

**9th Biennial International Interdisciplinary conference, 29th June-1st July, 2016  
Keele University, UK**

**GWO2016 Call for Abstracts**

**Parenthood penalties:  
childcare provision - gendered costs, opportunities and effects**

**Stream convenors:**

**Jennifer Tomlinson, Leeds University Business School, University of Leeds, ENGLAND**

**Stefan Kesting, Leeds University Business School, University of Leeds, ENGLAND**

**Jana Javornik, Central European Labour Studies Institute, SLOVAKIA**

**Jo Ingold, Business School, Leeds University Business School, University of Leeds, ENGLAND**

**Peter Hughes, Leeds University Business School, University of Leeds, ENGLAND**

The relevance of early childhood education and care (ECEC) has been widely acknowledged by governments across welfare states: it is central to policies on child welfare and education, social and employment policy and gender equity. Research shows its beneficial effects for children, parents and society (Folbre 2001; Fagan and Hebson 2005). In response to recent demographic, economic and social challenges, ECEC has received more attention: most EU countries have reformed their ECEC system and access to ECEC services has been extended (Eurofound 2015). International organisations such as the OECD, UN and Eurofound have published a series of comparative reports emphasising its significance and relevance to social sustainability and economic development. The development of quality ECEC has become an integral part of the Europe 2020 Strategy and in 2011, the European Commission issued a communication urging national governments to take action by analysing and evaluating their national ECEC provision, improving access and quality, and investing in ECEC as a long-term growth-enhancing measure (Eurofound 2015). Although critical, ECEC is just one part of the childcare picture, with quality and capacity issues also evident in relation to care provision for school-age children, both disabled and non-disabled.

Liberal welfare states, including the UK, Canada, Australia, US and New Zealand lag behind other countries, particularly social democratic welfare states, in providing cost-effective, quality childcare service. The UK, for example, appears a generous spender on childcare and early education: in 2011, government expenditure represented 1.1% of GDP, of which only 0.4% went into childcare, and the remainder towards the pre-primary education (OECD 2015). While this was above the OECD average of 0.8% or the US (0.4%), it was well behind Denmark (2%), Iceland and Sweden (both 1.6%), France and Norway (both 1.2%), countries that lead the ECEC league and have traditionally spent more on services to families than on cash benefits (Javornik 2014). The liberal welfare states are also considerably less successful than these countries in addressing child poverty and in some cases encouraging mothers' employment participation, with the notable exception of the USA. ECEC also vary considerably across the welfare states in terms of institutional arrangements, funding, coverage, use and provision. Public childcare service can be market-driven (e.g. in the USA, Ireland, Switzerland), or directed and regulated by the state (as in Sweden, Denmark, Slovenia). When regulated by the state, part of the financial burden of childcare shifts from parents to the tax-payers in general, which reduces and redistributes parents' financial burdens. Regulated service provision also enhances parents' confidence in public childcare (Gornick and Meyers 2003), and reduces the transaction costs (Coase, 1960) related to parents and carers 'browsing the care market', shopping around in order to locate day care service of high quality (Pettit and Hook 2005).

Given quality, affordable, flexible childcare provision is central to many parents, and particularly mothers' ability to work and sustain careers, we ask: what are the social and economic costs of

inadequate, inflexible or expensive childcare? While the costs and opportunities can be calculated in many ways, we outline three here:

### 1. The impact of parenthood on employment participation

While for men the reverse is typically true, women's employment participation is negatively affected by the presence of young children in the household, though this varies across countries. The EC Employment Compendium 2010 reports that the employment gap for women of early parenthood (calculated as the difference in the employment rates between women with a child aged 0-6 and those without children) is 21.1 percent in the UK – a rate which is much larger than in many other countries including Germany (16%), France (13.2%), Finland (10.1%) and the Netherlands (4.9%) (European Commission 2010: 62). What are the consequences of these penalties for women's employment participation, and the gendered organization of work and careers across the life course?

### 2. Underemployment

Inactivity and part-time work due to lack of child care and care services for other dependents is particularly high in the UK and Germany: there, 32.2% and 38.1%, respectively, of carers (both men and women) aged 15-64 with care responsibilities would like to work, or would like to work beyond part-time hours but state they cannot due to lack of suitable childcare and/or other care services. This compares with: 15.3 percent in France, 8.3 percent in Sweden, 7.2 percent in Denmark and 6.6 percent in Finland (European Commission 2010). This is particularly salient given the intensification of back to work (activation) policies across OECD countries, which increasingly require all groups outside the labour market to be in paid work on a full-time basis. What are the social and economic costs and consequences of underemployment and how might these be alleviated by alternative approaches to the organization of childcare provision?

### 3. Household and child poverty

Most lone parent households are headed by women but in low income families women's as well as men's earning power is critical in terms of the likelihood of families and children experiencing poverty (Women's Budget Group 2014). Because childbearing and -rearing years correspond with core economic activity years when wages should increase and human capital development continues, investments in childcare, and the role of the state and/or private provision, have profound consequences for economic independence, lifetime earnings, likelihood of themselves and their children experiencing poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion over the life course. How can different approaches to ECEC reduce the risk of inequalities and exclusion?

The cultural sense of entitlement and the varieties of institutional arrangements based on different assumptions about the responsibility for care of children can be identified as key factors shaping both the provision and use of childcare, and women's working patterns across OECD countries. In terms of sense of entitlement, Lewis and Smithson (2001) argue that parents make 'judgements about what is fair or equitable' on the basis of normative comparisons with 'others who are assumed to be similar to oneself' and therefore may look just within their national context to determine what is fair and appropriate based on normative and political narratives about responsibility for children and the cost of care. But what if parents in neo-liberal countries were aware of alternative models and different institutional arrangement; would their sense of entitlement to childcare alter, and what, if any, would be their preferred alternative institutional arrangement? It seems timely to ask questions of what societies want from childcare, how it should be funded and who might best provide these services. Which countries might we look to for best practice? While processes of change and reform of welfare states have received great attention, little reflection has been made on issues concerning the complexity of ECEC policies, their internal heterogeneity, uptake and parents' needs to reconcile work and family life.

This stream will explore these issues within and across welfare states. We invite papers critically engaging with comparative policy analysis, interpretative policy analysis, public attitudes and related cultural underpinnings of childcare, the impact and outcomes of childcare arrangements (e.g. cost, provision, availability and flexibility) on child development, well-being, female employment, gender equity and work-family-care trajectories, working-time patterns and the sustainability of work alongside best policy practice and institutional economic analyses. We encourage interdisciplinary and cross national comparative analysis and papers challenging the boundaries of contemporary welfare state studies. Indicative questions and issues may include the following:

- Why are there such marked differences in the provision, take up and use of childcare in Europe and internationally? And, relatedly, what are the cultural and institutional perceptions of "good childcare" and how do they impact on gendered patterns of work?

- What are the transaction costs of accessing childcare via the market or through public provision?
- Internationally, what are alternative arrangements to reliance on private sector childcare?
- What kind of childcare provision do parents want and need?
- What can local and national institutions do to support affordable and high quality childcare?
- How have female employment and policy interventions been shaped and legitimized, and how are policy discursive mechanisms framed? For example, how is gender equity understood in policy interventions?
- Measurement indicators are inadequate for describing policies and their effects and data availability, quality and measurement vary across countries, reflecting different national systems. Therefore, we ask how can the limitation of standard indicators be overcome? How can data sets be improved for internationally comparative analysis of childcare?

Abstracts of approximately 500 words (ONE page, Word document NOT PDF, single spaced, excluding references, no header, footers or track changes) are invited by 1st November 2015 with decisions on acceptance to be made by stream leaders within one month. All abstracts will be peer reviewed. Scholars with 'work in progress' papers are welcomed. Papers can be theoretical or theoretically informed empirical work. In the case of co-authored papers, ONE person should be identified as the corresponding author. Due to restrictions of space on the conference schedule, multiple submissions by the same author will not be timetabled. Abstracts should be emailed to: [j.tomlinson@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:j.tomlinson@leeds.ac.uk)

Abstracts should include FULL contact details, including your name, department, institutional affiliation, mailing address, and e-mail address. *State the title of the stream to which you are submitting your abstract. Note that no funding, fee waiver, travel or other bursaries are offered for attendance at GWO2016.*

### References

- Coase, R. (1960). 'The Problem of Social Cost', *The Journal of Law and Economics*, 3: 1-44.
- Eurofound (2015). Working conditions, training of early childhood care workers and quality of services – A systematic review, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- European Commission (2010). Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines including indicators for additional employment analysis. 2010 compendium.
- Fagan, C. and Hebson, G. (2005). 'Making work pay' debates from a gender perspective. A comparative review of some recent policy reforms in thirty European countries. Brussels, European Commission.
- Folbre, N. (2001). *The Invisible Heart – Economics and Family Values*. The New Press: New York.
- Gornick, C. J. and Meyers, K. M. (2003). *Families that work. Policies for Reconciling Parenthood and Employment*. New York, Russell Sage Foundation.
- Javornik, J. (2014). 'Measuring state de-familialism: Contesting post-socialist exceptionalism,' *Journal of European Social Policy*, 24(3): 240-257.
- Lewis, S. and Smithson, J. (2001). 'Sense of entitlement to support for the reconciliation of employment and family life'. *Human Relations*, 54, 11, 1455-81
- OECD (2015). OECD Family Database, OECD, Paris [www.oecd.org/social/family/database.htm](http://www.oecd.org/social/family/database.htm)
- OECD (2008). OECD Observer. July 2008 Policy Brief, *Babies and Bosses: Balancing Work and Family Life*.
- Pettit, B. and Hook, J. (2005). 'The Structure of Women's Employment in Comparative Perspective.' *Social Forces* 84(2): 779-801.
- WBG Women's Budget Group (2015). 'The impact on women of July budget 2015: A budget that undermines women's security'. <http://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/July-budget-briefing-2015-WBG.pdf>