the composition of parental care, and analyse mothers' and fathers' absolute and relative time in childcare, divided into routine and non-routine activities, and in caring for children in sole charge. In a further contribution to the literature, as far as possible we analyse both partners' input, to gain insight into how care is actually shared.

METHOD

Data and sample

We use data from the Australian Time Use Survey 2006 (AUSTUS), the American Time Use Survey 2003 (ATUS), the Danish Time Use Survey 2002 (DTUS), the Italian Time Use Survey 2002-03 (ITUS), and the French Time Use Survey 1999 (FTUS). Each contains nationally representative samples of the respective populations of each country. All surveys except the ATUS collected time use information using a time-budget diary instrument completed by respondents. For the ATUS respondents were 'walked through' the previous day in telephone interviews. Both these methods provide reliable estimates of time use (Juster 1985, Robinson

1985). All the surveys collected information from weekdays and weekend days, although ratios of day type differ. In all surveys except the ATUS, multiple members of the sampled households were required to provide data. So for Australia, France, Italy and Denmark we can analyze men and women living together as couples in households, and derive individual and household level results simultaneously. From AUSTUS, FRTUS, ITUS and DTUS we draw a sample of couples aged 20 – 54 with at least one child aged 0 – 12 years. From ATUS we draw an unmatched sample of individual mothers and fathers aged 20 - 54, each with a resident partner, who have at least one child aged 0 – 12. The number of men and women in each country is equal as they come from the same household, except in the USA.

There are country differences in demographic characteristics (see Table 1). As is to be expected in accordance with the contextual overview above, maternal workforce participation rates vary; 67% of Danish mothers are employed full time, 46% of Australian mothers are employed part time, and 44% percent of Italian mothers are not employed. In each case, these percentages are much higher than in the other countries. A comparatively low proportion of Italian parents have a tertiary degree and a comparatively high proportion of Italian households have only one child. The possibility that selection into parenthood differs systematically across countries should be borne in mind when interpreting the results.

[Table 1 about here]

Measures

We create measures of three dimensions of childcare. First, we sum the total minutes per day mothers and fathers spend performing childcare as a main or primary activity (total childcare).

Second, we disaggregate total childcare into two categories by activity type: i) talk-based care: face-to-face parent-child interaction that includes talking, listening, teaching, helping children learn, reading, telling stories, and playing games, and ii) physical care and accompanying a child: face-to-face parent-child interaction that includes feeding, bathing, dressing, putting children to sleep, carrying, holding, cuddling, hugging, and soothing. Transportation to school, visits, sports training, music and ballet lessons, parents and teacher nights, including time spent waiting, and meeting trains or buses, ensuring their safety, handing them over to substitute carers. The latter group includes both the most laborious care activities, and those which need to be done regularly or to a timetable. We refer to this category as routine care, and for the former we use the terms non-routine care and talk-based care interchangeably.

Third, we again disaggregate total primary childcare into two categories, this time by whether or not it is performed together with a spouse, that is, by social context. The intention is to separate out time fathers are looking after children on their own, and thus distinguish "taking over" from "joining in". Specifically, we calculate: i) time childcare is performed in the presence of a spouse ii) time childcare is performed when the spouse is not present (Because these last measures require information from both partners, we cannot compute them for USA.)

Analysis Plan

We begin with a descriptive overview of these three dimensions of care. First we show mean minutes per day mothers and fathers in each country spend in i) total care, and ii) its activity subsets routine and non-routine care and iii) its context subsets care near spouse and care away from spouse. We then show three ratio measures, i) the proportion of fathers and mothers'

own care time that is spent in routine care, ii) the proportion of total household care carried out by mothers and fathers separately, and iii) the proportion of total household childcare that is carried out by mothers and fathers when they are alone with children, away from their spouse. We present the descriptive results separately for weekdays and weekend days because previous research has found that US and Australian fathers increase their childcare on the weekend to a greater extent than French, Italian and Danish fathers (Craig & Mullan 2009a), and we wish to investigate whether they also change their relative care composition on the weekend.

We then estimate a series of OLS regression models separately for mothers and fathers to test country differences and the effect of individual and household characteristics, particularly mothers' workforce status. We enter dummy variables for each country (Denmark omitted). Because women's employment differs systematically across the countries (see Table 1), we interact maternal workforce status (fulltime, part time) with the country dummies. We control for factors which have been found to influence time with children: education, age of youngest child, number of children, presence of teenager, whether or not the father is employed, age of respondent and day of the week. The reference group in all models shown is a Danish mother/father aged 20-34 years in a household with a mother who is not employed, a father who is employed, one child aged 0-4 years, no teenage children, no degree, observed on a weekday.

RESULTS

Descriptive

In all five countries mothers average more time in total childcare than fathers, but confirming previous research there is wide cross-national variation in amount of family care provided (see Table 3). For mothers on a weekday, average daily total childcare time is highest in Australia and the USA, lower in Denmark and Italy, and substantially lower again in France. For fathers on a weekday, childcare time is highest in the USA, Denmark and Australia. It is substantially lower in Italy and lower again in France.

[Table 2 about here]

When we sub-divide total care into routine and non-routine (talk-based) care (Table 2, rows 6 and 7), it is apparent that both cross-national and the gender variation in childcare time is concentrated in routine care activities. Interactive activities such as talking, reading playing and listening are more similar for men and women and more similar across countries than physical care. This extends findings of previous research that interactive care is largely preserved despite variation in mothers' workforce participation (Bittman et al. 2004, Craig 2007b) and that men are more likely to spend time talking, reading and playing with their children than in physical and routine care (Craig 2006a). This finding suggests that despite quite wide variation in total care, talk-based interactions between parents and children are also roughly constant cross-nationally.

Rows 9 and 10 again show total care subdivided, this time by whether or not the care is performed in the presence of a spouse, or by the parent in sole charge. (Recall we cannot compute these measures for the USA.) Mothers average more care time in both contexts than fathers, reflecting their higher total care, but the gender difference is particularly pronounced in care performed out of the presence of a spouse. Mothers do much more care alone. Also, cross-national differences are apparent. Australian, Italian and French fathers average between 17 and 13 minutes a day alone with their children, whereas the average for Danish fathers is half an hour. So in this measure, Danish fathers' care composition is more similar to mothers' than is fathers in the other countries.

The lower part of Table 2 shows ratio measures, beginning (row 12) with the proportion of each respondent's own total childcare that is devoted to routine tasks. Only respondents who participated in the activities are included, and since many more fathers than mothers record no care at all, the Ns on this measure are lower for men than women. Across countries about 90 percent of mothers show positive values, whereas fathers' participation rates range from 78 percent (in Denmark and Australia) to 48 percent (in France).

Cross-nationally, between 68 and 79 percent of mothers' own total weekday care time is spent in routine care activities. The range for fathers is between 48 and 70 percent. In all countries mothers' ratio of routine to non-routine care is higher than fathers', with the gap narrowest in Denmark, where mothers and fathers who participate in care average 74 and 70 percent of their childcare time in routine activities, respectively. With regard to individual shares of total household care on a weekday, in all countries women do between 65 and 77 percent of the household total, with the percentage lowest in Denmark and highest in France (Table 2, row 14). The proportion of total household care that is carried out by mothers alone, away from fathers, is much higher that the proportion of total household care that is carried out by fathers alone away from mothers (Table 2, row 15). Denmark is again an exception, however, with fathers doing a slightly higher proportion and mothers doing a slightly lower proportion of the household care alone than their counterparts in Australia, Italy and France.

We now turn to weekend patterns (see Table 3), which differ from weekdays in some respects both by gender and by country.

[Table 3 about here]

Mothers average less care time on a weekend day than on a weekday, while fathers in Australia, the USA and Italy average more care time on a weekend, confirming previous research, (Craig & Mullan 2009a). The added care of fathers in the Anglo countries brings their total care on a weekend to higher averages than those of fathers in the other three countries. In terms of care composition, mothers in Australia and Denmark do proportionately less routine care on the weekend than on a weekday. So their care totals are not only lower on a weekend, but also include a higher proportion of talking, reading and playing. The ratio of routine to non-routine care performed by mothers in the USA, Italy and France is similar on both day types. Australian, Danish and French fathers have an even lower ratio of routine to non-routine care on a weekend day than on a weekday, while the proportional allocation of fathers' care time by day type is similar in the USA and Italy. Thus in none of the countries is father care time on the weekend, even when higher in amount than on a weekday, associated with a greater proportion of their own care being spent in the routine care activities that are associated with higher maternal perceptions that care is shared (Fuligni & Brooks-Gunn 2004).

As on a weekday, in Denmark the ratio of routine to non-routine care on a weekend day is much more similar for mothers and fathers than it is in the other countries. In all countries mothers do a slightly lower proportion of the total household care (see Table 3, row 14), and perform a substantially lower proportion of care alone (Table 3, row 15) on a weekend than on a weekday. Since fathers perform about the same proportion of household care alone as on weekdays, this means more care is done together on the weekends than on the weekdays. The increased total care inputs noted above for Australian, US and Italian fathers on the weekend are therefore concentrated in care alongside their spouses. That is, it represents "joining in" rather than "taking over" care, and so also unlikely to increase mothers' perception that care is meaningfully shared (Fuligni & Brooks-Gunn 2004).

The descriptive results show that in all five countries, mothers do more care than fathers, and more of their care time is spent in routine tasks. They do a much higher proportion of the total household care, including performing a higher proportion of the household care alone. The results also, however, show cross-national differences in how care is divided both by task and by social context, between mothers and fathers. In particular, Anglo countries have high amounts of family care, including from fathers, but gender differences in composition are marked. In France and Italy, fathers' total care is low, and the composition of care is also very different for men and women. Denmark stands out as the country in which average care is most similar in amount and in composition for men and women. This weakly supports the idea that Denmark's fostering of relatively gender-equal division of paid and unpaid work at a macro-level also fosters more gender equality in care composition within households. To test whether this finding holds net of the influence of individual and household characteristics, particularly women's workforce status, we turn now to multivariate analysis.

Multivariate

Table 2 shows OLS results for fathers and mothers total childcare, proportion of their own care that is routine, and proportion of household care they perform alone. The regressions are run separately by sex to concentrate on cross-national differences. The reference group is a Danish mother/father aged 20-34 years in a household with a mother who is not employed, a father who is employed, one child aged 0-4 years, no teenage children, no degree, observed on a weekday.

[Table 4 about here]

Fathers: First, net of controls Australian and US fathers' total care is not statistically different to that of Danish fathers. Italian and French fathers are estimated to do 26 and 42 minutes a day less, respectively. This confirms our descriptive findings on this measure. As a main effect, mothers' employment is not associated with differences in fathers' total care, but there are significant interaction effects for Italy and France. Having a spouse employed fulltime is associated with more total father care in those countries, which suggests that being in a dual fulltime earner household in France and Italy counteracts the prevalent negative country effect.

Second, looking at the proportion of total childcare time that fathers spend in routine activities, we see the same pattern as for total care, except that on this measure Australia, as well as Italy and France, is significantly lower than Denmark. So even though the absolute amount of care that fathers in Denmark and Australia provide is similar, it is significantly different in composition. The high total father care time in Australia is largely comprised of non-routine, talk-based care, whereas Danish fathers do more routine care. As was the case for total care, on this measure there is no statistically significant difference associated with mothers' employment as a main effect, nor with mothers' part time employment in any country. However, there are significant interaction effects between fulltime maternal employment and the proportion of fathers' care that is routine in Australia, France and Italy. In these countries, in households in which both parents work fulltime, the negative overall country effects on routine care are counteracted, as was the case for total care in France and Italy.

Third, we look at the proportion of household care that fathers carry out alone away from their spouse. Unlike for both previous measures, fulltime maternal employment has a major positive effect, which pertains across all countries. Cross-nationally, having a fulltime employed spouse is associated with fathers doing a greater share of household care alone.

Mothers: Net of controls, US mothers' total care is not statistically different to that of Danish mothers, but Italian and French mothers are estimated to do about half an hour a day less, and Australian mothers to do about half an hour a day more. This confirms the descriptive findings. As a main effect, being employed is associated with mothers spending less time in total care each day (40 minutes if employed part time, and just over an hour if employed fulltime). The interaction terms show no significant added country effects except in Italy, where the (relatively few) mothers who are employed full time are estimated to do more total care, largely neutralising the overall negative association with fulltime employment.

Reference category Danish mothers average 73 percent of their care in routine tasks. Mothers in none of the other countries significantly differ on this measure, except in France. Relating this to the result above shows that while French mothers do a lower amount of total care than other mothers, more of it is comprised of routine activities. With this one exception, the proportion of mothers' care that is routine is uniform cross nationally, despite the marked differences in total amount of care we noted above. The proportion of mothers' care that is routine is also uniform across variation in workforce participation. That is, in no country is mothers' employment, either full or part time, associated with any change in the proportion of their total care that is spent in routine tasks. This is in marked contrast to the findings for absolute amount of care, which was lower for employed women. Thus paid work lowers mothers' total care time but has no effect on the composition of their care.

All mothers that we observe relative to reference category Danish mothers average a higher proportion of total household care in sole charge of children, confirming the descriptive results. That the proportion of care alone is higher in France and Italy starkly contrasts with the results for total care; although mothers in these countries do less care overall, more of it is done alone. (We also saw above that more of French mothers' lower care total is devoted to routine tasks.) As a main effect, mothers' employment status has no impact on this measure, also in marked contrast to its effect on total care. Danish mothers do a similar proportion of the household care alone, whether or not they are employed. The interaction terms show that being employed part time lowers mothers' proportion of household time alone in Italy, and when mothers are employed fulltime, there are significant negative added country effects for Australia, Italy and France. That is, in all these countries fulltime employed mothers do less of the household care alone than other mothers. So mothers' fulltime employment means fathers "take over" slightly more of the care (see above), and also that a lower proportion of mothers' care is done away from their spouse. Also, the results suggest that because fulltime maternal employment is less prevalent elsewhere, it has more impact on the gender division of care within households in all the other countries than it does in Denmark, where dual earner households are the norm. In Australia, France and Italy, differences in household labour supply are more salient. (Recall we cannot compute this measure for the USA.) This implies that dual earner households in those countries differ from the average more markedly than in Denmark.

CONCLUSION

Our aim in this paper was to tease out whether the different institutional and cultural contexts of the USA, Australia, France, Denmark and Italy, which are known to be associated with different gender patterns in work and care at a macro-level, are also associated with differences in how care is shared within households, having regard to the composition of both fathers' and mothers' care. We found that in all five countries studied, mothers not only spend much more time caring for children, but also do much more of the routine care tasks in both absolute and relative terms, and spend a much higher proportion of household care time alone

with children, than do fathers. Gender care composition was broadly similar cross-nationally, and in no county was gender division of care on any measure equal.

Nonetheless, the gender composition of care did vary slightly across the countries. In Denmark, where there is most policy emphasis on equality in paid and unpaid work and on involving fathers in the care of children, fathers did take on slightly more of the routine care and do slightly more of the household care alone than was the case in Australia, Italy and France. In the latter countries, however, households in which mothers work fulltime had similar outcomes on some measures, which suggests that individual and household-level factors can counteract prevalent macro work-care patterns. Specifically, when mothers were employed fulltime, there was a significant increase in the proportion of care fathers performed away from their spouse. Also, having a fulltime employed spouse predicted increased total care for Italian and French fathers, and meant a higher proportion of fathers' care was spent in routine activities in Australia, France and Italy. (In further analyses not shown we found that this was largely concentrated in time accompanying children, which implies that in fulltime dual-earner households, fathers share in transporting children to school and day care.) This suggests that a major reason for our findings is simply that a much higher proportion of Danish mothers than of mothers in the other countries are employed fulltime (see Table 1). On this interpretation, the extensive state supports of the Scandinavian "valued care" model do engender slightly more equality in the composition of care, but the effect operates through mothers' employment, and could be matched in other countries if the prevalence of the dual fulltime earner household was similar to that in Denmark.

Though an important factor, however, female labour force participation did not explain all the differences between the countries in how care was shared. There were additional country effects which logically reflect cultural and normative factors. Consistent with the egalitarian ethos of Scandinavia, Danish fathers and mothers shared care slightly more equally than parents elsewhere even if the mother was not employed. That is, households with a male-breadwinner and a female care-giver, which in the other countries were estimated to have a more traditional division of care, were more gender-equal in Denmark. Conversely, even net of female labour supply, French and Italian households had a comparatively unequal division of care, and fathers' inputs were low compared to fathers elsewhere. This finding was not unexpected for Italy, since traditional gender attitudes are prevalent there and the relatively few fulltime working mothers of young children would be going against strong social trends towards fulltime homemaking (de Laat & Sevilla Sanz 2004). It was less expected for France, because like Denmark it is widely regarded as a model for supporting working mothers through social and workplace policies (Bergmann & Helburn 2002, Milkie et al. 2009). We found, though, that in France care time is low for both men and women. So there is less maternal care time, but not a more gender-equal distribution of care tasks, and fathers do little care alone. This suggests France's "collective care" model lowers the care burden upon mothers, but not by encouraging more father involvement, as is the aim in Denmark. Rather, the care is shared between mothers and the state. French fathers care was more similar to Italian fathers, perhaps reflecting similar social norms about gender and masculinity, than it was to Danish fathers.

Danish fathers' care was most similar in amount to that of fathers in the USA and Australia. This is also rather surprising given the reputation Scandinavia enjoys as a policy leader in involving men in care (Crompton et al. 2007, Gornick & Meyers 2009, Hobson 2002, Leira 2002). Indeed, net of controls, both mothers and fathers' care in the USA was similar to that of mothers and fathers in Denmark. This may mean individual characteristics such as education and income have a larger influence on care division in the USA than elsewhere. It is also consistent with the high cultural value placed on intensive parental involvement in the Anglo countries,

which in this study was most clearly exemplified by Australia, where households had the highest combined care totals. In multivariate results not shown we also found that both US and Australian fathers did more total care on the weekends than other fathers, but did not do a higher proportion of routine care, nor take on a greater share of total household care alone. So care was higher than in the other countries but not more gender-equal in relative terms.

It is worth noting some consistency in care patterns. Cross-national variation in care amount is concentrated in routine activities. Average time spent in activities such as reading, talking and playing with children is more similar, despite quite wide country differences in the use of non-parental substitute care. Talk-based care is important for children's social and human capital development, and to promote family bonding. Our finding shows that it is not lower in countries which have higher average maternal workforce participation.

In summary, moving towards gender equality in care requires more than fathers increasing the time they allocate to childcare overall. It requires them to participate across the range of care activities, and to increase their share of childcare as the sole carer. Involving fathers in care and sharing care more equally between men and women is not the same thing. Fathers can have relatively high care time, but if mothers care is even greater and tasks are gendered, care stays unequal, as in Australia. Conversely, substitute care services can reduce women's own childcare, whilst fathers remain relatively uninvolved, as in France. In this study we identified slightly more gender-similar care participation in Denmark than in the other countries, and so found weak support for the idea that macro-level gender equality in work-care patterns might foster more gender-similar care within households. The most striking result of this analysis, however, is that cross-nationally gender remains the strongest influence not only on how much care mothers and fathers do, but also upon the relative composition of that care.

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Table 1: Sample characteristics

	Australia	**Denmark**	**Italy**	**France**	**USA**	
	Couples	*Couples*	*Couples*	*Couples*	*Fathers*	*Mothers*
Mother not employed	0.31	0.20	0.44	0.36		0.34
Mother employed part-time	0.46	0.12	0.18	0.33		0.25
Mother employed fulltime	0.23	0.67	0.38	0.31		0.41
Father not employed	0.06	0.03	0.04	0.08	0.07	
Father employed	0.94	0.97	0.96	0.92	0.93	
Father no degree	0.75	0.66	0.89	0.74	0.58	
Father has a degree	0.24	0.34	0.11	0.25	0.41	
Father degree not known	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	
Mother no degree	0.71	0.59	0.89	0.73		0.60
Mother has a degree	0.28	0.41	0.11	0.26		0.39
Mother degree not known	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.01
Youngest child 0 - 4 years	0.51	0.43	0.44	0.41	0.48	0.47
Youngest child 5 - 12 years	0.49	0.57	0.56	0.59	0.52	0.53
No teenagers in household	0.72	0.69	0.72	0.65	0.76	0.75
Teenager in household	0.28	0.31	0.28	0.35	0.24	0.25
Father age 20 - 34 years	0.24	0.19	0.15	0.27	0.28	
Father age 35 - 44 years	0.54	0.59	0.61	0.56	0.53	
Father age 45 - 54 years	0.22	0.21	0.24	0.17	0.18	
Mother age 20 - 34 years	0.35	0.31	0.32	0.39		0.38
Mother age 35 - 44 years	0.56	0.57	0.60	0.53		0.49
Mother age 45 - 54 years	0.09	0.12	0.09	0.08		0.13
One child (0 - 12)	0.45	0.48	0.58	0.49	0.42	0.42
Two children (0 - 12)	0.40	0.40	0.36	0.39	0.41	0.41
More than two children (0-12)	0.15	0.12	0.06	0.13	0.18	0.17

Table 2: Parental care time by mothers and fathers in Australia, Denmark, Italy, France and the USA on a weekday

	Australia (N=712)		Denmark (N=334)		Italy (N=1359)		France (N=1070)		USA	
	Mothers	**Fathers**	**Mothers**	**Fathers**	**Mothers**	**Fathers**	**Mothers**	**Fathers**	**Mothers (N=1200)**	**Fathers (N=1060)**
Absolute measures										
Total care	178	56	131	66	128	44	109	34	159	67
Type										
Routine care	131	34	99	47	87	19	87	23	113	40
Talk-based care	47	23	33	20	41	25	22	11	45	26
Context										
Near spouse†	70	38	60	36	42	28	47	20	-	-
Away from spouse	106	17	71	30	86	15	62	13	-	-
Ratio measures										
	(N=688)	*(N=552)*	*(N=317)*	*(N=259)*	*(N=1228)*	*(N=812)*	*(N=901)*	*(N=514)*	*(N=1076)*	*(N=696)*
Routine care %*	0.68	0.54	0.74	0.70	0.70	0.48	0.79	0.70	0.74	0.63
	(N=703)		*(N=327)*		*(N=1268)*		*(N=937)*			
Total individual share %**	0.73	0.22	0.65	0.29	0.74	0.22	0.77	0.19	-	-
Away from spouse %**	0.49	0.11	0.38	0.17	0.52	0.11	0.46	0.10	-	-

† Includes time when both parents are together providing care simultaneously

* Ratios computed for each individual. Individuals with zero childcare time are set to missing.

** Ratios computed for each household. The household total is the sum of mothers' and fathers' care time and not double counting the time both are together providing care simultaneously. Households with zero childcare time are set to missing.

Table 3: Parental care time by mothers and fathers in Australia, Denmark, Italy, France and the USA on a weekend day

	Australia (N=519)		Denmark (N=312)		Italy (N=2375)		France (N=342)		USA	
	Mothers	**Fathers**	**Mothers**	**Fathers**	**Mothers**	**Fathers**	**Mothers**	**Fathers**	**Mothers (N=1308)**	**Fathers (N=1118)**
Absolute measures										
Total care	151	89	107	62	97	53	92	34	112	81
Type										
Routine care	107	50	71	37	66	23	72	20	75	47
Talk-based care	43	39	37	25	32	29	20	14	37	35
Context										
Near spouse†	100	64	79	42	58	38	53	24	-	-
Away from spouse	50	26	29	20	40	14	39	10	-	-
Ratio measures										
	(N=479)	*(N=399)*	*(N=273)*	*(N=223)*	*(N=1942)*	*(N=1386)*	*(N=280)*	*(N=165)*	*(N=1021)*	*(N=648)*
Routine care %*	0.63	0.48	0.65	0.64	0.69	0.46	0.79	0.61	0.72	0.62
	(N=497)		*(N=290)*		*(N=2076)*		*(N=290)*			
Total individual share %**	0.60	0.31	0.62	0.30	0.65	0.28	0.73	0.21	-	-
Away from spouse %**	0.23	0.11	0.20	0.12	0.31	0.11	0.32	0.08	-	-

† Includes time when both parents are together providing care simultaneously

* Ratios computed for each individual. Individuals with zero childcare time are set to missing.

** Ratios computed for each household. The household total is the sum of mothers' and fathers' care time and not double counting the time both are together providing care simultaneously. Households with zero childcare time are set to missing.

Table 4: OLS results for fathers and mothers' minutes a day total childcare, proportion of their own care that is routine, and proportion of household care they perform alone

		Fathers			Mothers		
		Absolute	Ratio		Absolute	Ratio	
		Total	Routine	Alone	Total	Routine	Alone
Intercept		75.4***	0.65***	0.05***	211.1***	0.73***	0.40***
		(7.1)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(13.4)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Country	Australia	-4.5	-0.21***	-0.03*	33.4*	-0.04	0.12***
		(8.7)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(15.6)	(0.03)	(0.03)
	Italy	-26.2***	-0.25***	-0.01	-32.7*	0.01	0.18***
		(7.1)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(13.5)	(0.03)	(0.02)
	France	-41.6***	-0.11**	-0.06***	-41.3**	0.11***	0.12***
		(7.3)	(0.04)	(0.01)	(13.9)	(0.03)	(0.03)
	USA	-9.5	-0.07	-	-12.1	0.02	-
		(7.8)	(0.04)	-	(14.1)	(0.03)	-
Mother employed	Part-time (PT)	-6.7	0.01	0.02	-39.1*	-0.02	0.03
		(12.8)	(0.06)	(0.03)	(17.9)	(0.05)	(0.04)
	Fulltime (FT)	-11.0	-0.01	0.08***	-63.9***	0.01	-0.01
		(7.7)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(14.0)	(0.03)	(0.03)
PT*country							
	Australia	6.0	0.02	0.04	-17.0	-0.00	-0.07
		(14.2)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(20.4)	(0.05)	(0.04)
	Italy	19.1	0.09	0.03	25.9	0.00	-0.11**
		(13.2)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(18.4)	(0.05)	(0.04)
	France	13.7	0.13	0.05	-0.3	0.00	-0.07
		(13.3)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(18.7)	(0.05)	(0.04)
	USA	21.3	-0.03	-	18.9	0.01	-
		(14.2)	(0.07)	-	(19.2)	(0.05)	-
FT*country							
	Australia	19.1	0.14*	0.02	3.1	0.02	-0.09*

		(11.0)	(0.06)	(0.02)	(18.4)	(0.05)	(0.04)
	Italy	22.7**	0.12**	0.01	41.1**	-0.01	-0.11***
		(8.1)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(14.4)	(0.03)	(0.03)
	France	26.5**	0.19***	0.04	29.9	-0.07	-0.09*
		(8.6)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(15.3)	(0.04)	(0.04)
	USA	17.7	0.07	-	20.1	0.01	-
		(9.2)	(0.04)	-	(15.2)	(0.04)	-
Control variables	Has a degree	17.6***	0.02	0.02**	23.0***	-0.02*	-0.04***
		(2.2)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(3.0)	(0.01)	(0.01)
	Two children 0 - 12 yrs	11.0***	0.04**	0.02**	21.9***	0.03***	0.00
		(1.8)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(2.5)	(0.01)	(0.01)
	Three + children 0 - 12 yrs	17.8***	0.06**	0.02*	39.1***	0.05***	0.02
		(3.4)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(4.6)	(0.01)	(0.01)
	Youngest child 5 - 9 yrs	-31.7***	-0.01	0.04***	-74.3***	-0.06***	0.04***
		(2.0)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(2.6)	(0.01)	(0.01)
	Teenager in household	-7.8***	0.08***	0.02*	-13.1***	0.01	0.02*
		(1.9)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(2.5)	(0.01)	(0.01)
	Age 35 - 44 years	-1.1	-0.01	0.00	-7.1*	-0.03***	-0.03**
		(2.5)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(2.8)	(0.01)	(0.01)
	Age 45 - 54 years	-6.4*	0.01	0.01	-18.7***	-0.02	-0.01
		(2.9)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(4.0)	(0.02)	(0.02)
	Weekend	11.3***	-0.04***	-0.01*	-33.2***	-0.02**	-0.20***
		(1.7)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(2.2)	(0.01)	(0.01)
	Father not employed	23.7***	0.03	0.07***	-10.6*	-0.01	-0.17***
		(4.8)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(4.5)	(0.02)	(0.02)
	Observations (N)	**9164**	**5638**	**6373**	**9480**	**8164**	**6373**
	Adjusted R2	**0.12**	**0.07**	**0.06**	**0.26**	**0.04**	**0.13**

***p<.001 **p<.01*p<.05