

The Dual Strategy: Motherhood and the Work Contract in Scandinavia

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Abstract. Mothers' employment in the Scandinavian countries is generally characterised by high employment rates. At the same time the fertility level is higher than in most European countries. Scandinavian women have to a large extent developed a dual strategy towards employment and children: Most women choose to have at least two children and they continue their employment after and between births. In this paper we discuss how this dual strategy can be explained, taking the case of Norway. We argue that the strategy of Norwegian mothers is based on arrangements in working life which enable employed mothers to pursue motherhood within the work contract.

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Résumé. Le travail des mères dans les pays scandinaves est généralement caractérisé par des taux d'activité élevés. En même temps, la fécondité est également plus élevée que dans la plupart des pays européens. Les femmes scandinaves ont, dans une large mesure, développé une double stratégie vis-à-vis de l'emploi et de leurs enfants: la plupart des femmes choisissent d'avoir au moins deux enfants et elles reprennent leur emploi aussitôt après ou entre les naissances. Dans cet article, nous tentons de voir comment cette double stratégie peut être expliquée, en prenant le cas de la Norvège. Nous montrons que la stratégie des femmes norvégiennes est basée sur des arrangements dans la vie active qui permettent aux femmes qui travaillent de poursuivre leur maternité dans le cadre de leur contrat de travail.

1. Introduction

The modernisation of motherhood in western European societies, encompassing both child care and gainful employment, has taken place at different speed and along different paths. The transformation process in the Scandinavian welfare states has been characterised by very high employment rates among mothers. This development is, at least in part, often explained by an interventionist welfare state socialising child care. Critics have argued that such state intervention weakens family institutions (e.g. Popenoe 1988). However, contrary to what one would expect if this critique was true, the Scandinavian modernisation process is accompanied by relatively high fertility levels compared to European countries with more

traditional gender relations. Evidently, Scandinavian motherhood practices comply with family models grounded on children as a central value and children as a vital element in the social constitution of the family.

Scandinavian women have to a large extent developed a dual strategy towards employment and children, that is, they do not choose between employment and children, they choose both (Ellingsæter 1995). Most women have at least two children, and they continue their employment after and between births. In 1993 the total fertility rate in the Scandinavian countries ranged from 1.75 in Denmark to 1.99 in Sweden, while the employment rates of mothers of children aged 0–6 varied between 86 percent in Sweden in 1988 and about 75 percent in Norway in 1993 (Jonung and Persson 1993, Norwegian Labour Force Survey, European Commission Network on Childcare). This is in contrast to patterns generated in other types of European welfare states, where one finds, on the one hand, patterns of low fertility combined with low maternal employment (e.g. former West-Germany), and patterns of high fertility combined with low maternal employment (e.g. the UK), on the other. In Germany, the fertility rate was 1.28 and the employment rate of mothers was 38 percent, while in the UK the fertility rate was 1.82, and the employment among mothers was 46 percent. Accordingly, the value of motherhood and mothers' preferences for employment form complex patterns, but the Scandinavian pattern is clearly distinguishable from those of other European countries.

The question addressed in this paper is how the dual strategy of Scandinavian women can be explained. We have selected one country, Norway, for our analysis. We shall argue that the relatively high employment rates and fertility levels among Norwegian mothers are based on arrangements in work life that enable employed mothers to pursue motherhood within the work contract, thus spending significant amounts of time with their children. These arrangements include access to stable, non-marginalised part-time work and generous parental rights to leave of absence in order to care for children.

As a background, we first explore the long-term change in Norwegian women's labour force participation and changes in the family institution. Subsequently, we discuss the relationship between women's employment rates and the development of part-time work, followed by a brief description of the recent trends in Norwegian mothers' employment patterns. Next, we present an empirical analysis of the determinants of mothers' return to work after child birth. Finally, we discuss our findings and the extent to which they may also be valid for all the Scandinavian countries.

2. Norwegian women's employment: A long-term perspective

Cohort analysis of women's employment patterns during the first stages of family formation provides important evidence of the profound changes in Norwegian women's adjustment to work and family. The long term trend has been increasing labour market participation among married women of successive cohorts. The work

Table 1. Women with two or more births, living in cohabitation or marriage, by birth cohorts and work pattern. Per cent

Birth cohort	Total ¹	Work pattern				Other
		EEE	EEN	ENN	NNN	
All	100	25	21	27	12	9
1912-29	100	15	14	42	18	5
1930-44	100	27	25	23	9	8
1945-59	100	35	26	13	10	14

¹ Including unspecified.

E = Employed. N = Not employed.

Phase 1 = the period before start of cohabitation/marriage.

Phase 2 = the period between start of cohabitation/marriage and the birth of the first child.

Phase 3 = the period between the first and the second birth.

EEE = Employed phase 1-3.

EEN = Employed phase 1-2, not employed phase 3.

ENN = Employed phase 1, not employed phase 2-3.

Source: Ellingsæter and Iversen (1984).

patterns in the early stages of family formation of three broad groups of female birth cohorts, women born 1912-29, 1930-44 and 1945-59, show that the implications of family events for women's relations to the labour market were radically altered from one generation to the next. The data on family formation and work histories were collected retrospectively in a survey in 1980 (Ellingsæter and Iversen 1984). In the oldest cohort studied, marriage was the most significant interruption factor for women's employment (Table 1). Participation in the 'marriage market' excluded to a large extent participation in the labour market. Only 15 percent established a work pattern that also included continuous labour force participation between the birth of the first and the second child. For the following group, marriage lost importance as the major interrupting factor in women's employment, while motherhood gained significance as a determinant of withdrawal from labour market. The variation in employment patterns in the first stages of family formation increased, indicating that the traditional practices regarding married women's employment had begun to loosen. Among women in the youngest cohort, constraints in relation to employment are increasingly related to the birth of the second child. It should be noted that not all women in these cohorts had started their family formation in 1980, when the data were collected. However, if these women had been followed throughout their fertile period, the effects would probably be stronger and in the same direction for the whole cohorts as for those who already had given birth, who are more likely to belong to the most traditional group of women. Marriage as an interruption factor for labour market participation was of little importance, and more women were employed also after giving birth. The youngest women entered the labour market from the mid 1960s to the late 1970s, when married women's employment started to grow significantly.

Table 2. Employment rates among women above the age of 15(16), 1875–1990

	Total	Unmarried	Married	Previously married
1875	31.8	59.8	3.4	46.5
1890	31.6	60.1	3.7	45.3
1900	33.0	62.3	4.6	42.4
1910	33.0	61.2	4.0	46.5
1920	31.4	61.1	2.1	36.9
1930	29.9	57.3	3.1	35.0
1946	26.9	59.1	3.9	31.1
1950	26.0	61.5	5.4	30.3
1960	23.8	55.7	9.5	28.3
1970	25.4	46.0	19.6	19.4
1980	28.9	34.0	30.0	18.8
1990	55.6	62.1	61.2	31.3

1970: over 16 years old, including family workers. 1980: 1000 hours or more per year.
1990: 100 hours or more per year.

Source: Ljones (1984), Table 1, and unpublished figures from the 1990 census.

In a long term historical perspective it can be argued that the rise in female employment in Norway in the 1970s and onwards did not represent a radical break with previous trends. Measured by census data, the total employment rate of Norwegian women has been surprisingly stable over the past century, from 1875 to 1980 (Ljones 1984) (Table 2). Married women's productive work has, however, been seriously under-registered and devalued in the censuses. Until 1970, to be defined as employed one had to subjectively state that paid work was one's 'main source of livelihood'. Thus, part-time workers, family workers, and even full-time employed women who saw their husband's incomes as more important than their own, were not registered as employed.

What has been changing over the century, however, as indicated in the census material, is the employment rates of women in different marital status categories (Table 2). This is associated with the changing composition of the marital status groups. From 1960 to 1980, employment rates of unmarried and previously married women dropped significantly, while the rates of married women started to increase. Among the unmarried, the decline is associated with increasing educational duration. The increase in employment rate from 1980 to 1990 reflects increasing part-time work among unmarried female students. Part-time work was not included in the 1980 census. Among the previously married, which consists of a high proportion of older women, there is no clear age pattern in the decline. Until 1960, the employment rate of married women was below 10 percent. With the census definition applied in 1980 – 1000 hours of paid work in the last 12 months – the employment rate of married women was still rather low, 30 percent. In 1990, the census definition of employment was changed to 100 hours or more per year,

which resulted in an employment rate of 61.2 percent among all married women above 16 years old.

The rising employment rates among married women are closely connected with labour market restructuring, that is, the transition from industrial to post-industrial labour markets. During the last 20 years, jobs in the primary sector and in manufacturing declined significantly. The service sector has grown considerably. A particular factor in mobilising women to take paid work in Norway and the other Scandinavian countries is the expansion of welfare state employment. Public sector employment, particularly local government employment, started to grow markedly in Norway at the end of the 1960s, and has continued to increase ever since. From 1970 to the late 1980s the number of employees doubled. In 1990, the female proportion of public sector employment was 58 percent, while the corresponding proportion in the private sector was 36 percent (Bjørklund 1991). In the 1960s and early 1970s women accounted for only about one third of those employed in the public sector. A main feature of welfare state development has been the expansion of the educational system, and women's increasing educational opportunities is another important factor contributing to higher employment rates. The proportion of women with high education has increased rapidly. For example, in 1992, 26 percent of women and 27 percent of men in the labour force aged 20–66 had university level education, while 15 percent among women and 16 percent among men had primary school level (Labour Market Statistics 1992, table 15, Statistics Norway 1993). From 1980 to 1990 the difference in years of education among men compared to women decreased from 0.87 to 0.26 years (Dale et al. 1994).

Demographic events are central to women's life-course employment and their position in the labour market. The most comprehensive demographic change in Norway in the 1970s was the reduction in the number of children ever born to a woman. From the late 1960s there was a decline in the birth of the third or the fourth child (Noack 1989), making women available for the labour market earlier in their life courses. In the 1980s, women started to postpone childbearing and prolong the time spent on education. The total fertility rate declined about 40 percent from 1965 to 1985. Reduced fertility does not, however, indicate a rise in the number of childless couples, since nine out of ten women become mothers. In the latter part of the 1980s, the total fertility rate again increased, reaching a level of 1.93 in 1990, after which it dropped somewhat to the present level of 1.87 (1994). Thus, very few Norwegian women choose to remain childless, and most women have two children. Delayed childbearing has occurred in tandem with delayed marriage. Cohabitation without marriage has become more common. Divorce has been increasing, but seems to be levelling off recently (Noack 1996). Recent figures show that if the present trend continues, 44 percent of all marriages contracted in 1992 will be dissolved, thus moving Norway from a medium to a high divorce rate pattern (Kravdal 1994).

These changes are manifest in different degrees in successive cohorts. Women born early in the 1930s and in the following two decades followed to a large

extent the traditional family pattern. It is particularly cohorts born after 1960 who established new patterns (Blom et al. 1993: 11). The new family patterns also include a partner and children, but the traditional sequencing of events is broken (e.g. childbirth comes before marriage), the formal context of events is changed (e.g. cohabitation without marriage), and important family events take place later in life (e.g. first births). Variation in fertility behaviour among different groups of women is increasing. While the median age of first birth varied very little among women born in 1945, succeeding cohorts (1950, 1955) exhibit distinct disparities (Blom et al. 1993: 28). Increasing educational levels are associated with increasing median age of birth. While women with low education (primary level) have kept to the traditional pattern of early births, women with high education (university level) delay their births. Moreover, women with education at university level have somewhat tighter spacing of births than women with lower education (Blom et al. 1993: 35).

3. The development of part-time work

Traditionally, the highest shares of part-time work are found in the Scandinavian countries (OECD 1991). However, while part-time work generally is seen as having a marginalising effect on women's position in the labour market, a common characteristic of part-time work in Scandinavia is that it is fairly 'normalised', that is, part-time work shows few signs of being marginal employment relationships (Ellingsæter 1992).

The rapid increase in female employment in Norway has been associated with a significant increase in part-time work (Ellingsæter 1989). Yet, part-time work is not a new labour market phenomenon, but as we have seen, this was not registered in official statistics. The 1970s were characterised by relatively high and increasing levels of part-time work. In the 1980s, when part-time work relative to total employment increased in almost all OECD countries, Norway's already high levels increased further early in the decade, but declined slightly towards the end. The early 1990s show a stagnating trend. In 1993, Norway had 26.9 percent part-time workers out of total employment (Table 3). Corresponding figures for Sweden and Denmark were 23.2 and 23.7 (1990), respectively (OECD 1991: 46).

One of the highest part-time proportions among employed women – almost 50 percent – is found in Norway (Table 3). In some countries part-time work may have replaced full-time work among women. In Norway, however, the rapid increase in the proportion of part-time working women during the 1970s was also accompanied by a growth in full-time employment, and in the 1980s the proportion of full-time working women grew more rapidly than the proportion working part-time (Ellingsæter 1989). Women's educational level is found to be positively correlated to the number of working hours, i.e. working hours increase with increasing educational level (Ellingsæter 1989). Increasing full-time work in the 1980s is probably influenced by the increasing educational levels of younger

Table 3. Part-time work among women. Percent

	1975	1979	1983	1986	1990	1993
Part-time work as a proportion of total employment	23.5	25.3	29.0	28.1	26.6	26.9
Women's share in part-time employment	77.0	83.0	83.7	79.2	81.8	80.6
Part-time work as a proportion of female employment	47.6	50.9	54.8 ¹	51.3	48.2	47.4

¹ 63.3 percent is reported for Norway, which is probably a misprint. The 1983 figure here therefore refers to OECD 1987.

Source: OECD 1983, Table 18 (1975 figures); OECD 1987, Table 1.3 (1986 figure) and OECD 1991, Table 2.9 (figures for 1979, 1983 and 1990, NOS Labour Market Statistics 1993 (1993 figures)).

cohorts. The tendency to prefer full-time work is found primarily among younger married women.

The close association between growth in female employment and increase in part-time work as found in the Scandinavian countries is not a universal pattern, however. In some countries high employment rates are not followed by high proportions working part-time (e.g. Finland and France). Thus, the availability of part-time work is not necessarily a premise of female employment growth, but is likely to have been important in the Scandinavian countries as a way of accommodating the employment-motherhood dilemma.

The growth and levels of part-time work are complex phenomena which cannot be explained by one single causal force (Ellingsæter 1992). Growth in part-time work has been explained by both cultural and structural factors. An analysis of the development in part-time work in the OECD countries from 1973 to 1988 shows that the growth in part-time work in this period was largest in those countries where part-time was most prominent at the outset, namely in Sweden, Norway and Australia (OECD 1989). According to OECD, these findings suggest that 'employment arrangements which cater for and accommodate part-time work are to some extent cultural phenomena which grow on themselves' (OECD 1989: 32).

The history of part-time work differ also in the Scandinavian countries. Large-scale part-time employment in Norway was not a result of governmental intervention, as in Sweden. While Sweden experienced active reforms regarding part-time work in the 1970s (see Sundström 1987), public policies in Norway in this field have been lagging, in fact, far behind the actual development. It was not until the end of the 1970s that the authorities started formulating a policy on part-time work. The expansion of part-time work was the great, 'unintended' working time reform of the 1970s.

The growth in part-time work is associated with an expanding service sector. The need for flexibility is relatively greater in this sector, and because of

greater time-flexibility, part-time employment has special advantages over full-time employment. Norway has experienced extraordinarily rapid growth in service sector employment (OECD 1991), particularly in the 1970s when part-time work expanded. High levels of part-time work, however, seem to be linked to a large public service sector. Public employment growth is accompanied by a feminisation of the labour force, and a tendency for the public sector to become increasingly female intensive over time (Schmid 1991). In 1985, Norway had the fourth largest public sector within the OECD area, while Sweden had the largest and Denmark the second largest (Alestalo et al. 1991). The question why public sector expansion and growth in part-time work are so strongly correlated needs more investigation, however.

4. Employment, part-time work and motherhood

The 1980s was a decade of radical transformation in Norwegian mothers' employment relations (Ellingsæter 1989, Kjeldstad 1991). From 1980 to 1990 the labour force participation rates of mothers with the youngest child under three years old grew from 47 to 69 percent, and the corresponding increase in participation among mothers with the youngest child three to six years old was from 57 to 74 percent (Kjeldstad 1991). While a slight decline in women's average labour force rate was registered in the economic recession starting around 1988, participation among mothers of the under-threes is steadily increasing, while the growth among mothers of three to six year olds has stagnated.

The previous strong correlation between age of the youngest child and mothers' labour market involvement has weakened. The differential between mothers of under threes and mothers of children eleven or older is only 13 percentage points (Table 4). Yet, having pre-school children still restricts employment, and having more than one child further lowers employment activity among mothers of pre-schoolers. Thus, mothers of children younger than three years old, or with two or more children where the youngest is of pre-school age, are the groups who seem to have the greatest problems in combining motherhood and paid work.

The proportion of mothers working full-time also increased in the 1980s. The propensity to work full-time is influenced both by the number and age of children. In 1992, the highest full-time rate, 60 percent, was found among mothers with one child of pre-school age (Table 5). In general, one-child mothers more often work full-time than mothers of two children. Mothers with the youngest children have the highest full-time rates, while the lowest full-time rate is found among those with children aged seven to ten. This pattern probably reflects increasing full-time rates among younger mothers, but also difficulties in obtaining care for children outside school hours in the first years of primary school (school starts at seven years old). Working time strategies among a large number of Norwegian mothers with pre-school children allow them to be independent of non-parental child care. They work inconvenient hours, when fathers or other relatives may take care of their

Table 4. Married women in the labour force by number of children aged 0–16 and by age of the youngest child. Per cent. 1993

Number of children	Age of youngest child				
	All	0–2	3–6	7–10	11–15
All ¹	78	72	76	82	85
1	81	76	81	82	85
2	79	73	78	84	85
3	70	66	70	75	–

¹ Figures for mothers with four children or more are included in the total, they account for only 2 percent of all mothers.

Source: Labour Market Statistics 1993, Statistics Norway, Oslo (Table 49).

Table 5. Proportion of employed married women working full-time, by number of children aged 0–16 and by age of youngest child. 1992. Per cent

	Proportion working full-time		
	Total	1 child	2 children
No children	55	–	–
Age of youngest child:			
0–6 years old, total	51	60	43
0–2 years old, total	53	63	50
3–6 years old, total	42	56	38
7–15 years old, total	44	46	39
7–10 years old, total	31	45	37
11–15 years old, total	46	47	44

Source: Labour Market Statistics 1992, Statistics Norway, Oslo (Table 52).

children (Ellingsæter 1987). Although this is probably not only an adjustment to the labour market resulting from the scarcity of child care provision, low coverage rates are likely to play a central role. This adjustment may also result from the cost of care relative to a part-time income. When mothers work evenings and nights, children can be looked after by their fathers. Some may also prefer this kind of arrangement as parents may be thought to provide the best quality care.

In the 1970s as well as in the 1980s the increase in mothers' continuous labour market attachment comprised both full-time and part-time work. In the 1970s, the trend of remaining in the labour market was strongest among one-child mothers, but there was a similar but weaker trend also among those who had a second child (Ellingsæter and Iversen 1984). From the mid 1960s until the late 1980s the proportion of women who were employed one year after first birth increased from 29 to 62 percent, and nearly half of the mothers worked reduced hours in the late 1980s (Table 6).

Table 6. Women's employment activity one year after first birth,¹ Per cent 1963–1988

Period	All	Not employed ²	Employed				(N =)
			Total	10–24 hours	25–34 hours	35 hours or more	
1963–73	100	71	29	6	2	20	698
1974–80	100	58	42	12	5	25	713
1981–84	100	55	45	11	6	29	407
1985–88	100	38	62	17	11	35	456

¹ Period is the calendar year following the year of birth.

² Including those who worked less than 10 hours per week.

Source: Rønsen (1992: 9).

5. Child-birth, return to work and working time

Even if marriage is no longer a constraint on women's labour force participation, most women still experience a conflict between family and employment when their first child is born. The focus of much recent research in female labour supply has, therefore, shifted from a general perspective to employment activity surrounding child-birth (McLaughlin 1982, Mott and Shapiro 1983, Bernhardt 1986 and 1988, Greenstein 1989, Desai and Waite 1991, Shapiro and Mott 1994). Questions which are being asked are how fast mothers resume employment after birth, and what determines their behaviour at this time. These are important questions for at least two reasons. First, shorter leave periods imply lower foregone earnings in connection with child-birth and thus a lower 'cost' of a child. Second, several US and recently also some European studies indicate that career breaks may have negative effects on women's wages (see e.g. Mincer and Ofek 1982, Kim and Polachek 1994, Stafford and Sundström 1994). Women's closer contact with the labour market after childbirth may therefore have important consequences for their returns from human capital investments.

The bulk of this research has mainly focused on the length of non-employment after first birth, but as we have seen, the conflict between employment and child-rearing may be even greater after the birth of the second child. Another area where little research has been done so far is the distinction between full-time and part-time work. The possibility of a part-time job after birth may be one of the main reasons for women's closer contact with the labour market during their child-rearing years. In this way, part-time work may have shortened the career breaks of mothers and helped to better their position on the labour market.

In the following, we present results of analyses of the determinants of Norwegian mothers' return to work after the first as well as the second birth. We distinguish between (re)entries into full-time and part-time work, as we are especially interested in the importance of part-time work for women's continuous employment. The analyses are based on data from the Norwegian Family and Occupation Survey of

1988. The survey contains complete retrospective life histories on childbearing, cohabitation and marriage, educational activity and employment. The survey is a national probability sample survey of 4019 women born in 1945, 1950, 1955, 1960, 1965 and 1968. Information on registered annual income from 1967–88 has also been obtained from the Directorate for Taxation and linked to the survey data. Employment spells of less than three months and weekly work activity of less than ten hours were not recorded. Weekly working hours above this limit were recorded in four intervals: 10–24, 25–34, 35–45 and more than 45 hours per week. Very few women worked more than 45 hours per week after birth, and in the analysis the two upper categories have been collapsed and defined as full-time work. The two part-time intervals have also been collapsed as there were relatively few (re)entries into long part-time work. Part-time is thus defined as working 10–34 hours per week.

Figures 1 and 2 contain plots of the *observed* monthly (re)entry rates into full-time and part-time after first and second birth, starting at the expiry of the paid maternity leave (3–4 months after birth). The rates fall sharply the first few months until about the 9th month when another peak is observed. This is a reflection of the Norwegian maternity leave regulations, which have offered an extended period of unpaid leave until the child is one year old since 1977 (1973 in government service). Thereafter, the rates continue to fall only slightly more until they stabilise, fluctuating around a more or less constant low level for the remaining observation period. The rates are drawn as yearly averages from month 36 onwards due to fewer monthly events and greater random fluctuation. The entry rates after first birth are characterised by a very high flow into full-time work during the first month (i.e. upon the expiry of the paid maternity leave). The rate is 123 per 1000 women, which is more than double the part-time rate during the first month. Thereafter, the full-time and part-time rates are quite similar. Looking at the return behaviour after second birth, the entry rate into full-time tends to be lower than the part-time rate, except for the very first month where the two rates are quite similar (75.1 and 69.6 respectively). When calculating the proportion of mothers who had returned to work by the expiry of the *unpaid* maternity leave (one year after birth), we find that 25 per cent had taken up full-time work while 17 per cent had taken up part-time work after first birth. After the second birth, the equivalent full-time proportion was only 14 per cent, while the part-time proportion was 20 per cent.

In the analysis we focus on four areas which we believe are important for the return to work: i) human capital factors, ii) work commitment, iii) institutional factors and iv) attitudes and values. The estimated effects of these determinants are based on a multivariate Cox proportional hazard model which is described in more detail in Rønsen (1995a and 1995b). The coefficients are reported as relative risks (Table 7). The interpretation is then as follows: For continuous variables, the hazard (risk of full-time or part-time) is multiplied by the coefficient for each unit increase in the explanatory variable. For dummy variables, the coefficient gives the risk of a specific group relative to the risk of a chosen reference group.

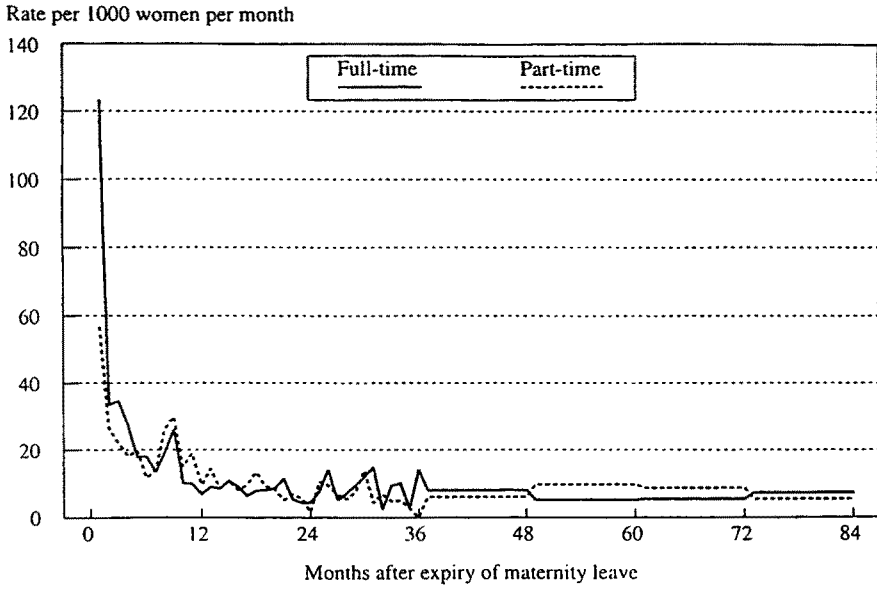


Figure 1. Observed full-time and part-time entry rates after first birth.

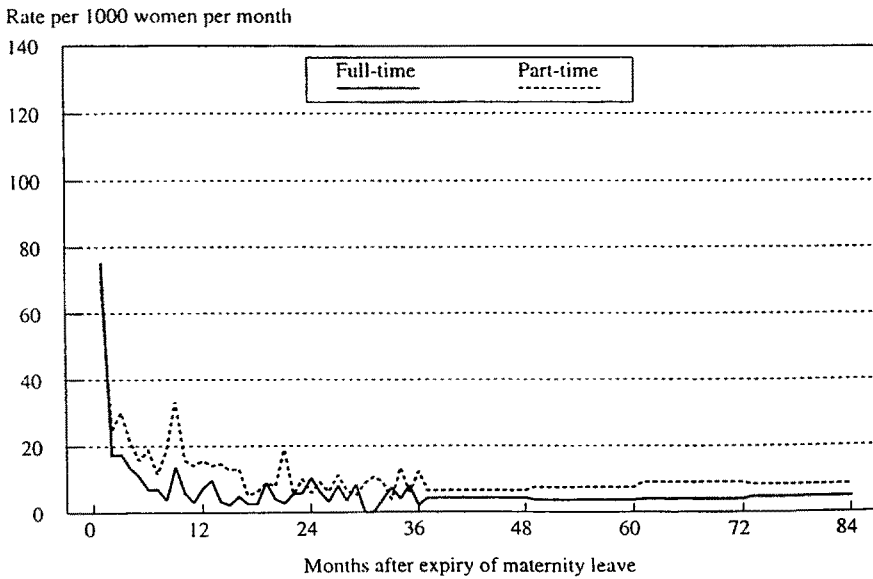


Figure 2. Observed full-time and part-time entry rates after second birth.

Table 7. Relative risk of entry into full-time and part-time employment after first and second birth, 1973–1988

	1st birth		2nd birth	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
<i>Human capital determinants:</i>				
Age	1.011	1.008	0.935 ^(*)	0.958 ^(*)
Education				
≤ 9 yrs	1	1	1	1
10–12 yrs	1.116	1.391*	1.153	1.016
≥ 12 yrs	2.098***	2.189***	2.524***	1.481*
Employment experience (full-time eq. yrs)	1.005	0.991	1.036	1.015
<i>Work commitment:</i>				
Prior home-time (years)	0.558**	0.561***	0.822**	0.819***
Between-birth employment:				
none			1	1
part-time or part-time/full-time			0.568*	2.288***
full-time only			2.638***	0.780
<i>Institutional factors:</i>				
Previous sector:				
Public	1.179 ^(*)	1.213*	0.931	1.185 ^(*)
Other	1	1	1	1
Maternity leave:				
Yes	1.871***	1.496**	1.873***	1.446**
No	1	1	1	1
<i>Values and attitudes:</i>				
Church attendance:				
<3 times/year	1	1	1	1
≥3 times/year	0.628***	0.975	0.971	1.047
Marital status:				
Cohabiting	1.607***	0.847	1.258	0.643
Married after cohab.	1.298*	0.920	1.402*	1.098
Directly-married	1	1	1	1
Single	1.386*	0.799	2.344**	1.009
<i>Calendar period:</i>				
1973–76	1.455**	0.811	1.119	0.949
1977–80	1.274*	1.213	1.101	1.241 ^(*)
1981–84	1	1	1	1
1985–88	1.151	1.744***	0.982	1.563***

***: significant at the 0.1% level, **: significant at the 1% level, *: significant at the 5% level, ^(*): significant at the 10% level.

5.1 HUMAN CAPITAL FACTORS

The two main human capital factors are educational level and employment experience. Educational level is the highest level attained at the time of birth of the child, and is measured by the required number of years needed to reach this level. Employment experience is constructed from the recorded employment histories, and is the full-time equivalent number of years worked by the time of birth of the child.

In agreement with human capital theory, there is a positive effect of education and partly also of employment experience on the re-entry rates into the workforce, but the latter is not significant. Closer analyses have however shown that the effect of employment experience varies with duration. There is a positive effect at short durations, which declines with time (see Rønsen 1995a for further details). Women with higher education are rewarded by higher wages and probably more interesting jobs. Thus they will lose more during a career break and resume work faster after birth. Human capital research has also pointed to the negative effects on wages from depreciation and non-accumulation of skills during a career break. Mincer and Polachek (1974 and 1978) found for example that women with more schooling and longer work experience had larger depreciation rates than other women. Hence, they have an added incentive to return faster to work. It is worth noting that mothers with the highest education are about twice as likely as mothers with the lowest education to return to both full-time and part-time work after first birth. After the second birth, higher education raises the risk of full-time even more, but the effect on part-time is smaller.

5.2 WORK COMMITMENT

Obviously, one cannot observe a woman's work commitment directly, but we believe that the past employment history is likely to reveal something of the present commitment. Similarly, women who have invested time in high education may have more long-term employment plans than other women. Thus the human capital factors above may also reflect differences in work commitment. Another variable that has been found to be a very strong predictor of after-birth employment in previous research is women's employment behaviour during pregnancy (see e.g. Even 1987, Joesch 1994). The longer the spell of non-employment before birth, the less likely is the return to work after birth. To capture this aspect of work commitment, we have constructed a variable labelled 'prior home-time', which measures the number of months without any employment or educational activity just before birth.

Previous research has also pointed to a great deal of stability or persistence in female labour supply behaviour (Heckman 1981, Ellingsæter and Iversen 1984, Shapiro and Mott 1994, Nakamura and Nakamura 1985, 1994). An interesting question is whether the observed persistency also encompasses a woman's working hours. Is it possible to predict not only employment or non-employment after birth,

but also part-time or full-time work from a woman's pre-birth employment history? To answer this question we have included a variable that indicates whether a woman worked full-time or part-time before birth. As few women work part-time before they have children, this is limited to employment entries after the second birth. The variable is labelled 'between-birth employment' and is divided into 1) none, 2) part-time only or both part-time and full-time and 3) full-time work only.

We find that prior home-time has a clear negative effect on the return to both full-time and part-time work after birth (Table 7). By staying home longer before birth, women seem to be signalling a looser attachment to the labour market. This supports the earlier findings of stability in female labour supply over the life-course. Most women seem to be either persistent workers or persistent non-workers. In the US, the degree of persistency seems largely unchanged over the last twenty years (Shaw 1994). The number of women who are persistent workers has, however, increased while the number of persistent non-workers has decreased.

Prior home-time has just as large a negative effect on entries into part-time as into full-time, suggesting that mothers who work part-time after birth have no less continuous work pattern than full-time working mothers. This is further supported by the estimates of between-birth employment, which point to a great deal of stability also in women's choice of working hours. Compared to women who did not work at all between births, women who worked part-time are more than twice as likely to resume part-time work after the birth of the second child, and women who worked full-time are more than two and half times as likely to resume full-time work. In fact, previous full-timers are 4.6 times ($2.638/0.568$) more likely than previous part-timers to take up full-time work, while previous part-timers are 2.9 times ($2.288/0.780$) more likely than previous full-timers to take up part-time work. From earlier analyses we also know that previous part-timers are just as likely to resume employment regardless of working hours as previous full-timers (see Rønsen 1995a for further details). Thus, there is no evidence that women who work part-time after they become mothers have a looser attachment to the labour market than mothers who stick to full-time work. On the contrary, the possibility of a part-time job may have been an important ingredient in the increasing number of persistent workers among women.

5.3 INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

The institutional setting created by family policies mainly intended to foster gender equality and secure the economic well-being of children and their families have, no doubt, played an important role in the expansion of female employment. Here, we shall look at the importance of the public sector and the right to a paid maternity leave. Other institutional factors such as the provision of subsidised child care and other economic support to families with children have been studied elsewhere (see Rønsen 1995b). These policies seem to be of less importance for the return to work after birth.

A mother is defined as having the right to a paid maternity leave if she fulfils the eligibility criteria for such leave. This can be established from the pre-birth employment records. Before mid-year 1977 a woman had to be employed 8 of the last 10 months before birth to be eligible for benefits, which were granted for a period of 12 weeks. In 1977, the required pre-birth employment was reduced to 6 of the last 10 months, and the benefit period was extended to 18 weeks. In 1987 a series of extensions of the benefit period started. Today, maternity benefits are granted for a period of 42 weeks with full pay or 52 weeks with 80 per cent compensation. The right to leave in connection with childbirth was enforced by law in 1977. The right was granted to both parents, who together are entitled to a total of one year's continuous leave. The first 6 weeks after birth are reserved for the mother, but the remaining leave may be shared by the parents. Government employees enjoy extra benefits in connection with child-birth and child-care, such as full income compensation in high income brackets, two hours off per day for breast-feeding without loss of salary and extra unpaid leave (maximum 3 years) before the child is 12 years old.

It may be argued that mothers may feel they can afford a longer career break when they receive maternity benefits and hence will delay the return to work. However, having a secure job to return to, they do not have to spend time looking for a suitable job. Besides, women who have secured the right to a paid leave are more likely to be work-committed and have long-term employment plans. We expect the latter effects to far outweigh the former, and thus expect a positive effect of maternity leave on the return rates. Our estimates confirm that the right to paid maternity leave greatly speeds up the return to work (Table 7). Women who are on maternity leave are nearly twice as likely as others to resume a full-time job and almost 50 per cent more likely to go back to a part-time job. Also, the effect seems to be just as important after the second as after the first birth.

Previous research has suggested that the degree of an occupation's or sector's work convenience, measured e.g. as the proportion working part-time, helps to retain mothers after birth (Desai and Waite 1991). The public sector has a long tradition in offering part-time jobs and other flexible working schedules as well as improved maternity leave arrangements. Having a job in the public sector is therefore expected to speed up the return to work after birth. The estimation results confirm that the public sector has played an important role for the continuity in women's employment careers, raising the risk of employment by approximately 20 per cent, except when full-time after the second birth is concerned (Table 7). The main impact of the public sector at this stage thus seems to be on part-time work.

5.4 VALUES AND ATTITUDES

Several studies of demographic events document the usefulness of religious activity as an indicator of individual differences in values and attitudes. In recent studies from Nordic countries, religiously active women are found to be more likely

to marry and less likely to enter into unmarried cohabitation (Blom 1994), less likely to experience a divorce (Hoem and Hoem 1992) and more likely to have a third child (Kravdal 1992b). We expect religiously active women also to be more home-committed and thus less inclined to resume employment after birth. Religious activity is measured by church attendance in the year prior to interview. As religious attitudes are probably fairly stable over the life-course, this should not invalidate its usefulness as a proxy for values and attitudes. As expected, religiously active women seem to be more home-committed and are less inclined to resume full-time work, but only significantly so after first birth. Full-time entries after second birth and part-time entries are less affected (Table 7).

Previous demographic research has also established a clear negative association between cohabitation and traditional family values (Lesthaege and Moors 1995). In line with these findings we expect marital status to reflect something of a woman's attitudes towards family and work. Since we know the partnership histories, we are also able to distinguish between married women who cohabited with their partner prior to marriage and those who followed the traditional pattern of marrying directly. We particularly expect the latter group to follow a more conventional pattern also when it comes to employment outside the home. This is confirmed by the estimates in Table 7. Compared to all other marital status groups – married women who started out as cohabitants, mothers who still live in a consensual union and single mothers – women who married directly are less inclined to take up full-time work after birth. Some of the differences between the marital status groups may, of course, be a result of variations in the economic position of the family. The strong preference for full-time work among single mothers may, for example, also be a result of the Norwegian social security system which gives lone parents an income-related benefit that discourages part-time work. This is discussed more fully in e.g. Rønsen (1992 and 1995a). However, we must assume that the two groups of married women are quite similar when it comes to economic resources and economic security, so that it is reasonable to relate the differences in employment behaviour between these groups largely to differential values and preferences.

6. A common Scandinavian path to the dual strategy?

The high employment rates of Scandinavian mothers are usually seen as a result of an interventionist welfare state. For example, according to Esping-Andersen (1990) the state's provision of social services has been of vital importance for the high female employment rates found in the Scandinavian countries. The social democratic welfare state is supposed to have released women from the traditional responsibility of children and other dependants, thus reducing the conflict between employment and care.

In the case of Norway, however, socialisation of child care is not likely to be the main force in changing mothers' employment relations. In 1993 the coverage rate

for children 0–2 years old was 20 percent, while that of children 3–6 years old was 63 percent. There was already a large unmet demand for public child care in the early 1970s. During most of the 1980s the gap was widening, and the excess demand increasing, due to the rapid expansion in mothers' employment (Gulbrandsen and Tønnesen 1987). The causal relationship between mothers' employment and the public provision of adequate child care is of course difficult to establish (Rønsen 1994). Nevertheless, public child care cannot be the main explanation of the rapid growth in employment among mothers of under threes in the 1980s, as the coverage rate of public child care among children of this age did not exceed 10 percent till after 1989. Moreover, Rønsen (1995b) indicates that the availability of public child care only to a small extent explains how soon mothers go back to work after birth.

There are, however, other welfare state-related developments which are important to mothers' employment. By policies which provide opportunities to leave of absence to care for children and by creating good part-time jobs, the welfare state makes a double contribution to mothers' dual strategy. Thus the state plays an important part in shaping work life arrangements which are vital to Norwegian women's strategies.

Esping-Andersen (1990) has suggested that the Scandinavian welfare states permit employees to pursue non-work activities within the work contract. Our analysis indicates that the possibility to pursue motherhood within the work contract plays a decisive part in explaining Norwegian mothers' continuous labour market participation. As mentioned earlier, Norway has obtained quite extensive parental leave over the last few years, at high earnings compensation. In addition to the parental leave in connection with birth, each employed parent is entitled to ten days leave per year to care for sick children under the age of ten. Fathers are increasingly integrated into the care of the new-born child. There is a two weeks post-natal paternity leave, generally without compensation. Fathers working in the public sector, however, have full earnings compensation. To encourage more fathers to utilise some leave, the latest amendment has reserved four weeks of the after-birth leave period for fathers (the 'father's quota'). If not utilised by the father, the parents lose these four weeks. Politically, the extended parental rights have been advocated as a concern for the needs of children, and not so much as a gender equality concern, which underlines the fact that the Norwegian welfare state is not only 'woman-friendly', but also 'children-friendly'.

Also important to the development of the dual strategy among mothers is the access to part-time work. Crucial to the assessment of the role of part-time work, however, is its character as an employment relationship. Part-time work as labour market attachment is very often understood as marginal, both in terms of worker's attachment to the labour market and job characteristics. In its extreme version, part-time workers are seen as uncommitted women in precarious jobs. This understanding is inadequate, however, first of all because part-time work is characterised by tremendous variation with different meanings for women. Political and institutional factors are underemphasised in the analysis of part-time work

(Ellingsæter 1992). The state and unions have a central role in structuring part-time work. Part-time work is central in understanding how different welfare states' arrangements between state, market and family influence women's employment. Beechey and Perkins (1987) argue that in order to understand why so many women work part-time, it is necessary not only to analyse the division of labour within the family, but also the ways in which this division has been shaped through the operation of state policies and markets.

As noted earlier, part-time work in Norway and the other Scandinavian countries shows few signs of being a marginal employment relationship. In the 1980s part-time work in Norway underwent a process of normalisation, in which both working conditions and the behaviour of the employees seem to have changed (Ellingsæter 1989). The demarginalised character of part-time work in Norway is strongly influenced by welfare state arrangements, mediated through the large public sector for part-time work and for non-discriminating social security regulation (Ellingsæter 1992). The state is not only an 'employment machine' (Esping-Andersen 1990), but also a creator of good part-time jobs. Welfare state jobs are generally good jobs, belonging to the 'core' jobs in the labour market, with relatively high levels of qualification requirements. Union strategies towards regulation of part-time work also seem to have contributed in the same direction. As a consequence, in the Scandinavian welfare states there are fewer disincentives related to part-time work than in most other countries. However, some would argue, like Rosenfeld and Kalleberg (1991), that policies making it easier to combine family and employment, for example offering part-time jobs, may reduce women's human capital and job choice.

High part-time rates indicate that the total time spent in the labour market in a life time perspective of a Norwegian woman may not be all that different compared with women in other countries (see Jonung and Persson's (1993) discussion about Swedish women). But this is a mechanical way of looking at women's work, which may lead to erroneous conclusions. The Scandinavian pattern, with high employment rates but relatively low market hours, have critical implications both for qualitative aspects of women's labour market attachment, and for their economic relations to men. What is vital in the Scandinavian pattern is that leaves of absence and part-time work enable women to maintain their labour force connection through the period of child-births and child-rearing, which is likely to secure a stable and long term commitment to the labour market (Ellingsæter 1995), clearly in contrast to a full-time, but more discontinuous pattern. Moreover the economic position of women on maternity leave or in part-time work is very different from women with no links to the labour market. Many women are compensated almost entirely when on maternity leave, and when working part-time, they often work relatively long hours. They thus provide both money of their own and an income which is important to the family's standards of living. Consequently, the period of life a woman is totally dependent on a husband's income becomes marginal.

To what extent are the explanations we have discussed for the Norwegian case also relevant for Sweden and Denmark? Obviously there are many similarities between the Scandinavian countries, but there are also significant historical, contextual and political differences between these societies in the shaping of gender relations (Ellingsæter 1996). Historically, working mothers have been a controversial question in Norwegian politics (Leira 1993). Reforms have been brought forward by a series of political compromises, rather than by the strong consensus across political parties found in Sweden and Denmark. Moreover, while the role of public child care in increasing mothers' continuous employment have been of little importance in Norway, the much higher coverage rates for the under threes particularly in Denmark, but also in Sweden, may have been of greater importance. On the other hand, rights to leave of absence to care for children are less developed in Denmark than in present-day Norway and in Sweden, where the most generous rights are found. Further, the proportion of Danish mothers working part-time is lower than in Norway (Ellingsæter 1992). Altogether, these contrasts suggest that there have been distinct national paths to the dual strategy of mothers within the framework of the Scandinavian welfare states.

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