

Families, Relationships and Societies

Parenting and social solidarity in cross-cultural perspective

--Manuscript Draft--

Manuscript Number:	FRS-D-18-00093R2
Full Title:	Parenting and social solidarity in cross-cultural perspective
Article Type:	Special Issue
Keywords:	Parenting, Childhood, Social Solidarity, Trust, UK, Norway.
Corresponding Author:	Charlotte Faircloth, PhD UCL London, Greater London UNITED KINGDOM
First Author:	Charlotte Faircloth, PhD
Order of Authors:	Charlotte Faircloth, PhD
Abstract:	Many scholars, particularly in Anglophone countries, have observed that mothers and fathers are now expected to do much more explicit 'parenting' than in the past. This paper draws on the case studies of Norway and the UK as examples of welfare states with different historical orientations to social coherence, equality and diversity as a means of examining the spread (or otherwise) of these ideologies. In particular, it considers theoretical concerns of risk, responsibility and trust, especially as they relate to our ideas of childhood and adulthood. In short, the paper suggests that an intensification of parenting has the potential to have a corrosive effect on notions of social solidarity, and makes the case instead for a societal conception of raising children.
Order of Authors Secondary Information:	
Funding Information:	

Parenting and social solidarity in cross-cultural perspective

Charlotte Faircloth¹

¹University College London

Abstract:

Many scholars, particularly in Anglophone countries, have observed that mothers and fathers are now expected to do much more explicit 'parenting' than in the past. This paper draws on the case studies of Norway and the UK as examples of welfare states with different historical orientations to social coherence, equality and diversity as a means of examining the spread (or otherwise) of these ideologies. In particular, it considers theoretical concerns of risk, responsibility and trust, especially as they relate to our ideas of childhood and adulthood. In short, the paper suggests that an intensification of parenting has the potential to have a corrosive effect on notions of social solidarity, and makes the case instead for a societal conception of raising children.

Key words:

Parenting, Childhood, Social Solidarity, Trust, UK, Norway.

Word count: 8498

Introduction

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

What is the relationship between the way we raise the next generation and wider social relations? This paper uses classical social theory to ‘think through’ the subjects of parenting and social solidarity, with the aid of a comparative perspective.

Many scholars, particularly in Anglophone countries, have observed that mothers and fathers are now expected to do much more explicit ‘parenting’ than in the past. For the purposes of an investigation into the reception, or otherwise, of this more ‘intensive’ parenting culture, typical in (neo)liberal welfare states, Norway has been selected as a ‘social democratic’ state with an alternative historical orientation to questions of social coherence and equality.

Drawing on classical sociological themes, the paper investigates how the ‘intensification’ of parenting relates to notions social solidarity or ‘gemeinschaft’ relations. It considers the effect of a more individualistic narrative around parenting (arguably, part of a move towards ‘gesellschaft’ society) on notions of trust and social cohesion in the two settings. This provides a means of thinking through broader theoretical concerns around risk, responsibility and trust, especially as they relate to our ideas of childhood and adulthood. In short, the paper suggests that an intensification of parenting has the potential to have a corrosive effect on notions of social solidarity. Whilst this has been tempered by Norwegian social democracy, this is changing with the global spread of neoliberal ideologies.

In policy, practice, and academic scholarship the intensification of parenting has been examined through the lens of neoliberalism and in relation to individual family problems. Whilst these are important, they are insufficient, and can fall into the trap of taking neoliberalism on its own terms of competition and familisation. By drawing on Tonnies’ concepts of ‘gemeinschaft’ and ‘gesellschaft’ (1887) to analyze the rise and impact of intensive parenting, the paper argues for a societal conception of parenting where the ways that we – including children and adults (parents and non-parents) – care for each other is central to the potentials and challenges of building social trust. To make this argument, the paper uses four ‘theoretical examples’ of social relations where antagonism might be expected to be particularly pronounced, such as between the sexes, between parents and non-parents, between fertile and infertile couples, and between the generations. Drawing on work in childhood studies it asks throughout how children themselves might be active in shaping ideas about good parenting and social solidarity, both within and beyond family units.

‘Intensive’ parenting

Parenting has long been considered of great importance when it comes to the transmission of social norms and values, the continuation of kinship, family and household, and for reproducing local and national communities (Barlow and Chapin, 2010). Recent sociological work, however, has situated ‘parenting’ as critical for understanding contemporary changes in modern society – particularly in the US and the UK but also further afield (Author 2013). Drawing

1 attention to broader socio-cultural processes that have cast modern child rearing
2 as a highly important yet problematic sphere of social life, this work starts from
3 the premise that raising children has become a more complex task, culturally,
4 than it used to be in the past. Far from simply ensuring the transition to
5 adulthood, today's parents are expected to do much more to protect and
6 optimise the development of their children (Lee et al., 2014). There are
7 continuities with the past here, in that parenting has always been subject to
8 moralizing and 'guidance', but the magnitude of the increase in expectations
9 around raising children, particularly since the mid-1970s, (the fact that we even
10 use the term 'parenting' as a verb at all) is striking: parenting classes, parenting
11 manuals, parenting experts, and parenting 'interventions' are now so common-
12 place as to be unremarkable (Lee et al., 2014).
13
14

15
16 Chiming with work done by modernization theorists (Beck, 1992; Giddens,
17 1999a) the assumption is that children are particularly vulnerable to risk in the
18 early years, such that a developmental 'blueprint' can be set during this period
19 (see also Macvarish 2016). In a neoliberal era, with its emphasis on self-
20 management, 'good' parents are reflexive, informed consumers, able to account
21 for their parenting strategies (Murphy, 2003, Author 2013). Recognizing the
22 gendered dimension to these changes, much work in the US and the UK has
23 drawn on the concept of 'intensive mothering' (Hays, 1996) in understanding the
24 experiences of contemporary women, who are increasingly torn between the
25 spheres of work and home (Hays, 1996; Lee et al., 2014). Fathers have not been
26 immune from this trend but it remains mothers to whom these cultural
27 messages are largely targeted, and around women's reproductive choices that
28 the fiercest debates reign (Douglas and Michels 2004, Author, 2013).
29
30
31

32
33 Of course, the perception of what is a 'good parent' is largely culturally,
34 historically and ideologically rooted, and thus in continuous change. So an
35 'neoliberal' cultural script does not affect all parents in the same way – class,
36 ethnicity and gender all affect its internalization, and there may be a curious
37 combination of adoption, resistance or adaptation within and between specific
38 times and places. Certainly, the traction of this more individualised and
39 competitive approach to parenting is intimately linked to wider cultural norms
40 as well as state infrastructures, which differ dramatically in terms of welfare and
41 resources for education and care (e.g. lack of school places, which puts extra
42 pressure on parents to 'go the extra mile' (Nelson 2013)). At the same time, in a
43 globalized world, there are commonalities and shared experiences as these
44 discourses circulate through both formal and informal channels.
45
46
47

48
49 In our introduction to this special issue, the editors elaborate on the passivity of
50 children in the model of 'parenting' whereby 'the child' becomes merely an
51 'outcome' of parental input, and a trope rather than an active contributor to the
52 parent-child relationship. Alanen and Mayall's (2005) suggestion that 'childing'
53 be the logical partner to 'parenting' is a welcome intervention here, and whilst
54 this paper does focus on the parental experience of the relationship, this is not to
55 endorse the idea that socialization is a unilateral process. Instead, it asks how we
56 might use concepts like 'gemeinschaft' to re-think popular, policy and academic
57 understandings of 'parenting' as a more social endeavor, that necessarily
58 involves children (as conduits, mediators and agents) in building and breaking
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

1 solidarities, as much as being cared for and socializing others, whether other
2 children or other adults.

3 **Theoretical context: Social solidarity and ‘gesellschaft’**

4
5
6 Theoretically this paper investigates the relationship between the contemporary
7 construction of the ‘task’ of raising children (‘parenting culture’), the state
8 infrastructure which supports it or not, and perceptions of community solidarity,
9 both in the UK and in Norway. Combining classical theoretical concerns around
10 the effects of modernity on social cohesion (such as from Marx, Durkheim,
11 Weber and Tonnies) with work on changing parenting culture, which draws on
12 notions of individualisation and risk consciousness (from those like Giddens,
13 Beck and Bauman), is part of an attempt to re-invigorate debates about the
14 relationship between ‘gemeinschaft’ and ‘gesellschaft’, particularly in
15 increasingly diverse societies (Tonnies 1887, Bendixsen and Danielsen 2018). As
16 used by Weber, these are *ideal types* referring to social relationships based on
17 informal, personal and ‘community’ ties in the former, and indirect, formal or
18 ‘society’ ties in the latter.¹

19
20
21
22
23 The Norwegian anthropologist Eriksen has argued that the recent turn towards
24 ‘intensive’ or ‘paranoid’ parenting (Furedi 2008) represents a shift in our very
25 notions of personhood, responsibility and trust (2015). He suggests that there
26 has been a corresponding loss in community or ‘gemeinschaft’ trust, as part of
27 the turn towards ‘reflexive modernisation’ or ‘gesellschaft’ society that Giddens
28 et al. describe (Tonnies 1887, Giddens 1999). He gives the example that in the
29 past, mothers in the UK would leave prams outside the shop whilst they carried
30 out errands, or informally arrange for friends to do the school run; today, this
31 would be unthinkable (and probably a prosecutable offence).

32
33
34
35 In line with work on risk consciousness, whether this is an actual or an imagined
36 loss of social cohesion the effects are the same: People do not leave their children
37 outside shops because they perceive solidarity, or ‘trust’ to have eroded (see also
38 Bristow 2014, discussed further below). A focus on these *conceptions* therefore
39 has important implications for both theory and policy. Arguably, the notion that
40 the adult generation has a responsibility for nurturing the next generation was
41 historically something that was taken for granted (Furedi 2008). Even if as an
42 adult one was childless, for example, this did not mean that one was indifferent
43 to the next generation (see Rosen and Suissa, this issue).

44
45
46
47 Today (in the US and the UK) Furedi argues that something has changed, in part
48 as a result of contemporary political shifts towards neoliberalism. Now that
49 parenting has become more individualized, he argues that there has been an
50 estrangement from responsibility. The presumption of generational
51 responsibility that has historically underpinned child-rearing has become

52
53
54
55 ¹ This is not to argue for a return to a romanticised forms of ‘gemeinschaft’
56 society (where forms of stratification and exclusion were arguably more
57 pronounced) but rather to see how these heuristic concepts might help us think
58 through shifting conceptions of trust and its implications for social reproduction.

1 disorganized, with parents positioned as both the omnipotent protectors yet
2 ultimate cause of children's problems, and therefore in need of expert help. This
3 means, he argues, that there has been a breakdown in the very notion of adult
4 (and indeed childhood) identity. Adults are no longer confident in their ability to
5 act as authority figures *per se* to the next generation. And, as noted, whilst 'good
6 parenting' in this model is ostensibly child-centred, it is arguably one where
7 children *qua* children are eclipsed as participants in 'building tomorrow' and
8 understood merely as outcome of parenting skills (again, this chimes with Rosen
9 and Suissa's argument, this issue)

11 Furedi diagnoses this as a crisis of adulthood, where being a 'grown up' is no
12 longer valued (or socially signified) in the same way as the past; again, in line
13 with the shift towards 'liquid' modernity that Bauman describes (2005). Because
14 of this confusion, relationships between adults and children are ever more
15 subject to juridification – that is, to rules about both formal and informal contact.
16 This is historically and culturally specific: in Japan, for example, small children –
17 aged only 2 or 3 – routinely take the subway alone, without parental supervision
18 (Dixon 2015). Dixon notes that one reason for the unusual degree of
19 independence of Japanese children is not (only) self-sufficiency, but rather,
20 'group reliance'. He observes that children learn early that 'any member of
21 society can be called on to help or serve others' and that a 'sense of trust and co-
22 operation occurs, often unspoken or unsolicited' (Dixon 2015).

27 By contrast, where children might once have relied on adults to help them when
28 they encountered day-to-day adversity, today, in the UK, many adults would be
29 wary about getting involved with a child they were not related to, and children
30 are taught from an early age about 'stranger danger' and to be suspicious of
31 unknown adults. As Bristow argues, recognition that some adults may harm
32 children has become transposed, in the form of society-wide regulatory projects
33 regulating inter-generational contact, into the sensibility that *all* adults should be
34 vetted in case they might pose a danger to children (2014). To give a more
35 extreme example, in New York, a woman who let her 9-year old ride the subway
36 was labelled 'the world's worst mom' (*Washington Post* 2008). For Furedi, a
37 substantive element of interpersonal relationship (between adults and children,
38 adults and adults and children and children) gets lost in this transformation of
39 personhood in the new parenting culture (see also Ramaekers and Suissa on this
40 instrumental, de-personalized turn in the approach to 'managing' the parent-
41 child relationship, 2011).

47 As is examined below, this has had a knock-on effect on social solidarity more
48 broadly – to the extent that active resentment between adults (whether parents
49 or not) about their caring rights and responsibilities are becoming increasingly
50 commonplace. In parallel children themselves have become de-responsibilised,
51 leading some to argue that we are 'breeding a nation of wimps' and need to
52 return to a more 'free-range' approach to parenting (Skenazy cited in the
53 *Washington Post* 2015) recognizing children as willing and able to take
54 responsibility for themselves from a much earlier age.

58 **State infrastructure and social reproduction: A comparative perspective**

1 Norway has deliberately been selected as a comparative case study for the
2 purposes of this paper. Like the Japanese example, traditionally, Norwegian
3 society has been understood as one where neoliberal individualization, and the
4 effects thereof, would be less far-reaching, given a different historical, political
5 and cultural orientation towards social justice, family life and community
6 cohesion. Eriksen, for example, suggests that the loss of 'gemeinschaft' trust he
7 describes in the US and the UK has not been experienced in Norway to such an
8 extent – parents will still leave their prams outside shops, and arguably the
9 effects of this individualization of the responsibility for child care are less
10 extreme (2014).
11

12
13 Esping-Andersen's seminal (if controversial) *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*
14 categorises Norway as one of the 'social democratic' welfare states. He says of
15 these states: 'The ideal is not to maximise dependence on the family, but
16 capacities for individual independence (2006: 169) The state opts to 'take direct
17 responsibility of caring for children, the aged and the helpless.' It is committed to
18 'allow women to choose work rather than the household', providing substantial
19 state-provided child-care from an early age. Taxes are typically high, but in
20 general this is understood by citizens to be in their best interests as a society
21 more broadly, giving the state a high degree of legitimacy (Eriksen 2014). It is
22 also crucial, argues Eriksen, to building a sense of community coherence and
23 safety: in place of the need for competitive or intensive parenting, parents in
24 Norway know that they can rely on the state to provide for their children, and
25 competition for nurseries, schools and universities (for example) is less intense.
26
27

28
29 In opposition to this 'social-democratic' model, the British system has been
30 classified as a (neo) 'liberal welfare state' (Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2011).
31 Here, Esping-Andersen notes that the main features are 'means-tested
32 assistance, modest universal transfers or modest social-insurance plans';
33 'Benefits cater mainly to a clientele of low-income, usually working class, state
34 dependants.' (2006: 167). Taxes tend to be lower than in social democratic states
35 and a narrative of the '(un)deserving poor' dominates discussions of public
36 finances (*Guardian* 2012). Not surprisingly (like the US, which might be said to
37 be an even more extreme example) this infrastructure has been linked to the
38 pervasive appeal or spread of intensive parenting, where individual parents
39 must work hard to 'cultivate' their children in a concerted way, to ensure their
40 success in life (Lareau 2003).
41
42

43
44 The commitment to foster the capacity for individual independence seen in many
45 Nordic states does not sit easily with the more 'intensive' model of parenting,
46 described above, which stresses the importance of individual, family-based, and
47 embodied care for children, rather than allowing for a more community based or
48 shared model of child care. Indeed, it sits much more easily in the liberal welfare
49 states like the UK, with its implicit support for the traditional model of the family
50 and a stay-at-home, usually female, carer.
51

52
53 Recently, however, to counter 'gender inequality' in parenting in the UK – and its
54 knock-on effect on men and women's working lives – there have been efforts to
55 get fathers more 'involved' in parenting. Fatherhood has become politicized, with
56 many calling for better 'work-life balance' policies to alleviate gender inequality
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

1 in parenting (such as split parental leave and flexible working policies, Author
2 2014, Baird and O'Brien 2015, Twamley and Schober 2018). Many of those
3 calling for these changes look to the Scandinavian countries as an example of
4 'best practice' – since many of them have long embodied a commitment to
5 'equality' and fairness at the legislative level.
6

7 Norway, for example, operates the 'use-it-or-lose-it' system whereby a
8 substantial amount of parental leave is allocated to the partner or father but is
9 lost to the family unit if not taken up (Bradnth and Kvande 2009); this leave is
10 paid at or nearly at full salary². Similarly, childcare is almost fully subsidized and
11 represents an average expense of less than 5% in terms of the household
12 outgoings (the OECD average is 12%, Daycare Trust 2014, Statistics Norway
13 2015). By contrast, the UK technically operates a system of 'Shared Parental
14 Leave' whereby a mother can 'transfer' leave to her partner, but this is typically
15 unpaid or paid at a very low statutory rate at less than a quarter of the average
16 wage. Furthermore, childcare on average amounts to 30% of the disposable
17 household income in the UK (ibid). The suggestion here is that these state
18 infrastructures represent (and inform) different cultural ideas around family life,
19 reproduction and social solidarity. In turn, these expectations are reflected in
20 other social institutions, such as schools, the media or indeed the expertise
21 culture around family life itself.
22
23
24
25

26 There is therefore an interesting process of mirroring going on in each location
27 (of parenting culture and social policy respectively) that makes these two
28 countries ideal case studies for an investigation into the iterative relationship
29 between social norms and state infrastructure.
30
31

32 **Changing cultures of parenting: diffusion and cohesion**

33

34 In Norway, preliminary research indicates that a similar trend in parenting
35 culture has been observed to that in the UK, with scholars noting that it has
36 gradually become more 'intensive', albeit not to such a great extent. Frønes
37 (2007) describes contemporary Norway as 'parent-oriented', an era when
38 parents invest more time and energy in their children than ever before, and
39 where parenting tasks are becoming more demanding. Like the UK,
40 contemporary parenting has therefore been defined as 'involved parenting' – a
41 parenthood that centres on the child and the child's needs, and where parents
42 bear a fundamental responsibility for the child's future. Aarseth and Andersen's
43 (2012) work on middle class parents, as well as Danielsen and Bendixsen's
44 research on parenting and diversity, also show how family-life has become a
45 project to be managed and worked at (2010, 2018). Indeed, this is particularly
46 the case for the newly 'elite' families in Scandinavia reported as grappling,
47 historically for the first time, with wanting their children to be socialized
48 according to social values of 'sameness', whilst also making them competitive in
49 the increasingly global capitalist market and therefore invest in them in ways
50
51
52
53
54
55

56 ² It is worth noting, however, that recent changes in Norway's government – with
57 the ascension of a right-wing party – have led to proposals for a reduction in the
58 amount of non-transferable parental leave to 10 weeks, making this an
59 interesting time to explore these issues.
60
61
62
63
64
65

1 familiar to US and UK parents, often with the aid of nannies or au-pairs (Aarseth
2 2016).

3 Aarseth's work in Norway in particular brings to the fore the question of
4 individualism/ collectivism. What scholars of 'parenting culture' in neoliberal
5 contexts observe is that the task of raising the next generation has become highly
6 fragmented and detailed, with a keen focus on the everyday practices of daily life
7 (such as practices around eating or sleeping). Rather than 'socialising' children
8 into a set of shared social values, a more individualised perspective means that
9 the aim is to raise 'successful individuals' who are able to 'be themselves', at the
10 same time as fulfil adult 'lifestyle projects' (Author 2013). This clearly sits well
11 within an intensive parenting ethos, but less well where there is a focus on
12 communality or 'being social' (see also Bach 2016 on the Danish case).
13
14
15

16 In general, however, whilst there are signs of growing stratification, there are
17 important differences between the UK and Norway, specifically around gender
18 (Gullvåg Holter 2014). Whilst in the UK researchers have explored if and how
19 more intensive forms of fathering is 'on the rise' (Shirani et al 2012), Norwegian
20 research indicates that a more active role for fathers and norms promoting a
21 shared parenthood has been developing for some time (Lorenzen 2012,
22 Bjornholt 2014), and point to their shifting role in Norwegian society (Aarseth
23 2011). In part, this is explained by a policy context which has long championed
24 an 'equality' ethos.³
25
26
27

28 In thinking anthropologically about the politics of cultural translation (see
29 Author 2013) this paper considers the ways in which messages about 'good
30 parenting' are mobilized by various actors, including children – and adopted,
31 resisted or reconfigured in these two cultural settings. In terms of resistance to
32 this model of 'parenting', for example, Anving and Elden (talking about middle
33 class families in Sweden, 2016) include accounts from children, who are largely
34 skeptical of the intensive 'quality time' approach to childcare, and are instead
35 keen to spend time with their parents, during mundane activities of cooking and
36 bathing, rather than having this 'dirty work' outsourced to an au-pair.
37
38
39

40 Certainly, knowledge concerning the cultural presumptions underlying ways of
41 'doing parenthood' (or 'doing childhood') is essential for understanding how
42 trust, belonging and support for central societal values are preserved (and
43 changed) particularly in the context of a culturally plural and increasingly
44 cosmopolitan setting (Bendixsen and Danielsen 2018). How has this more
45 'intensive' model of parenting has diffused differently in Norway and the UK in
46 accordance with different cultural and political histories (that is according to
47 gender, ethnic and class differences)? Is it the case that Norway is following in
48 the footsteps of the UK in terms of the intensification of parenting, or is this too
49 simplistic a way of framing this issue?
50
51
52

53 **Parenting and social antagonism: Four 'theoretical examples'**

54
55
56
57
58 ³ This commitment to gender equality seems to be shifting in these 'elite' families,
59 where many women, unusually for Norway, stop work or move to part-time hours
60 so as to focus on a more intensive form of mothering.
61
62
63
64
65

1 The four theoretical examples which follow focus on areas of potential social
2 antagonism relating to 'parenting', as a means of thinking through the potential
3 and challenges of building social trust with a more societal conception of raising
4 children.

5 ***Parents and non-parents***

6
7
8 In the UK, an antagonism between parents and non-parents has become
9 increasingly visible as a form of social categorization – most notably in the
10 workplace, particularly around parents' entitlement to leave and flexible
11 working. As the press would have it, this has become a battle between the
12 'breeders' and the 'child-free-by-choicers', with campaigns for 'personal leave' to
13 be available to employees for reasons other than child care (Bristow 2014, see
14 also Rosen and Suissa, this issue ⁴)
15
16

17
18 In the UK, childcare is understood as the responsibility of the family unit, with
19 many scholars pointing out that the assumption childcare should rest with the
20 individual parents is not only an expression of a neoliberal, individualistic era
21 (Gillies 2009, Fraser 2013), but also one which exacerbates a segregation
22 between parents and non-parents. This could arguably be framed as part of this
23 general loss in *gemeinschaft* or community responsibility for raising the next
24 generation. Instead, with a societal conception of raising children, leading to a
25 society-wide organised system of care for children, and corresponding re-
26 organisation of the work-place, the antagonisms between parents and non-
27 parents described might well be lessened, as they would not be pushed back
28 onto individuals and employers (Bristow 2014). This makes this an interesting
29 issue to compare with Norway, then, since there the state demonstrates a
30 financial commitment to children's care through heavily subsidised childcare
31 and flexible working arrangements for parents – seemingly without courting the
32 antagonism mentioned above. Indeed, preliminary research suggests that this
33 antagonism is not one that is considered culturally salient as a form of social
34 labelling, and certainly not one voiced in the media (Bendixsen and Danielsen
35 2018).
36
37
38
39

40
41 Theoretically it is interesting to consider whether this represents a different
42 vision of the family life to that in the UK, and how, if at all, an increasing
43 'intensification' of parenting outlined above is likely to alter this. The Nordic
44 states are frequently held up as the 'gold standard' of equality legislation, but
45 how that actually works itself out in practice is generally less clear-cut
46 (Simonardottir 2016). Certainly, the role of children themselves as active
47 participants in being or shaping 'the future' (Rosen and Suissa, this issue) is
48 reflected in a commitment to children's rights at the level of policy and practice
49 in the Scandinavian context, but has not been empirically investigated in terms of
50 differing understandings what it means in terms of the responsibilities of
51 adulthood and childhood per se.
52
53
54

55 ***Migration and intergenerational change***

56
57
58 ⁴ This clearly chimes with the availability of contraception, abortion and the new
59 reproductive technologies which have meant having children is ever more a
60 'choice'
61
62
63
64
65

1 Taking a historical angle, essential to exploring notions of social solidarity over
2 time, the second example is that of intensive parenting and intergenerational
3 relationships, with special attention to issues of migration, diversity and
4 coherence (a subject of much recent scholarship; e.g Franceschelli forthcoming).
5

6 Scholars working on parenting culture in the UK have observed that one of the
7 negative effects of a more intensive, expert-driven individualistic approach to
8 parenting is the impact on intergenerational transmission. A cultural context that
9 views parents as inadequate in the face of the task of 'building tomorrow' means
10 that parents have become seen in need of ever more expert guidance in carrying
11 out this task (Lee et al 2014). Arguably, this contemporary, expert-based
12 parenting culture has not only had an effect on parents' own subjectivities, but it
13 has magnified a disruption to this cultural transmission and recognition of
14 authority between grandparents, parents and children. Grandparents are
15 routinely presented (in the UK) as not to be trusted as they are 'out of touch' or
16 not 'up to date' on the most recent parenting methods and advice. Children, by
17 contrast, are often targeted by schemes to 'educate' parents about, for example,
18 healthy eating or environmentalism (Furedi 2008). It is crucial then to consider
19 intergenerational shifts in parenting culture, as well as at the effect of the
20 intensification of parenting on those intergenerational relationships themselves.
21
22
23
24

25 As UK and Norwegian societies become ever more globalized and 'multicultural,'
26 new parenting norms, ideologies and practices are emerging, not least at the
27 instigation of children themselves who often act as interlocutors for their
28 parents – something that is of particular concern for the state and notions of
29 social coherence and nation-building. Gullestad has famously written about the
30 Norwegian model of social equality as one which champions 'sameness' rather
31 than 'difference', in contrast to the 'multi-cultural' model usually promoted in the
32 UK (2002). Working in contexts of high migration in Norway, with communities
33 who embody this 'disconnect' most explicitly, Danielsen and Bendixsen have
34 explored how notions of diversity (and disruption) are expressed by Norwegian
35 parents (2018), through a concern with 'other peoples' children', widening
36 efforts at 'intensive' parenting beyond the nuclear family and seeing socialization
37 as a collective endeavor. Thus, as the work of Vergara (this issue) acknowledges,
38 we also need to think about how an intensification of parenting in certain
39 contexts has the potential to *create* coherence within – as well as between –
40 particular groups, as part of this process of 'integration' not least as a product of
41 children's engagement in these social networks (see also Author, 2013).
42
43
44
45
46

47 ***Gender relations and couple relationships*** 48

49 Another key area of potential conflict in a more 'intensive' parenting culture
50 concerns relationships between men and women (or, more strictly, partners
51 raising children together). In tandem with shifting legislation around gender
52 equity in parenting, British culture has witnessed a turn toward a construction of
53 the 'new father' (Dermott 2008, Gatrell 2005, Shirani et al 2012). As well as
54 concerns around equality, this is understood as important at the level of the
55 individual child (for optimizing child development), and framed as a wider
56 question of social mobility – as David Cameron put it when he was Prime
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

1 Minister, having good male role models in working class families is a way of
2 creating social cohesion, and mending 'Broken Britain' (BBC 2012).

3 Research in the UK has already shown that promotion of this 'new father' figure
4 tends to focus on what Dermott calls the middle-class 'caring about' activities of
5 childcare – swimming classes, reading groups and so on (Fatherhood Institute
6 2010, HM Government 2011) – in a bid to extend a model of 'intensive mothering'
7 to men. This is, say critics, in place of legislating on issues such as subsidized
8 childcare and paid parental leave, which would provide space for a 'relational'
9 fatherhood and a genuine sharing of care (Browne 2013). Indeed, given the lack
10 of material support for this 'equal parenting' agenda in the UK, some have argued
11 that policies around 'involving fathers' are less about promoting gender equality,
12 and more about a class-based cultural anxiety around the importance of
13 intensive parenting (Author 2014). Gillies, for example, notes that for working
14 class fathers who are 'at home' with their children due to unemployment, this is
15 not considered the *right* kind of involvement by policy-makers, unless those men
16 show intensive commitment to the 'project' of raising their children (2009).

17 There is a danger, then, that in that promoting a particular kind of 'good
18 fathering' model to men, without the material support for splitting care, does not
19 actually help with the 'caring for' activities (feeding, cleaning and so on) that
20 children require (Dermott 2008, Doucet 2006, Wall and Arnold 2007), but leaves
21 women to bear the brunt of this labour whilst also increasing the cultural
22 pressure on men to do more activities with children. So whilst 'involving' fathers
23 in family life would clearly go some way towards easing the responsibility of care
24 many women shoulder, the extension of an 'intensive' expertise-based 'parenting'
25 to men, particularly without material support to do so, might actually leave them
26 in a similar 'cultural contradiction' currently faced by women whereby the
27 realms of work and home-life are in fraught tension (Hays 1996). In a shift
28 towards a more 'gesellschaft' society, whereby intimate relations are considered
29 ideal when they are most 'equitable' (Giddens 1999), this area of social
30 transformation represents an important field for scholarly investigation.

31 In Norway, which has a much more established history of gender equality
32 legislation, and state support for parental leave and childcare a different picture
33 emerges (Bjornholt 2014, Gullvåg Holter 2014). Here, partners are actually able
34 to care more equitably, and the responsibility for social reproduction is not left
35 solely on the shoulders of (biological) parents, but stratified across society more
36 widely.⁵

37 Whilst in the UK changes to fatherhood have been introduced (purportedly at
38 least) as a means of alleviating gender inequality, in Norway recent changes
39 were discussed under the guise of being about the best interests of the child, and
40 the right of the child to have access to their father (Brandth and Kvande 2009.)
41 In what might be seen as evidence for the spread of a more 'intensive' parenting',
42 which puts more and more focus on the importance parents raising their
43 children (rather than using childcare, say), this example prompts us to ask

44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
⁵ That said, there still remains a gender imbalance in the uptake of leave, and at
the level of CEOs higher up the labour market (Gullestad 1984, 2002).

1 whether this has affected gender equality in Norway, and how this is
2 experienced in different social classes. Are parents internalising this message
3 about the importance of family-based care? Does having two parents
4 'intensively' engaged in child-rearing present the solution to gender-inequality
5 and create greater cohesion amongst couples (Andersen and Aarseth 2012), or
6 does this in fact risk doubling (rather than halving) the problem? (Author 2015,
7 Baird and O'Brien 2015). Certainly, the evidence is not as straightforward as
8 might be expected, with tensions between partners a hallmark of the transition
9 to parenthood in spite of greater 'gender equality' (Simonardottir 2016).

12 ***Fertility and inequality***

14 The final example looks particularly at how the intensification (and
15 individualization) of parenting has differently affected would-be parents (that is,
16 infertile couples seeking treatment) in the UK and Norway, in the context of
17 different regulatory regimes. In a more individualised, intensive parenting
18 culture, which stresses personal fulfilment through parenthood, becoming a
19 (biological) parent has not only become seemingly more feasible for many
20 couples, but the social role has been inflated in congruence, frequently being
21 framed as a 'human right' (Strathern 1993). In line with a focus on antagonisms,
22 then, this example considers how the inflation of the parenting identity has led to
23 feelings of exclusion and segregation at the wider social level, for those who
24 cannot 'achieve' it (Author 2017). These issues are particularly timely, given
25 recent debates in each country about how far the state should pay for couples to
26 receive fertility treatment (recent headlines in the UK reveal that in many areas
27 of the country, IVF treatment will be scrapped on the National Health Service due
28 to cost-cutting, *Independent* 2017).

34 Recent work on the subject of egg-donation explores these issues around
35 individualisation and social reproduction in a cross-cultural comparative
36 framework (Marre 2017). In the UK, couples are (currently) able to receive
37 treatment with donor eggs on the NHS, where in Norway, this is currently
38 prohibited due to concerns about coercion (although the Biotechnology Council
39 has advised changing this law, Melhuus 2005). Instead, couples seeking
40 treatment through egg donation typically engage in what has been called
41 'fertility tourism' or 'Cross Border Reproductive Care' in search of egg-donors,
42 with Spain being one of the most popular destinations (Pennings and Gurtin
43 2012, Marre 2017). This example therefore prompts us to think about 'solidarity'
44 not only in access to reproductive technologies, but also 'what counts' in the
45 creation of kinship and national communities, not least as this relates to any
46 children born as a result of that treatment (Cheney 2018).

51 In thinking about the relationship between the intensification of parenting,
52 reproductive technologies and neoliberalism it is important to think specifically
53 about the nature of 'individualisation'. As both a product of this element of
54 parenting culture, as well as one of its greatest catalysts, reproductive
55 technologies could be read as the example *par excellence* of the individualisation
56 of a social problem. What might be seen as a problem with the way society is
57 structured (in terms of, for example fertility decline and the pressure to become
58 established in one's career), infertility is, instead, tackled in ways that makes
59

1 individuals accountable for their reproductive trajectories, emphasizing and
2 enabling ever further the importance of the biological relation (Inhorn and Van
3 Balen 2002). Paradoxically, many couples seeking fertility treatment narrate
4 their inability to have children as a form of social exclusion (from a peer group),
5 whilst those who are parents *also* report a sense of segregation from society as a
6 whole. In both cases, this individualization is antithetical to the case of family life
7 and social reproduction, which has traditionally been about creating connections
8 (see Author 2017)
9

10 It is interesting to consider how couples (or indeed individuals) grapple with
11 their own desire to become parents in light of this intensive parenting culture,
12 and how this is differently narrated by would-be parents in the UK and Norway,
13 particularly as they relate to parents who have not required technological
14 intervention. How has the intensification of parenting affected patients'
15 approach to, and experiences of, these technologies, with what implications for
16 the imagination of 'kinship'? These kinds of questions prompt us to think about
17 the relationship between individualism and community relations as they relate
18 to the role of the state in subsidising treatment (and by extension, who can
19 afford to become a parent at all).
20
21
22
23

24 In short, we need to think about what the technologisation of reproduction does
25 for society, in terms of thinking about where children come from, and the
26 collective responsibility for their care, especially in the context of transnational
27 donation. This example feeds into debates around the ways in which 'biological'
28 parenthood fits into models of intensive parenting (Author 2017). Much recent
29 research on adoption, for example, shows how narratives of intensive parenting
30 are used to 'smooth over' the lack of biological connection to children in creating
31 a bond of 'concerted cultivation' (De Graeve and Longman 2013). Paradoxically
32 however, one of the downsides of the availability of these technologies might be
33 that there has actually been a questioning of biological parenthood: as scholars
34 working on parenting culture have observed, 'natural' pregnancies are becoming
35 problematized, just as those who do not have 'training' for parenting are
36 considered in need of 'skilling up'. Certainly, people are making reproductive
37 decisions in a context of longevity which clearly changes patterns of social
38 reproduction – and as such, there has been a shift from 'natural' generational
39 reproduction to a more bureaucratized, 'gesellschaft' or planned process.
40
41
42
43
44

45 **Discussion: Solidarity, care and the 'common good'**

46 Taking a comparative perspective allows us to make a contribution to debates
47 around variability in welfare policies (Esping-Andersen 2006, Moss 2011). These
48 conversations are particularly timely, both because of the recent changes in
49 parental leave provisions in both Norway and the UK, and in light of the UK's
50 likely exit from the EU, and the implications of this, for example, on employment
51 conditions and gender equality, including maternity, parental leave and childcare
52 provision. Similarly, Norway retains close relations with the EU, but has so far
53 rejected full membership, making it an interesting case-study in the European
54 context. These enquiries aim to enrich and inform these on-going public
55 discussions, by bringing an inter-disciplinary perspective to bear on what are all
56 too often two-dimensional, economic-based discussions (though see Garey 1999,
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

1 Miller 2011, Somerville 2000), and asking how far we think cultural change
2 could ever be achieved through legislation (Browne 2013).

3 It is critical that discussions of reproduction and parenting are part of a
4 conversation around the promotion of social trust but of the 'common good,' to
5 use the language of Sandel's community-oriented virtue theory (see also Rosen
6 and Suissa on Rawls' theory of intergenerational justice, this issue). Sandel notes
7 that the challenge for policy-makers is to 'imagine a politics that takes moral...
8 questions seriously, but brings them to bear on broad economic and civic
9 concerns' (2009: 262). Looking at institutions in the US such as national service
10 and public schooling, for example, he rejects a utilitarian approach to the
11 common good that prioritises the maximisation of welfare, on the grounds that
12 justice should not become a simple 'matter of calculation' rather than of
13 principle. He also rejects the choice-oriented (or 'freedom-based') approaches of
14 both libertarians and liberal-egalitarians for failing to provide anything other
15 than 'individual preference' as the guiding principle on public policy design.
16 Instead, revisiting ideas from Aristotle, he argues for the cultivation of virtue and
17 reasoning on questions of policy in which 'value' to the common good becomes
18 paramount.
19
20
21
22
23

24 Contemporary political rhetoric in Europe has been increasingly focused on the
25 individual's private 'choices', meaning that structural challenges to collective
26 duties of care often fall outside the remit of equality and anti-discrimination
27 policies (Browne 2013, Baird and O'Brien 2015). But how free are people – as
28 parents, non-parents or even children – to make these 'choices' about their work
29 and home lives? In the context of cuts to public services (in the UK) on the one
30 hand, and the obsession with parenthood on the other, what is society actually
31 doing about being and raising children? In this particular political climate,
32 childcare and reproduction provides an interesting 'litmus test' for policy-
33 makers in thinking about a range of other issues relating to the allocation of state
34 resources (for example, the political polarization around the recent refugee
35 crisis). Through a comparative perspective, this paper aims to re-frame the
36 debate around 'parenting' and 'childcare' as one beyond the individual family,
37 opening up, it is hoped, new avenues in how we could approach the 'problem' of
38 raising the next generation as a *societal* rather than an individual one.
39
40
41
42
43

44 **Conclusion**

45 This paper has explored the relationship between 'parenting culture' and notions
46 of social solidarity, and the ideas of adulthood and childhood on which it rests.
47 Thinking about parenting as a societal endeavour, whereby all of us – children,
48 parents and non-parents care for each other - challenges the model of the
49 neoliberal 'parent' and 'child' within the new 'parenting culture' and helps us
50 approach the question of building social trust afresh. Drawing on classical
51 sociological theory, the suggestion is that an 'intensification' of parenting has a
52 potentially corrosive effect on notions of trust and social cohesion, thinking the
53 implications of this through in four theoretical examples. Whilst a social
54 democratic welfare state infrastructure (as seen in Norway) clearly goes some
55 way to curbing the worst excesses of a more individualised 'intensive' parenting
56 culture evident in the UK, it's clear that the spread of this culture is on the rise,
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

creating novel tensions and forms of inequality in the Nordic context. To put it another way, how long will Norwegian parents continue to leave their children in prams outside shops?

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65

References

- 1
2
3 Aarseth, H 2011. *Moderne familieliv. Den likestilte familiens motivasjonsformer*.
4 Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.
5
6
7 Aarseth, H. 2017 'Fear of Falling – Fear of Fading: The Emotional
8 Dynamics of Positional and Personalised Individualism'. *Sociology* 1-16.
9
10 Aarseth, H & Andersen, L 2012. 'Den likestilte familien i et klasseperspektiv:
11 Mellom selvutfoldelse og felleskap', in: Ellingsæter & Widerberg (red.),
12 *Velferdsstatens familier. Nye sosiologiske perspektiver*. Gyldendal Akademisk, pp.
13 191 – 2107/2008
14
15
16 Alanen and Mayall, B. Conceptualizing Child- Adult Relations; Samantha Punch,
17 'The Generationing of Power: A Comparison of Child- parent and Sibling
18 Relationships in Scotland', *Sociological Studies in Childhood and Youth*, 10, ed.
19 Loretta Bass (2005): 169– 88.
20
21
22 Anving, T. & Sara Elding. 2016. *New Ways of Doing (the Gender Equal and Good)*
23 *Family: Nannies, Au Pairs and Parents in Sweden*. Sociological Research Online, 21
24 (4), 2
25
26
27 Arendell, T. 2000. 'Conceiving and Investigating Motherhood: The Decade's
28 Scholarship', *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62 (November):1192–1207.
29
30
31 Bach, D. 2017. The civilized family life : childrearing in affluent families. In
32 *Children of the welfare state: civilising practices in schools, childcare and*
33 *families*. ed. / Laura Gilliam; Eva Gulløv. London : Pluto Press. p. 194-235.
34
35
36 Baird, M, and O'Brien M. (2015) Dynamics of parental leave in Anglophone
37 countries: the paradox of state expansion in liberal welfare regimes. *Community*
38 *Work and Family* 18.
39
40
41 Barlow, K. and Chapin, B.L. 2010. 'The practices of Mothering: An Introduction',
42 in *Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology, ETHOS*, 38(4): 324-338
43
44
45 Bauman, Z. 2005 *Liquid Life* Cambridge: Polity Press.
46
47 [BBC News Online](#) 2011 'England riots: Broken society is top priority – Cameron',
48 15 August
49
50
51 Beck, U. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. New Delhi: Sage
52
53 Beck, U. 2000. 'Risk Society Revisited: Theory, Politics and Research
54 Programmes', in Adam, Beck, and Van Loon. (eds.), *The Risk Society and Beyond:*
55 *Critical Issues for Social Theory*. London: Sage, pp. 211 -229
56
57
58 Bendixsen, S. and Danielsen, H. 2018. 'Other people's children: inclusive
59 parenting in a diverse neighborhood in Norway.' *Ethnic and Racial Studies*
60
61
62
63
64
65

1 Bjørnholt, M. 2014. *Modern Men: A Norwegian 30-Year Longitudinal Study of*
2 *Intergenerational Transmission and Social Change*. Örebro Studies in Gender
3 Research, 3. Örebro: Örebro universitet. Doctoral dissertation

4 Brandth, B, and Kvande, E. 2009. "Norway: The Making of the Father's Quota." In
5 *The Politics of Parental Leave Policies: Children, Parenting, Gender and the Labour*
6 *Market*, eds. Sheila Kameman and Peter Moss. Bristol: The Policy Press.

7 Bristow, J. 2014. 'Who cares for children? The problem of intergenerational
8 contact' in Lee, E. Bristow, J. Faicloth, C. and Macvarish, J. 2014 [Parenting Culture](#)
9 [Studies](#) Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

10 Browne, J. 2013 'The Default Model: Gender Equality, Fatherhood and Structural
11 Constraint', *Politics & Gender. Official Journal of the American Political Sciences*
12 *Association (APSA)*. Vol 9, Issue 02. pp. 152-173.

13 Cheney, K. 2018. 'International commercial surrogacy: Beyond feminist
14 conundrums and the child as product' in Rosen, R. and Twamley, K (eds).
15 *Feminism and the Politics of Childhood: Friends of foes?* UCL Press [Open Access](#)

16 Chiong, C. 2020. 'Teachers are Legit Our Parents': Disadvantaged families and the
17 politics of home-school relations in Singapore' *Families, Relationships and*
18 *Societies* Special Issue, 'Childhood, Parenting and Adult-Child Relations in
19 Transnational Perspectives'

20 [Daycare Trust](#). 2014 'Childcare Costs Survey 2014'. London: Daycare Trust
21 Dermott, E. 2008 *Intimate Fatherhood: A Sociological Analysis* London: Routledge.

22 De Graeve, K. and Longman, C. 'Intensive mothering of Ethiopian adoptive
23 children in Flanders, Belgium' in Faircloth, C. Hoffman, D and Layne, L. (eds.)
24 2013. [Parenting in Global Perspective: Negotiating ideologies of kinship, self and](#)
25 [politics](#). London: Routledge

26 Dixon. 2015 cited in [The Atlantic](#). 'Why are little kids in Japan so independent?'

27 Doucet, A. 2006. *Do Men Mother?* Toronto: University of Toronto Press

28 Douglas, S. and Michaels, M. 2004. *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of*
29 *Motherhood and How It Has Undermined All Women*. New York: Free Press.

30 Eriksen, T. H. 2014. 'Who or What to Blame' *European Journal of Sociology*,
31 Volume 55, Issue 02, August 2014, pp 275 - 294

32 Esping-Andersen, G. 2006 'The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism'. *The Welfare*
33 *State Reader*. Pierson, C and Castles, F. (Eds). London: Polity Press.

34 Fatherhood Institute 2010 [Guide for New Dads](#), accessed 2 May 2013.

35 Ferragina, E and Seeleib-Kaiser, M 2011. 'Thematic Review: Welfare regime
36 debate: past, present, futures?' [Policy & Politics](#), Volume 39, Number 4, October
37 2011, pp. 583-611(29)

1 Franceschelli, M. Forthcoming. 'Global migration and local communities: social
2 solidarity and the absent state in the Italian island of Lampedusa'

3
4 Furedi, F. 2008. *Paranoid Parenting*. London: Continuum

5
6 Fraser, N. 2013. *Fortunes of Feminism: From state-managed capitalism to
7 neoliberal crisis*. New York: Verso.

8
9 Frønes, I. 2007. *Moderne barndom*. Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk

10
11 Garey, A. 1999. *Weaving Work and Motherhood*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple
12 University Press.

13
14 Gatrell, C. 2005 *Hard Labour: The sociology of parenthood* Maidenhead: Open
15 University Press.

16
17 Giddens, A. 1999. 'Risk and Responsibility', in *Modern Law Review*, 62 (1): 1-10

18
19 Gillies, V. 2009 'Understandings and experiences of involved fathering in the
20 United Kingdom: exploring classed dimensions', *The Annals of the American
21 Academy of Political and Social Science*, 624, 49-60

22
23 [Guardian](#) 2012. 'Rich and Poor: Deserving and undeserving'

24
25
26 Guardian 2013. 'Childcare – like life – is about so much more than economics.'

27
28 Guardian 2014. 'Cost of childcare is barrier to working more, says two-thirds of
29 mothers'

30
31 [Guardian](#) 2015. 'Shared parenting leave: nightmare new rules, or the first baby
32 steps to equality?'

33
34
35 Gullestad, M. 1984. *Kitchen-Table Society. A Case Study of the Family Life and
36 Friendships of Young Working-Class Mothers in Urban Norway*. Oslo:
37 Universitetsforlaget

38
39
40 Gullestad, M. 2002 'Invisible Fences: Egalitarianism, Nationalism and Racism'
41 *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* [Volume 8, Issue 1](#), pages 45-
42 63, March

43
44
45 Gullvåg Holter, O. 2014. "'What's in it for Men?": Old Question, New Data' *Men
46 and Masculinities*, Vol. 17 (5)

47
48 Hays, S. 1996. *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT, and
49 London: Yale University Press.

50
51 HM Government 2011 [Consultation on Modern Workplaces](#), accessed 1 May
52 2013.

53
54 [Independent](#). 2017. 'Patients facing 'postcode lottery' after NHS budgets slashed'

55
56
57 Inhorn, M C., and van Balen, eds, F. 2002 *Infertility Around the Globe: New
58 Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies*. Berkeley:
59 University of California Press.

1 Lareau, A. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. By Berkeley:
2 University of California Press.

3 Lorenzen, J. 2012. *Fra farskapets historie i Norge. Fra 1850 til 2012*. Oslo:
4 Universitetsforlaget

5 Macvarish, J. 2016. *Neuroparenting: The expert invasion of family life*.
6 Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

7
8
9
10 Marre, D. Beatriz San Román & Diana Guerra (2017): On Reproductive
11 Work in Spain: Transnational Adoption, Egg Donation, Surrogacy, *Medical*
12 *Anthropology* 1-16.

13
14
15 Melhuus, M. 2005. 'Better safe than sorry'. Legislating assisted conception in
16 Norway' i Christian Krhohn-Hansen og Knut Nustad (eds) *State Formation:*
17 *Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.

18
19
20 Miller, T. 2011. *Making Sense of Fatherhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University
21 Press.

22
23 Moss, P. ed. 2011. *International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research*
24 *2011*. London: Institute of Education, University of London.

25
26 O'Brien M and Twamley K (2016) 'Fathers taking leave alone in the UK - a gift
27 exchange between mother and father?' in O'Brien M and K Wall (Eds) *Fathers on*
28 *leave alone and gender equality: An international comparative perspective*,
29 London: Springer

30
31
32 Pennings, G. and Grtin, Z.B. 2012 'The legal and Ethical Regulation of
33 Transnational Donation'. In M. Richards, J. Appleby & G. Pennings (eds.)
34 *Reproductive Donation: Bioethics, Policy and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge
35 University Press.

36
37
38 Ramaekers, S. and Suissa, J. 2011. *The Claims of Parenting: Reasons, Responsibility*
39 *and Society*, Contemporary Philosophies and Theories in Education 4. London:
40 Springer.

41
42
43 Roisin, H. 2013. *The End of Men: And the rise of women*. London: Penguin.

44
45
46 Rosen, R. and Suissa, J. 2020. Children, parents, and non-parents: To whom does
47 the future belong? *Families, Relationships and Societies* Special Issue, 'Childhood,
48 Parenting and Adult-Child Relations in Transnational Perspectives'

49
50 Sandel, M. 2009. *Justice: What's the right thing to do?* London: Penguin.

51
52
53
54 Shirani, F. Henwood, K. and Coltart, C. (2012) 'Meeting the challenges of
55 intensive parenting culture: gender, risk management and the moral parent'.
56 *Sociology*. 46(1) 25-40.

57
58
59 Simonardottir, S. 2016. 'Constructing the attached mother in the "world's most
60 feminist country"' *Women's Studies International Forum* 56 (2016) 103 -112

1 Somerville, J. 2000. *Feminism and the Family: Politics and society in the UK and*
2 *USA*. Hampshire and London: Macmillan

3 Strathern, M. 1993. *Reproducing the Future: Anthropology, Kinship and the New*
4 *Reproductive Technologies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

5
6
7 Statistics Norway 2015. [Earnings of all Employees](#), accessed November 2015.

8
9 Tönnies, F. 1887. *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Leipzig: Fues's Verlag.
10 (Translated, 1957 by Charles Price Loomis as *Community and Society*, East
11 Lansing: Michigan State University Press.)

12
13 Twamley, K. and Schober, P. 2018. 'Shared parental leave: exploring variations in
14 attitudes, eligibility, knowledge and take-up intentions of expectant mothers in
15 London.' *Journal of Social Policy*

16
17
18 Vergara del Solar, A (et al) 'To be ever present: The discourse of children and
19 parents on parenting in Chile today'. *Families, Relationships and Societies* Special
20 Issue, 'Childhood, Parenting and Adult-Child Relations in Transnational
21 Perspectives'

22
23
24 Wall, G. and Arnold, S. 2007. 'How Involved Is Involved Fathering?' *Gender and*
25 *Society* 21(4): 508–527..

26
27
28 [Washington Post](#) 2015 'I let my 9 year old ride the subway alone and I got
29 labeled the world's worst mom'

Introduction

What is the relationship between the way we raise the next generation and wider social relations? Drawing on theoretical discussions around risk and trust this paper ‘thinks through’ the subjects of parenting and social solidarity, with the aid of a comparative perspective.

Many scholars, particularly in Anglophone countries, have observed that mothers and fathers are now expected to do much more explicit ‘parenting’ than in the past (Hays 1996, Lee et al. 2014). This has led to theorisations of an ‘intensification’ of parenting, linked, in particular, to (neo)liberal welfare states (Lareau 2003, Nelson 2013, see also introduction, this issue). For the purposes of a comparative look into the reception, rejection, transformation and potential effect of these discourses, Norway has been chosen as a ‘social democratic’ state with an alternative historical orientation to the UK on questions of welfare and equality.

In particular, the paper considers the effect of a more individualistic narrative around parenting on notions of solidarity and trust in the two settings. This provides a means of discussing broader theoretical concerns around risk and responsibility, especially as they intersect with our ideas of childhood and adulthood. In short, the paper suggests that an individualised understanding of ‘parenting’ is problematic, as it has potentially corrosive effects on notions of social solidarity – a phenomenon arguably visible in the UK already. Whilst this has been tempered by Norwegian social democracy, this is changing with the global spread of neoliberal ideologies.

By drawing on theories of social trust and the ‘common good’ (Eriksen, 2014; Tonnies, 1887; Sandel 2009) to analyze the rise and impact of intensive parenting, the paper uses insights from both parenting culture and childhood studies to argue for a societal conception of parenting where the ways that we – including children and adults (parents and non-parents) – care for each other is central to the potentials and challenges of building solidarity. To make this argument, the paper considers three examples in social reproduction where tensions might be expected to be particularly pronounced, such as between parents and non-parents, between fertile and infertile citizens, and between the generations, in the context of rising migration. In bringing insights from childhood and parenting culture studies to bear on both academic and policy understandings of parenting, it explores how we – children as well as adults – are active in shaping ideas about good parenting and social solidarity, both within and beyond family units. In short, an individualised perspective on the ‘parenting’ relationship is not only highly reductive, it is also damaging to the project of building tomorrow.

‘Intensive’ parenting

Parenting has long been considered of great importance when it comes to the transmission of social norms and values, the continuation of kinship, family and household, and for reproducing local and national communities (Barlow and Chapin, 2010). It is understood here as an element of ‘social reproduction’, as

used by feminist scholars. As part and parcel of the perpetuation of gender and class relations:

[s]ocial reproduction includes the care and socialization of children and care of the elderly or infirm. Social reproduction includes the organization of sexuality, biological reproduction, and how food, clothing, and shelter are made available. Most social reproduction occurs within the family unit...variations in the distribution of the work of social reproduction are affected by the family, market, community, and state. (Laslett and Brenner, 1989: 381).

Recent sociological work has also situated 'parenting' as critical for understanding contemporary changes in society – particularly in the US and the UK but also further afield (Author 2013). Drawing attention to broader socio-cultural processes within those societies that have cast contemporary child rearing as a highly important yet problematic sphere of social life, this work starts from the premise that raising children has become a more complex task, culturally, than it used to be in the past. Furedi, for example says the following:

Child-rearing is not the same as parenting. In most human societies there is no distinct activity that today we associate with the term parenting. In agricultural societies, children are expected to participate in the work and routine of the community and are not regarded as requiring special parenting attention or care ... The belief that children require special care and attention evolved alongside the conviction that what adults did mattered to their development. These sentiments gained strength and began to influence public opinion in the nineteenth century. The work of mothering and fathering was now endowed with profound importance. It became defined as a distinct skill that could assure the development of character traits necessary for a successful life ... Once children are seen as the responsibility of a mother and father rather than of a larger community the modern view of parenting acquires salience. (Furedi, 2002, p. 106)

From this point of view, a trajectory towards placing particular significance on the role and contribution of the parent, using their 'skills' to ensure a child's 'successful life', has a long history. However, despite its long history, it is also recognized that 'parenting' has acquired specific connotations more recently, certainly within neoliberal Euro-American settings. If one looks closely at the question of raising the next generation it will become clear this is rarely discussed as a communal task or the responsibility of adult society as a whole. Rather, it is discussed as an individualized 'parenting strategy' (whether it be around discipline, eating and sleeping patterns or otherwise).

Chiming with work done by modernization theorists (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1999) a key conceptual assumption is that children are particularly vulnerable to risk in the early years, such that a developmental 'blueprint' can be set during this period, engendering a highly deterministic, heavily loaded understanding of the parenting relationship (see also Macvarish 2016, Burman 2017, introduction, this issue). In a neoliberal era, with its emphasis on self-management, 'good'

parents are therefore reflexive, informed consumers, able to account for their 'parenting strategies' (Murphy, 2003, Author 2013). Recognizing the gendered dimension to these changes, much work in the US and the UK has drawn on the concept of 'intensive mothering' (Hays, 1996) in understanding the experiences of contemporary women to describe a kind of interaction with their children that is ideally 'child-centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor intensive, and financially expensive' (Hays, 1996: x, see also Lee et al., 2014).

In the introduction to this special issue, the editors elaborate on the inevitable relation between the 'vulnerable child' and the 'risky parent', noting that in such conceptions 'the child' becomes merely an 'outcome' of parental input, and a trope rather than an active contributor to the parent-child relationship. Alanen and Mayall's (2005) suggestion that 'childing' be the logical partner to 'parenting' is a welcome intervention, and whilst this paper focuses largely on the parental experience of the relationship, this is not to endorse the idea that socialization or 'parenting' is a unilateral or 'downwards' process. Indeed, much work in childhood studies has highlighted the extent to which children are active in caring relationships across the generations and beyond (e.g. Alanen, 2011, Spyrou, Rosen and Cook 2018). In challenging this academic lacunae, and thinking through children's roles (as conduits, mediators and agents) in building and breaking solidarities, it is critical that we take into account both their positions of being 'socialised' and 'cared for' but also their role in caring for and socializing others, whether children or adults.

Of course, the perception of what is a 'good parent' (or 'good child') is culturally, historically and ideologically rooted, and affects individuals in different ways according to a range of intersectional factors. However, the traction of this more individualised and competitive approach to parenting is intimately linked to wider cultural norms as well as state infrastructures, which differ dramatically in terms of welfare and resources for education and care (e.g. lack of school places, which puts extra pressure on parents to 'go the extra mile' (Lareau 2003, Nelson 2010)). Drawing on classical theoretical concerns, this article therefore asks how we might use ideas like 'trust' and 'solidarity' to challenge popular, policy and indeed academic understandings of 'parenting', which tend to conceptualize it as an individualized relationship. Instead, what might be gained in thinking about it as more *social* endeavor that necessarily involves all adults and children?

Theoretical context: Parenting, social solidarity and trust

The Norwegian anthropologist Eriksen has argued that the recent turn towards 'intensive' or 'paranoid' parenting (Furedi 2008) represents a shift in our very notions of personhood, responsibility and trust (2015). Using insights from classical social theorists, Eriksen evokes debates about the relationship between 'gemeinshaft' and 'gesellschaft', as used by thinkers such as Tonnies and Weber in particular (Tonnies 1887, Weber 2012). For Weber, these are ideal types referring to social relationships based on informal, personal and 'community' ties in the former, and indirect, formal or 'society' ties in the latter (2012). The term is used here in this Weberian sense to refer to a sense of social cohesion and commitment to others, which is not only kin-based, but formed from a sense of 'we-ness' more broadly (Westerling, 2016). Solidarity of this sort matters in

thinking about the project of 'building tomorrow'; that is, to discussions and decisions about who counts as a member of the 'we' – a highly politicized issue in the context of ethno-nationalism (Rosen and Suissa, this issue), but not one necessarily determined by that, either within or beyond transnational borders. Solidarity, as understood here, is premised in many ways on an idea of trust and shared values, and this paper asks how trust is impacted by the rise of neoliberal, risk-conscious intensive parenthood, considering other means by which we might cultivate a sense of social solidarity.

Certainly, Eriksen suggests that there has been a loss of community or 'trust' in recent years, as part of the turn towards the 'risk society' that Giddens et al. describe (Giddens 1999). He gives the example that in the past, mothers in the UK would leave prams outside the shop whilst they carried out errands, or informally arrange for friends to do the school run; today, this would be unthinkable (and probably a prosecutable offence).ⁱ To this extent, the loss of 'solidarity' or 'trust' might best be read as one consequence of the growing individualization of adult-child relations, itself a product of a more neoliberal turn in the management of personal and family life: one cannot trust others to who do not have as much of a stake in that child's future (and see Rosen and Suissa, this issue, on how this has become politicized in the UK). Arguably this has even extended to intimate and family relations, such that the mother cannot trust anyone – even her partner or parents – to look after her child in the 'right' way (Wolf 2011; discussed further below).

Further, in line with work on risk consciousness, whether this is an actual or an imagined loss of social cohesion the effects are the same: People do not leave their children outside shops because they perceive solidarity, or 'trust' to have eroded (see also Bristow 2014). A focus on these *conceptions* therefore has important implications for both theory and policy. Arguably, the notion that the adult generation has a responsibility for nurturing the next generation was historically something that was taken for granted (Furedi 2008). Even if as an adult one was childless, for example, this did not mean that one was indifferent to the next generation (see Rosen and Suissa, this issue).

Today (in the US and the UK at least) Furedi argues that something has changed, in part as a result of contemporary political shifts. Now that parenting has become more individualized, he argues that there has been an estrangement from responsibility. The presumption of generational responsibility that has historically underpinned child-rearing has become disorganized. This means, he argues, that there has been a breakdown in the very notion of adult (and indeed childhood) identity. Whilst this can of course be welcomed in some sense – breaking down traditional power relations, for example – Furedi identifies this as a historically novel development, such that adults are no longer confident in their ability to act as authority figures *per se* to the next generation. Instead, parents are positioned, by policy makers at least, as both omnipotent and yet the ultimate cause of their children's problems, and in need of expert guidance. And whilst 'good parenting' in this model is ostensibly child-centred, it is arguably one where children *qua* children are eclipsed as participants in 'building tomorrow' and understood merely as outcome of parenting skills (again, this intersects with Rosen and Suissa's argument, this issue)

Furedi diagnoses this as a crisis of adulthood, where being a 'grown up' is no longer valued (or socially signified) in the same way as the past – in line with the shift towards uncertain, 'liquid' or 'reflexive' modernity that Bauman describes (2005). Because of this confusion, relationships between adults and children are ever more subject to juridification – that is, to rules about both formal and informal contact (see Bristow 2014 on the increased policing of adult-child relations in the form of CRB checks or similar in the UK, for example). This is historically and culturally specific: in Japan, for example, small children – aged only 2 or 3 – routinely take the subway alone, without parental supervision (Dixon 2015). Dixon notes that one reason for the unusual degree of independence of Japanese children is not (only) self-sufficiency, but rather, 'group reliance'. He observes that children learn early that 'any member of society can be called on to help or serve others' and that a 'sense of trust and co-operation occurs, often unspoken or unsolicited' (Dixon 2015, see also Hendry, 1986, on neighbourhood based 'techniques of training' for young Japanese children).

By contrast, where children might once have relied on adults to help them when they encountered day-to-day adversity, today, in the UK, many adults would be wary about getting involved with a child they were not related to, and children are taught from an early age about 'stranger danger' and to be suspicious of unknown adults. As Bristow argues, recognition that some adults may harm children has become transposed, in the form of society-wide regulatory projects regulating inter-generational contact, into the sensibility that *all* adults should be vetted in case they might pose a danger to children (2014). To give a more extreme example, in New York, a woman who let her 9-year old ride the subway was labelled 'the world's worst mom' (*Washington Post* 2015). In short, a substantive element of the interpersonal relationship (between adults and children) gets lost in this transformation of personhood in the new parenting culture (see also Ramaekers and Suissa, 2011).

As is examined below, this has had a knock-on effect on social solidarity or 'trust' more broadly – to the extent that active suspicion and resentment between adults (whether parents or not) about their caring rights and responsibilities are becoming increasingly commonplace. In parallel, children themselves have become de-responsibilised, leading some to argue that we need to return to a more 'free-range' approach to parenting (Skenazy, in Lee et al 2014.) recognizing children as willing and able to take responsibility for themselves from a much earlier age. At the same time, critics have noted that this continues to rely on a deterministic, individualized model of the parent-child relationship. Instead, these authors advocate that that the ways in which we engage in processes of social reproduction should be understood as precisely that – social (Bristow, 2014, Lee et al 2014.).

In the three examples discussed below, areas of potential social tension are explored in more depth, probing specifically why a more individualized approach to parent-child (or adult-child) relations is problematic. The suggestion is that relations between parents and non-parents (for example) act as a 'pressure point,' indicating where a sense of social solidarity is particularly under threat from a more individualized understanding of 'parenting'. A more

stratified perspective on the question of social reproduction (i.e., with a shared sense of responsibility for raising the next generation) by contrast, opens up new avenues for the re-imagining of social trust.

State infrastructure and social reproduction: A comparative perspective

Norway and the UK have deliberately been selected as comparative case studies for the purposes of this paper. Like the Japanese example, traditionally, Norwegian society has been understood as one where neoliberal individualization, and the effects thereof, would be less far-reaching than the UK, given a different historical, political and cultural orientation towards social justice, family life and social cohesion. Eriksen, for example, suggests that the loss of trust he describes in the US and the UK has not been experienced in Norway to such an extent – parents will still leave their prams outside shops, and arguably the effects of this individualization of the responsibility for child care are less extreme (2014).ⁱⁱ

Esping-Andersen's seminal (if controversial) *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* categorises Norway as one of the 'social democratic' welfare states. He says of these states: 'The ideal is not to maximise dependence on the family, but capacities for individual independence (2006: 169). The state opts to 'take direct responsibility of caring for children, the aged and the helpless.' It is committed to 'allow women to choose work rather than the household', providing substantial state-provided child-care from an early age. Taxes are typically high, but in general this is understood by citizens to be in their best interests as a society more broadly, giving the state a high degree of legitimacy (Eriksen 2014). It is also crucial, argues Eriksen, to building a sense of community coherence and safety: in place of the need for competitive or intensive parenting, parents in Norway know that they can rely on the state to provide for their children, and competition for nurseries, schools and universities (for example) is less intense.

In opposition to this 'social-democratic' model, the British system has been classified as a (neo) 'liberal welfare state' (Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2011). Here, Esping-Andersen notes that the main features are 'means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers or modest social-insurance plans'; 'Benefits cater mainly to a clientele of low-income, usually working class, state dependants' (2006: 167). Taxes tend to be lower than in social democratic states and a narrative of the '(un)deserving poor' dominates discussions of public finances (*Guardian* 2012). Not surprisingly (like the US, which might be said to be an even more extreme example) this infrastructure has been linked to the pervasive appeal or spread of intensive parenting, where individual parents must work hard to 'cultivate' their children in a concerted way, to ensure their success in life (Lareau 2003).

The commitment to foster the capacity for individual independence seen in many Nordic states does not sit easily with the more 'intensive' model of parenting, described above, which stresses the importance of 'familisation' (individual, family-based, and embodied care for children), rather than allowing for a more socially based or shared model. Indeed, it sits much more easily in liberal welfare states like the UK, with their implicit support for the traditional model of the family and a stay-at-home, usually female, carer.

Recently, to counter this 'gender inequality' in parenting in the UK – and its knock-on effect on men and women's working lives – there have been efforts to get fathers more 'involved' in parenting. Fatherhood has become politicized, with many calling for better 'work-life balance' policies to alleviate gender inequality in parenting (such as split parental leave and flexible working policies, Author 2014, Baird and O'Brien 2015, Twamley and Schober 2019). Many of those calling for these changes look to the Scandinavian countries as an example of 'best practice' – since many of them have long embodied a commitment to 'equality' and fairness at the legislative level.

Norway, for example, operates the 'use-it-or-lose-it' system whereby a substantial amount of parental leave is allocated to the partner or father but is lost to the family unit if not taken up (Bradnth and Kvande 2009); this leave is paid at or nearly at full salary.ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, childcare is almost fully subsidized and represents an average expense of less than 5% in terms of household outgoings (the OECD average is 12%, Daycare Trust 2014, Statistics Norway 2015). By contrast, the UK technically operates a system of 'Shared Parental Leave' whereby a mother can 'transfer' leave to her partner, but this is typically unpaid or paid at a very low statutory rate at less than a quarter of the average wage. Furthermore, childcare on average amounts to 30% of disposable household income in the UK (ibid), making decisions around working patterns a particularly fraught one for many parents, again linked to wider intersectional concerns. (These economic constraints do not just affect parents, of course; see Vergara et al, this issue on children's 'ethical reflexivity' around debt management in neoliberal settings as part of caring relationships within families).

The suggestion here is that these state infrastructures represent (and inform) different cultural ideas around family life (for all members), reproduction and social solidarity more widely. In turn, these expectations are reflected in other social institutions, such as schools or indeed the media itself. There is therefore an interesting process of mirroring going on in each location (of parenting culture and social policy respectively) that makes these two countries ideal case studies for an investigation into the iterative relationship between social norms and state infrastructure.

Changing cultures of parenting: diffusion and cohesion

In Norway, preliminary research indicates that a similar trend in parenting culture has been observed to that in the UK, with scholars noting that it has gradually become more 'intensive' as part of a turn towards a more neoliberal agenda, albeit not to such a great extent. Frønes (2007) describes contemporary Norway as 'parent-oriented', noting that parents invest more time and energy in their children than ever before, and where parenting tasks are becoming more demanding. Like the UK, contemporary parenting has therefore been defined as 'involved parenting' – a parenthood that centres on the child and the child's needs, and where parents bear a fundamental responsibility for the child's future. Aarseth and Andersen's (2012) work on middle class parents, as well as Bendixsen's and Danielsen's research on parenting and diversity, also shows how family-life has become a project to be managed and worked at (2018).

Indeed, this is particularly the case for the newly 'elite' families in Scandinavia reported as grappling, historically for the first time, with wanting their children to be socialized according to social values of 'sameness', whilst also making them competitive in the increasingly global capitalist market and therefore invest in them in ways familiar to US and UK parents, often with the aid of nannies or au-pairs (Aarseth 2018).

Indeed Aarseth's work in Norway in particular brings to the fore the question of individualism/ collectivism. What scholars of 'parenting culture' in neoliberal contexts observe is that the task of raising the next generation has become highly fragmented and detailed, with a keen focus on the everyday practices of daily life (such as practices around eating or sleeping). Rather than 'socialising' children into a set of shared social values, a more individualised perspective means that the aim is to raise 'successful individuals' who are able to 'be themselves' (Author 2013, and clearly this is premised on a highly reductive vision of 'the child'). This sits well within an intensive parenting ethos, but less well where there is a focus on communality, sameness and 'being social' (see also Bach 2017 on the Danish case).

In thinking anthropologically about the politics of cultural translation (see Author 2013) this paper considers the ways in which messages about 'good parenting' are mobilized by various actors, including children – and adopted, resisted or reconfigured in these two cultural settings. In terms of resistance to this model of 'parenting', for example, Eldén and Anving (talking about middle class families in Sweden, 2019) include accounts from children, who are largely skeptical of the intensive 'quality time' approach to childcare, and are instead keen to spend time with their parents, during mundane activities of cooking and bathing, rather than having this 'dirty work' outsourced to an au-pair.

In general, however, whilst there are signs of growing stratification and increasing visibility of neoliberal discourses in Norway, there are important differences between the UK and Norway, specifically around gender (Gullvåg Holter 2014). Whilst in the UK researchers have explored if and how more intensive forms of fathering is 'on the rise' (Shirani et al 2012), Norwegian research indicates that a more active role for fathers and norms promoting a shared parenthood has been developing for some time (Lorenzen 2012, Bjornholt 2014), and point to their shifting role in Norwegian society (Aarseth 2011). In part, this is explained by a policy context which has long championed an 'equality' ethos. ^{iv}

Certainly, knowledge concerning the cultural presumptions underlying ways of 'doing parenthood' (or 'doing childhood') is essential for understanding how trust, belonging and support for central societal values are preserved (and changed) particularly in the context of a culturally plural and increasingly cosmopolitan setting (Bendixsen and Danielsen 2018). How has this more individualized model of parenting diffused differently in Norway and the UK in accordance with different cultural and political histories (that is, according to gender, ethnic and class differences)? Is it the case that Norway is following in the footsteps of the UK in terms of the intensification of parenting, or is this too simplistic a way of framing this issue?

Parenting, childhood and social antagonism: Three examples

The suggestion here is that an individualised approach to parenting, so common in policy, which stresses the importance of the parent-child relationship to ultimate outcomes not only eclipses other social relations key to the parenting relationship, but also has the potential to erode notions of social trust or solidarity. Thus the three examples which follow focus on areas of hypothetical tension relating to 'parenting' and social reproduction, as a means of thinking through the potentials and challenges of building social trust in using a more societal conception of raising children. To do this, this section draws on work in childhood studies to articulate the ways in which children are engaged in building and breaking solidarities, caring and being cared for being socialized and socializing others (whether that be adults or other children).

Parents and non-parents

In the UK, an individualized narrative around parenting (in policy as well as academic and media discourses) increasingly presents children as a morally loaded 'lifestyle choice' for which parents should (and do) take sole and full responsibility (Bristow 2014). Thus an antagonism between parents and non-parents has become increasingly visible as a form of social categorization – most notably in the workplace, particularly around parents' entitlement to leave and flexible working. As the press would have it, this has become a battle between the 'breeders' and the 'child-free-by-choicers', with campaigns for 'personal leave' to be available to employees for reasons other than child care (Bristow 2014, see also Rosen and Suissa, this issue ^v)

In the UK, childcare is understood as the responsibility of the family unit, with many scholars pointing out that the assumption childcare should rest with the individual parents is not only an expression of a neoliberal, individualistic era (Gillies 2009, Fraser 2013), but also one which exacerbates a segregation between parents and non-parents. This could arguably also be framed as part of a general loss in social responsibility for raising the next generation.

Instead, the suggestion here is that if we took a *societal* conception of raising children, this could lead to a society-wide organised system of care for children, and corresponding re-organisation of the work-place. Working with similar ideas of sociality, but from a social policy perspective, Sandel notes that the challenge for contemporary policy-makers is to 'imagine a politics that takes moral... questions seriously, but brings them to bear on broad economic and civic concerns' (2009: 262). Looking at institutions in the US such as national service and public schooling, for example, he rejects a utilitarian approach to the common good that prioritises the maximisation of welfare, on the grounds that justice should not become a simple 'matter of calculation' rather than of principle. He also rejects the choice-oriented (or 'freedom-based') approaches of both libertarians and liberal-egalitarians for failing to provide anything other than 'individual preference' as the guiding principle on public policy design. Instead, revisiting ideas from Aristotle, he argues for the cultivation of virtue and reasoning on questions of policy in which 'value' to the common good becomes paramount. To use the idea of the common good is not to imply that children are a resource from which we all stand to benefit. Rather, this focus on virtue and

what we really 'value', socially, is helpful in discussions around parenting/childing as a more societal endeavor, in that it helps us think beyond the more typical, neoliberal framings of relations of social reproduction, which tend to rest on ideas of competition, individualisation or familisation (e.g. Gillies 2011).

To this extent, with a social understanding of the importance of childcare for all, the tensions between parents and non-parents described might well be lessened, as they would not be pushed back onto individuals and employers (Bristow 2014). This makes this an interesting issue to compare with Norway, then, since there the state demonstrates a financial commitment to children's care through heavily subsidised childcare and flexible working arrangements for parents – seemingly without courting the tensions mentioned above. Indeed, preliminary research suggests that this tension (between parents and non-parents) is not one that is considered culturally salient as a form of social labelling, and certainly not one voiced in the media (Bendixsen and Danielsen 2018).

And what of children? Theoretically it is interesting to consider whether this represents a different vision of the family life to that in the UK, and how, if at all, an increasing 'intensification' of parenting outlined above is likely to alter this. The Nordic states are frequently held up as the 'gold standard' of equality legislation, but how that actually works itself out in practice is generally less clear-cut (Simonardottir 2016). Certainly, the role of children themselves as active participants in being or shaping 'the future' (Rosen and Suissa, this issue) is reflected in a commitment to children's rights at the level of policy and practice in the Scandinavian context (Qvortrup 2009). Clearly, children *are* active participants in building relations with adults (and between adults) in ways that span the parent/non-parent boundary, something which is often eclipsed by the narrow focus on 'parenting' in policy and indeed academic discourse (Patico, this issue, discusses adult-child interactions in a US school).

Migration and intergenerational change

Taking a historical angle, essential to exploring notions of social trust over time, the second example is that of intensive parenting and intergenerational relationships, with special attention to issues of migration, diversity and coherence (Bendixsen and Danielsen, 2018; Franceschelli, 2018).

Scholars working on parenting culture in the UK have observed that one of the negative effects of a more intensive, expert-driven individualistic approach to parenting is the impact on intergenerational transmission. A cultural context that views parents as inadequate in the face of the task of 'building tomorrow' means that parents have become seen in need of ever more expert guidance in carrying out this task (Lee et al, 2014). Arguably, this contemporary, expert-based parenting culture has not only had an effect on parents' own subjectivities, but it has magnified a disruption to any sense of cultural transmission between grandparents, parents and children. Grandparents are routinely presented (in the UK) as not to be trusted as they are 'out of touch' or not 'up to date' on the most recent parenting methods and advice. Children, by contrast, are often instrumentalised in schemes to 'educate' parents about, for example, healthy

eating or environmentalism (Furedi 2008). It is crucial then to consider intergenerational shifts in parenting culture, as well as at the effect of an individualization of parenting on those intergenerational relationships themselves.

As UK and Norwegian societies become ever more globalized and 'multicultural,' new parenting norms, ideologies and practices are emerging, not least at the instigation of children themselves who often act as interlocutors for their parents (and grandparents) – something that is of particular concern for the state and notions of social coherence and nation-building (Crafter and Iqbal 2016).

In the context of rising ethno-nationalism and historically high levels of migration, Gullestad has written about the Norwegian model of social equality as one which champions 'sameness' rather than 'difference', in contrast to the 'multi-cultural' model usually promoted in the UK (2002). Working in urban contexts of high migration in Norway (and, importantly, in the context of the ascension of a right-wing party to power) Bendixsen and Danielsen have explored how notions of diversity (and disruption) are experienced by Norwegian parents (2018). Encouragingly, they document parents' accounts of concern about 'other peoples' children' in this context, as part of efforts to extend 'intensive' parenting beyond the nuclear family, seeing socialization as a collective endeavor through what they term 'inclusive' parenting. Thus, as the work of Vergara (this issue) also acknowledges, we also need to think about how an intensification of parenting in certain contexts has the potential to *create* coherence within – as well as between – particular groups, as part of this process of 'integration' not least as a product of children's engagement in these social networks (see also Author, 2013).

In London, Vincent et al's work on children's friendships (2017) also makes an argument about the importance of peer relations to the building of social solidarity, particularly in 'super diverse' contexts. Focussing on friendships across ethnic and class differences they highlight both the potentials and challenges of relationships between children across class boundaries, not least when these are mediated by parental anxieties, seeing these as examples of 'efforts to forge relationships across difference' (2017: 1987). However, these are recognized to be fragile ones under threat from a declining sense of social trust as part of a wider 'hostile environment' towards migrants (Guardian 2017)

This issue therefore highlights some of the problems of thinking about parenting as simply an individualistic matter, as it is so often framed in policy discourse. In contexts of historically high migration (and a rise in right-wing, nationalist rhetoric across Europe) a risk-conscious, neo-liberal understanding of social reproduction threatens attempts to build social trust and arguably encourages a turn away from 'others', whether from different cultural backgrounds, or arguably even a different generation. A more social conception allows space for an appreciation of peer and other adult-child relations in the creation of social relations.

Fertility and inequality

The final example looks particularly at how the intensification of parenting has differently affected would-be parents in the UK and Norway, in the context of different regulatory regimes, suggesting that an individualized approach is corrosive to notions of solidarity and trust between citizens. In a more individualised, intensive parenting culture, which stresses personal fulfilment through parenthood, becoming a (biological) parent has not only become seemingly more feasible for many couples, but the social role has been inflated in congruence, frequently being framed as a 'human right' (Strathern 1993). In line with a focus on tensions (Rosen and Newberry 2018, Rosen and Suissa, this issue), then, this example considers how the inflation of the parenting identity has led to feelings of exclusion and segregation at the wider social level, for those who cannot 'achieve' it (Author 2017). These issues are particularly timely, given recent debates in each country about how far the state should pay for couples to receive fertility treatment (recent headlines in the UK reveal that in many areas of the country, IVF treatment will be scrapped on the National Health Service due to cost-cutting, *Independent* 2017).

Recent work on the subject of egg-donation explores these issues around individualisation and social reproduction in a cross-cultural comparative framework (Marre et al 2017). In the UK, individuals are (currently) able to receive treatment with donor eggs on the NHS, where in Norway, this is currently prohibited due to concerns about coercion (although the Biotechnology Council has advised changing this law, Melhuus 2005). Instead, patients seeking treatment through egg donation typically engage in what has been called 'fertility tourism' or 'Cross Border Reproductive Care' in search of egg-donors, with Spain being one of the most popular destinations (Pennings and Gurtin 2012, Marre et al 2017). This example therefore prompts us to think about 'trust' and 'solidarity' not only in access to reproductive technologies, but also 'what counts' in the creation of kinship and national communities, not least as this relates to any children born as a result of that treatment (Cheney 2018).

In thinking about the relationship between the intensification of parenting, reproductive technologies and neoliberalism it is important to think specifically about the nature of 'individualisation'. As both a product of an intensified parenting culture, as well as one of its greatest catalysts, reproductive technologies could be read as the example *par excellence* of the individualisation of a social problem. Instead, if we take a more social view, this might better be understood as a problem with the way society is structured (in terms of, for example fertility decline and the pressure to become established in one's career). Instead, infertility is increasingly tackled in ways that makes individuals accountable for their reproductive trajectories, emphasizing and enabling ever further the importance of the biological relation (Inhorn and Van Balen 2002).

The problem then, is that paradoxically, many individuals (and couples) seeking fertility treatment narrate their inability to have children as a form of social exclusion (from a peer group), whilst those who are parents *also* report a sense of segregation from society as a whole. In both cases, this individualization is antithetical to the case of family life and social reproduction, which has traditionally been about creating connections (see Author 2017). Roman's work in Sweden (2014), for example, reveals the paradox of individualization in the

contemporary era: having children is itself considered a 'risk project', minutely planned by couples to counter the threat to individual autonomy and therefore family life itself.

Whilst of course children are not 'active' participants in the forging (or breaking) of these relationships between fertile and infertile adults, it is nevertheless critical to think about the notion of 'the child' in these debates, even when this is at the conceptual (or rather, pre-conception) level. In Cheney's work, for example, we see how 'the best interests of the child' is configured in debates around international commercial surrogacy, usually from within a children's rights perspective. She argues instead for the importance of empirical work with children conceived by such arrangements, and a theoretical perspective which has relationality at heart (2018, see also Lee, Macvarish and Sheldon 2017, who look at the 'Welfare of the Child' question with respect to the policing of potential parents). These kinds of questions prompt us to think about the relationship between individualism and community relations as they relate to the role of the state in subsidising treatment (and by extension, who can afford to become a parent at all). An individualized perspective on 'parenting' plays into a more divisive approach to reproduction and the redistribution of resources across society, and thus has potentially corrosive effects on relations of solidarity.

Discussion: Solidarity, care and the 'common good'

Bringing together insights from childhood with work in parenting culture studies, in parallel with ideas around social solidarity, the article suggests that concepts such as 'gemeinschaft' (Tonnies) 'trust' (Eriksen) or the 'common good' (Sandel) can be useful in re-thinking the way social reproduction is framed, in both academic and policy debates. Certainly, childhood studies helps us see the ways in which 'parenting culture studies' too readily eclipses the perspectives of, and potential for, children to build social relations, helping us re-think underlying notions of socialisation, authority and categories of adulthood and childhood in turn.

Politically, rhetoric in Europe has been increasingly focused on the individual's private 'choices', meaning that structural challenges to collective duties of care often fall outside the remit of equality and anti-discrimination policies (Browne 2013, Baird and O'Brien 2015). But how free are people – as parents, non-parents or even children – to make these 'choices' about their work and home lives? In the context of cuts to public services (in the UK) on the one hand, and the obsession with parenthood on the other, what is society actually doing about being and raising children? In this particular political climate, childcare and reproduction provides an interesting 'litmus test' for policy-makers in thinking about a range of other issues relating to the allocation of state resources. This also clearly has implications for what Eriksen (and indeed Marx, Tonnies and Weber) say about solidarity, particularly in the context of rising diversity. In taking a more social perspective on the question of reproduction, the ways that we – children and adults (parents and non-parents) – care for each other can be foregrounded, and therefore made central to project of building social solidarity. To this extent the 'reading across' of the two fields of parenting culture and childhood studies can be fruitful to this endeavour.

Further, through a comparative perspective, this paper aims to re-frame the debate around 'parenting' as one beyond the individual family, to become one of the 'common good', from which we all – parents, non-parents and children, have a stake in. This opens up, it is hoped, new avenues in how we could approach the 'problem' of raising the next generation as a *societal* rather than an individual one.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the relationship between 'parenting' and trust, and the ideas of adulthood and childhood on which it rests. Thinking about parenting as a societal endeavour, whereby all of us – children, parents and non-parents care for each other - challenges the individualised model of the neoliberal 'parent' and 'child' within the new 'parenting culture' and helps us approach the question of building social solidarity afresh. The suggestion is that an 'intensification' of parenting has a potentially corrosive effect on notions of trust and social cohesion, looking at the potential implications of this through three examples. Whilst a social democratic welfare state infrastructure (as seen in Norway) clearly goes some way to curbing the worst excesses of a more neoliberal individualised 'intensive' parenting culture evident in the UK, it's clear that the spread of this culture is on the rise, creating novel tensions and forms of inequality in the Nordic context. To put it another way, how long will Norwegian parents continue to leave their children in prams outside shops?

References

- Aarseth, H. (2011) *Moderne familieliv. Den likestilte familiens motivasjonsformer*. Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.
- Alanen, L. (2011) 'Generational Order', in J. Qvortrup, W. Corsaro and M.-S. Honig (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. pp. 159-74
- Alanen and Mayall, B. (2001) *Conceptualizing Child- Adult Relations* London: Falmer
- Bach, D. (2017) 'The civilized family life : childrearing in affluent families.' In Gilliam, L. and Eva Gulløv. *Children of the welfare state: civilising practices in schools, childcare and families*. London : Pluto Press. Pp. 194-235.
- Baird, M, and O'Brien M. (2015) 'Dynamics of parental leave in Anglophone countries: the paradox of state expansion in liberal welfare regimes'. *Community Work and Family* 18.
- Barlow, K. and Chapin, B.L. (2010) 'The practices of Mothering: An Introduction', in *Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology, ETHOS*, 38(4): 324-338
- Bauman, Z. (2005) *Liquid Life* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. New Delhi: Sage
- Beck, U. (2000) 'Risk Society Revisited: Theory, Politics and Research Programmes', in Adam, Beck, and Van Loon. (eds.), *The Risk Society and Beyond: Critical Issues for Social Theory*. London: Sage, pp. 211 -229
- Bendixsen, S. and Danielsen, H. (2018) 'Other people's children: inclusive parenting in a diverse neighborhood in Norway.' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (Online first).
- Bjørnholt, M. (2014) *Modern Men: A Norwegian 30-Year Longitudinal Study of Intergenerational Transmission and Social Change*. Örebro Studies in Gender Research, 3. Örebro: Örebro universitet. Doctoral dissertation
- Brandth, B, and Kvande, E. (2009) "Norway: The Making of the Father's Quota." In Kameman, S and Moss, P (eds). *The Politics of Parental Leave Policies: Children, Parenting, Gender and the Labour Market* Bristol: The Policy Press. Pp 191-207
- Bristow, J. (2014) 'Who cares for children? The problem of intergenerational contact' in Lee, E. Bristow, J. Faicloth, C. and Macvarish, J. 2014 *Parenting Culture Studies* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Browne, J. (2013) 'The Default Model: Gender Equality, Fatherhood and Structural Constraint', *Politics & Gender. Official Journal of the American Political Sciences Association (APSA)*. Vol 9, Issue 02. pp. 152-173.

- Burman, E. (2017) *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*, London: Routledge.
- Crafter, S., & Iqbal, H. (2016). 'Child language brokering in cultural contact zones: Young people's experiences of critical moments'. Presented at: Special Interest Group 10, 21 & 25 Conference of the European Association for Research in Learning and Instruction.
- Cheney, K. (2018) 'International commercial surrogacy: Beyond feminist conundrums and the child as product' in Rosen, R. and Twamley, K (eds). *Feminism and the Politics of Childhood: Friends of foes?* UCL Press pp. 155-172.
- Daycare Trust. (2014) 'Childcare Costs Survey 2014'. London: Daycare Trust <http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/childcare-costs-surveys>
- Dermott, E. 2008 *Intimate Fatherhood: A Sociological Analysis* London: Routledge.
- Dixon (2015) cited in *The Atlantic*. 'Why are little kids in Japan so independent?' <http://www.citylab.com/commute/2015/09/why-are-little-kids-in-japan-so-independent/407590/>
- Douglas, S. and Michaels, M. (2004) *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined All Women*. New York: Free Press.
- Eldén, S and Anving, T. (2019) *Nanny Families: Practices of Care by Nannies, Au Pairs, Parents and Children in Sweden*. Bristol: Bristol University Press
- Eriksen, T. H. (2014) 'Who or What to Blame' *European Journal of Sociology*, Volume 55, Issue 02, August 2014, pp 275-294
- Esping-Andersen, G. (2006) 'The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism'. *The Welfare State Reader*. Pierson, C and Castles, F. (Eds). London: Polity Press.
- Ferragina, E and Seeleib-Kaiser, M (2011) 'Thematic Review: Welfare regime debate: past, present, futures?' *Policy & Politics*, Volume 39, Number 4, October 2011, pp. 583-611(29)
- Franceschelli, M. 2018. *CCÀ SEMU. Here we are, lives on hold in Lampedusa* Available: <https://vimeo.com/264381307>
- Furedi, F. (2002) *Paranoid Parenting: Why ignoring the experts may be best for your child* Chicago: Chicago Review Press
- Furedi, F. (2008) *Paranoid Parenting*. London: Continuum
- Fraser, N. (2013) *Fortunes of Feminism: From state-managed capitalism to neoliberal crisis*. New York: Verso.
- Frønes, I. (2007) *Moderne barndom*. Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk
- Gatrell, C. (2005) *Hard Labour: The sociology of parenthood* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Giddens, A. (1999) 'Risk and Responsibility', in *Modern Law Review*, 62 (1): 1-10

Gillies, V. (2009) 'Understandings and experiences of involved fathering in the United Kingdom: exploring classed dimensions', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 624, 49-60

Gillies, V. (2011) 'From function to competence: engaging with the new politics of family', *Sociological Research Online*, 16(4), 11, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/16/4/11.html>

Guardian (2012) 'Rich and Poor: Deserving and undeserving' <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/27/rich-poor-deserving-undeserving>

Guardian (2013) 'Childcare – like life – is about so much more than economics.' <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/27/rich-poor-deserving-undeserving>

Guardian (2014) 'Cost of childcare is barrier to working more, says two-thirds of mothers' <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2014/jan/23/cost-childcare-barrier-work-mothers-survey>

Guardian (2015) 'Shared parenting leave: nightmare new rules, or the first baby steps to equality?' <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2015/apr/11/shared-parental-leave-rules-equality>

Guardian (2017) 'Hostile environment': the hardline Home Office policy tearing families apart'. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/nov/28/hostile-environment-the-hardline-home-office-policy-tearing-families-apart>

Gullestad, M. (1984) *Kitchen-Table Society. A Case Study of the Family Life and Friendships of Young Working-Class Mothers in Urban Norway*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Gullesatad, M. (2002) 'Invisible Fences: Egalitarianism, Nationalism and Racism' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* Volume 8, Issue 1, pages 45-63, March

Gullvåg Holter, O. (2014) "'What's in it for Men?": Old Question, New Data' *Men and Masculinities*, Vol. 17 (5)

Hays, S. (1996) *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press.

Hendry, J. (1986) *Becoming Japanese: The world of the pre-school child*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Independent. (2017) 'Patients facing 'postcode lottery' after NHS budgets slashed' <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/ivf-nhs-treatment-fertility-lists-wait-patients-lottery-budget-cuts-a8028116.html>

- Inhorn, M C., and van Balen, eds, F. (2002) *Infertility Around the Globe: New Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lareau, A. (2003) *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. By Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Laslett, B. and Brenner, J. 1989. 'Gender and social reproduction: historical perspectives'. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 15:381-404
- Lee, E. Bristow, J. Faicloth, C. and Macvarish, J. (2014) *Parenting Culture Studies* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Lee, E., Macvarish, J. and Sheldon, S. (2017). 'After the 'need for....a father': 'The welfare of the child' and 'supportive parenting' in UK assisted conception clinics'. *Families, Relationships and Societies* [Online] 6:71-87.
- Lorenzen, J. (2012) *Fra farskapets historie i Norge. Fra 1850 til 2012*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget
- Macvarish, J. (2016) *Neuroparenting: The expert invasion of family life*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Marre, D. Beatriz San Román & Diana Guerra (2017) 'On Reproductive Work in Spain: Transnational Adoption, Egg Donation, Surrogacy' *Medical Anthropology* 1-16.
- Melhuus, M. (2005) 'Better safe than sorry'. Legislating assisted conception in Norway' i Christian Krhohn-Hansen og Knut Nustad (eds) *State Formation: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.
- Murphy, E. (2003) 'Expertise and forms of knowledge in the government of families', *The Sociological Review*, 51(4), 433-462.
- Nelson, M. (2010) *Parenting Out of Control: Anxious parents in uncertain times* New York and London: New York University Press
- O'Brien, M and Twamley, K (2016) 'Fathers taking leave alone in the UK - a gift exchange between mother and father?' in O'Brien M and K Wall (Eds) *Fathers on leave alone and gender equality: An international comparative perspective*, London: Springer
- Penn, H. (2011) 'Travelling policies and global buzzwords: How international non-governmental organizations and charities spread the word about early childhood in the global South', *Childhood*, 18(1): 94-113.
- Pennings, G. and Grtin, Z. (2012) 'The legal and Ethical Regulation of Transnational Donation'. In M. Richards, J. Appleby & G. Pennings (eds.) *Reproductive Donation: Bioethics, Policy and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. PAGES
- Qvortrup, J., Corsaro, W., and Honig, M (2011). 'Why Social Studies of Childhood?

- An Introduction to the Handbook' in Qvortrup, J., Corsaro, W., and Honig, M (eds). *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan. Pp. 1-18
- Ramaekers, S. and Suissa, J. (2011) *The Claims of Parenting: Reasons, Responsibility and Society*, Contemporary Philosophies and Theories in Education 4. London: Springer.
- Roman, C. 2014. 'Children and risk: a qualitative study on Swedish IT specialists' transition to parenthood' *Families, Relationships and Societies*, Volume 3, Number 3, November, pp. 443-457(15)
- Rosen, R. and Newberry, J. (2018) 'Love, labour and temporality: Reconceptualising social reproduction with women and children in the frame', in Rosen, R. and Twamley, K. (eds), *Feminism and the politics of childhood: Friends or foes?*, London, UCL Press. pp. 117-33.
- Sandel, M. (2009) *Justice: What's the right thing to do?* London: Penguin.
- Shirani, F. Henwood, K. and Coltart, C. (2012) 'Meeting the challenges of intensive parenting culture: gender, risk management and the moral parent'. *Sociology*. 46(1) 25-40.
- Simonardottir, S. (2016) 'Constructing the attached mother in the "world's most feminist country"' *Women's Studies International Forum* 56 (2016) 103 –112
- Spyros, S, Rosen, R. and Cook, D.T. (2018). 'Introduction: Reimagining Childhood Studies: Connectivities ... Relationalities ... Linkages ... ' in *Reimagining childhood studies*. London: Bloomsbury Academic pp. 1-20.
- Strathern, M. (1993). *Reproducing the Future: Anthropology, Kinship and the New Reproductive Technologies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Statistics Norway 2015. Earnings of all Employees.
<http://www.ssb.no/en/arbeid-og-lonn/statistikker/lonnansatt>
- Tönnies, F. (1887) *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Leipzig: Fues's Verlag. (Translated, 1957 by Charles Price Loomis as *Community and Society*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.)
- Vincent, C. Neal, S. and Iqbal, H. (2017) "Encounters with Diversity: Children's Friendships and Parental Responses." *Urban Studies* 54 (8): 1974–1989
- Westerling, A. (2016). 'Parenthood and We-ness in Everyday Life: Parenting Together Apart.' In A. Sparrman, A. Westerling, J. Lind, & K. I. Dannesboe (Eds.), *Doing Good Parenthood: Ideals and Practices of Parental Involvement* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Studies in Family and Intimate Life (1 ed., pp. 127-136).

ⁱ Use of this framework is not to argue for a return to romanticised forms of 'gemeinschaft' society (where forms of stratification and exclusion were arguably more pronounced) but rather to see how these heuristic concepts might help us think through shifting conceptions of trust and its implications for social reproduction.

ⁱⁱ As is discussed further below, this correlates with historically lower levels of migration to Norway than either the UK or the US.

ⁱⁱⁱ Recent changes in Norway's government, have led to proposals for a reduction in the amount of non-transferable parental leave to 10 weeks, making this an interesting time to explore these issues.

^{iv} This commitment to gender equality seems to be shifting in these 'elite' families, where many women, unusually for Norway, stop work or move to part-time hours so as to focus on a more intensive form of mothering.

^v This intersects with the availability of contraception, abortion and the new reproductive technologies which have meant having children is ever more a 'choice'

Introduction

What is the relationship between the way we raise the next generation and wider social relations? Drawing on theoretical discussions around risk and trust this paper ‘thinks through’ the subjects of parenting and social solidarity, with the aid of a comparative perspective.

Many scholars, particularly in Anglophone countries, have observed that mothers and fathers are now expected to do much more explicit ‘parenting’ than in the past (Hays 1996, Lee et al. 2014). This has led to theorisations of an ‘intensification’ of parenting, linked, in particular, to (neo)liberal welfare states (Lareau 2003, Nelson 2013, see also introduction, this issue). For the purposes of a comparative look into the reception, rejection, transformation and potential effect of these discourses, Norway has been chosen as a ‘social democratic’ state with an alternative historical orientation to the UK on questions of welfare and equality.

In particular, the paper considers the effect of a more individualistic narrative around parenting on notions of solidarity and trust in the two settings. This provides a means of discussing broader theoretical concerns around risk and responsibility, especially as they intersect with our ideas of childhood and adulthood. In short, the paper suggests that an individualised understanding of ‘parenting’ is problematic, as it has potentially corrosive effects on notions of social solidarity – a phenomenon arguably visible in the UK already. Whilst this has been tempered by Norwegian social democracy, this is changing with the global spread of neoliberal ideologies.

By drawing on theories of social trust and the ‘common good’ (Eriksen, 2014; Tonnies, 1887; Sandel 2009) to analyze the rise and impact of intensive parenting, the paper uses insights from both parenting culture and childhood studies to argue for a societal conception of parenting where the ways that we – including children and adults (parents and non-parents) – care for each other is central to the potentials and challenges of building solidarity. To make this argument, the paper considers three examples in social reproduction where tensions might be expected to be particularly pronounced, such as between parents and non-parents, between fertile and infertile citizens, and between the generations, in the context of rising migration. In bringing insights from childhood and parenting culture studies to bear on both academic and policy understandings of parenting, it explores how we – children as well as adults – are active in shaping ideas about good parenting and social solidarity, both within and beyond family units. In short, an individualised perspective on the ‘parenting’ relationship is not only highly reductive, it is also damaging to the project of building tomorrow.

‘Intensive’ parenting

Parenting has long been considered of great importance when it comes to the transmission of social norms and values, the continuation of kinship, family and household, and for reproducing local and national communities (Barlow and Chapin, 2010). It is understood here as an element of ‘social reproduction’, as

used by feminist scholars. As part and parcel of the perpetuation of gender and class relations:

[s]ocial reproduction includes the care and socialization of children and care of the elderly or infirm. Social reproduction includes the organization of sexuality, biological reproduction, and how food, clothing, and shelter are made available. Most social reproduction occurs within the family unit...variations in the distribution of the work of social reproduction are affected by the family, market, community, and state. (Laslett and Brenner, 1989: 381).

Recent sociological work has also situated 'parenting' as critical for understanding contemporary changes in society – particularly in the US and the UK but also further afield (Author 2013). Drawing attention to broader socio-cultural processes within those societies that have cast contemporary child rearing as a highly important yet problematic sphere of social life, this work starts from the premise that raising children has become a more complex task, culturally, than it used to be in the past. Furedi, for example says the following:

Child-rearing is not the same as parenting. In most human societies there is no distinct activity that today we associate with the term parenting. In agricultural societies, children are expected to participate in the work and routine of the community and are not regarded as requiring special parenting attention or care ... The belief that children require special care and attention evolved alongside the conviction that what adults did mattered to their development. These sentiments gained strength and began to influence public opinion in the nineteenth century. The work of mothering and fathering was now endowed with profound importance. It became defined as a distinct skill that could assure the development of character traits necessary for a successful life ... Once children are seen as the responsibility of a mother and father rather than of a larger community the modern view of parenting acquires salience. (Furedi, 2002, p. 106)

From this point of view, a trajectory towards placing particular significance on the role and contribution of the parent, using their 'skills' to ensure a child's 'successful life', has a long history. However, despite its long history, it is also recognized that 'parenting' has acquired specific connotations more recently, certainly within neoliberal Euro-American settings. If one looks closely at the question of raising the next generation it will become clear this is rarely discussed as a communal task or the responsibility of adult society as a whole. Rather, it is discussed as an individualized 'parenting strategy' (whether it be around discipline, eating and sleeping patterns or otherwise).

Chiming with work done by modernization theorists (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1999) a key conceptual assumption is that children are particularly vulnerable to risk in the early years, such that a developmental 'blueprint' can be set during this period, engendering a highly deterministic, heavily loaded understanding of the parenting relationship (see also Macvarish 2016, Burman 2017, introduction, this issue). In a neoliberal era, with its emphasis on self-management, 'good'

parents are therefore reflexive, informed consumers, able to account for their 'parenting strategies' (Murphy, 2003, Author 2013). Recognizing the gendered dimension to these changes, much work in the US and the UK has drawn on the concept of 'intensive mothering' (Hays, 1996) in understanding the experiences of contemporary women to describe a kind of interaction with their children that is ideally 'child-centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor intensive, and financially expensive' (Hays, 1996: x, see also Lee et al., 2014).

In the introduction to this special issue, the editors elaborate on the inevitable relation between the 'vulnerable child' and the 'risky parent', noting that in such conceptions 'the child' becomes merely an 'outcome' of parental input, and a trope rather than an active contributor to the parent-child relationship. Alanen and Mayall's (2005) suggestion that 'childing' be the logical partner to 'parenting' is a welcome intervention, and whilst this paper focuses largely on the parental experience of the relationship, this is not to endorse the idea that socialization or 'parenting' is a unilateral or 'downwards' process. Indeed, much work in childhood studies has highlighted the extent to which children are active in caring relationships across the generations and beyond (e.g. Alanen, 2011, Spyrou, Rosen and Cook 2018). In challenging this academic lacunae, and thinking through children's roles (as conduits, mediators and agents) in building and breaking solidarities, it is critical that we take into account both their positions of being 'socialised' and 'cared for' but also their role in caring for and socializing others, whether children or adults.

Of course, the perception of what is a 'good parent' (or 'good child') is culturally, historically and ideologically rooted, and affects individuals in different ways according to a range of intersectional factors. However, the traction of this more individualised and competitive approach to parenting is intimately linked to wider cultural norms as well as state infrastructures, which differ dramatically in terms of welfare and resources for education and care (e.g. lack of school places, which puts extra pressure on parents to 'go the extra mile' (Lareau 2003, Nelson 2010)). Drawing on classical theoretical concerns, this article therefore asks how we might use ideas like 'trust' and 'solidarity' to challenge popular, policy and indeed academic understandings of 'parenting', which tend to conceptualize it as an individualized relationship. Instead, what might be gained in thinking about it as more *social* endeavor that necessarily involves all adults and children?

Theoretical context: Parenting, social solidarity and trust

The Norwegian anthropologist Eriksen has argued that the recent turn towards 'intensive' or 'paranoid' parenting (Furedi 2008) represents a shift in our very notions of personhood, responsibility and trust (2015). Using insights from classical social theorists, Eriksen evokes debates about the relationship between 'gemeinshaft' and 'gesellschaft', as used by thinkers such as Tonnies and Weber in particular (Tonnies 1887, Weber 2012). For Weber, these are ideal types referring to social relationships based on informal, personal and 'community' ties in the former, and indirect, formal or 'society' ties in the latter (2012). The term is used here in this Weberian sense to refer to a sense of social cohesion and commitment to others, which is not only kin-based, but formed from a sense of 'we-ness' more broadly (Westerling, 2016). Solidarity of this sort matters in

thinking about the project of 'building tomorrow'; that is, to discussions and decisions about who counts as a member of the 'we' – a highly politicized issue in the context of ethno-nationalism (Rosen and Suissa, this issue), but not one necessarily determined by that, either within or beyond transnational borders. Solidarity, as understood here, is premised in many ways on an idea of trust and shared values, and this paper asks how trust is impacted by the rise of neoliberal, risk-conscious intensive parenthood, considering other means by which we might cultivate a sense of social solidarity.

Certainly, Eriksen suggests that there has been a loss of community or 'trust' in recent years, as part of the turn towards the 'risk society' that Giddens et al. describe (Giddens 1999). He gives the example that in the past, mothers in the UK would leave prams outside the shop whilst they carried out errands, or informally arrange for friends to do the school run; today, this would be unthinkable (and probably a prosecutable offence).ⁱ To this extent, the loss of 'solidarity' or 'trust' might best be read as one consequence of the growing individualization of adult-child relations, itself a product of a more neoliberal turn in the management of personal and family life: one cannot trust others to who do not have as much of a stake in that child's future (and see Rosen and Suissa, this issue, on how this has become politicized in the UK). Arguably this has even extended to intimate and family relations, such that the mother cannot trust anyone – even her partner or parents – to look after her child in the 'right' way (Wolf 2011; discussed further below).

Further, in line with work on risk consciousness, whether this is an actual or an imagined loss of social cohesion the effects are the same: People do not leave their children outside shops because they perceive solidarity, or 'trust' to have eroded (see also Bristow 2014). A focus on these *conceptions* therefore has important implications for both theory and policy. Arguably, the notion that the adult generation has a responsibility for nurturing the next generation was historically something that was taken for granted (Furedi 2008). Even if as an adult one was childless, for example, this did not mean that one was indifferent to the next generation (see Rosen and Suissa, this issue).

Today (in the US and the UK at least) Furedi argues that something has changed, in part as a result of contemporary political shifts. Now that parenting has become more individualized, he argues that there has been an estrangement from responsibility. The presumption of generational responsibility that has historically underpinned child-rearing has become disorganized. This means, he argues, that there has been a breakdown in the very notion of adult (and indeed childhood) identity. Whilst this can of course be welcomed in some sense – breaking down traditional power relations, for example – Furedi identifies this as a historically novel development, such that adults are no longer confident in their ability to act as authority figures *per se* to the next generation. Instead, parents are positioned, by policy makers at least, as both omnipotent and yet the ultimate cause of their children's problems, and in need of expert guidance. And whilst 'good parenting' in this model is ostensibly child-centred, it is arguably one where children *qua* children are eclipsed as participants in 'building tomorrow' and understood merely as outcome of parenting skills (again, this intersects with Rosen and Suissa's argument, this issue)

Furedi diagnoses this as a crisis of adulthood, where being a 'grown up' is no longer valued (or socially signified) in the same way as the past – in line with the shift towards uncertain, 'liquid' or 'reflexive' modernity that Bauman describes (2005). Because of this confusion, relationships between adults and children are ever more subject to juridification – that is, to rules about both formal and informal contact (see Bristow 2014 on the increased policing of adult-child relations in the form of CRB checks or similar in the UK, for example). This is historically and culturally specific: in Japan, for example, small children – aged only 2 or 3 – routinely take the subway alone, without parental supervision (Dixon 2015). Dixon notes that one reason for the unusual degree of independence of Japanese children is not (only) self-sufficiency, but rather, 'group reliance'. He observes that children learn early that 'any member of society can be called on to help or serve others' and that a 'sense of trust and co-operation occurs, often unspoken or unsolicited' (Dixon 2015, see also Hendry, 1986, on neighbourhood based 'techniques of training' for young Japanese children).

By contrast, where children might once have relied on adults to help them when they encountered day-to-day adversity, today, in the UK, many adults would be wary about getting involved with a child they were not related to, and children are taught from an early age about 'stranger danger' and to be suspicious of unknown adults. As Bristow argues, recognition that some adults may harm children has become transposed, in the form of society-wide regulatory projects regulating inter-generational contact, into the sensibility that *all* adults should be vetted in case they might pose a danger to children (2014). To give a more extreme example, in New York, a woman who let her 9-year old ride the subway was labelled 'the world's worst mom' (*Washington Post* 2015). In short, a substantive element of the interpersonal relationship (between adults and children) gets lost in this transformation of personhood in the new parenting culture (see also Ramaekers and Suissa, 2011).

As is examined below, this has had a knock-on effect on social solidarity or 'trust' more broadly – to the extent that active suspicion and resentment between adults (whether parents or not) about their caring rights and responsibilities are becoming increasingly commonplace. In parallel, children themselves have become de-responsibilised, leading some to argue that we need to return to a more 'free-range' approach to parenting (Skenazy, in Lee et al 2014.) recognizing children as willing and able to take responsibility for themselves from a much earlier age. At the same time, critics have noted that this continues to rely on a deterministic, individualized model of the parent-child relationship. Instead, these authors advocate that that the ways in which we engage in processes of social reproduction should be understood as precisely that – social (Bristow, 2014, Lee et al 2014.).

In the three examples discussed below, areas of potential social tension are explored in more depth, probing specifically why a more individualized approach to parent-child (or adult-child) relations is problematic. The suggestion is that relations between parents and non-parents (for example) act as a 'pressure point,' indicating where a sense of social solidarity is particularly under threat from a more individualized understanding of 'parenting'. A more

stratified perspective on the question of social reproduction (i.e., with a shared sense of responsibility for raising the next generation) by contrast, opens up new avenues for the re-imagining of social trust.

State infrastructure and social reproduction: A comparative perspective

Norway and the UK have deliberately been selected as comparative case studies for the purposes of this paper. Like the Japanese example, traditionally, Norwegian society has been understood as one where neoliberal individualization, and the effects thereof, would be less far-reaching than the UK, given a different historical, political and cultural orientation towards social justice, family life and social cohesion. Eriksen, for example, suggests that the loss of trust he describes in the US and the UK has not been experienced in Norway to such an extent – parents will still leave their prams outside shops, and arguably the effects of this individualization of the responsibility for child care are less extreme (2014).ⁱⁱ

Esping-Andersen's seminal (if controversial) *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* categorises Norway as one of the 'social democratic' welfare states. He says of these states: 'The ideal is not to maximise dependence on the family, but capacities for individual independence (2006: 169). The state opts to 'take direct responsibility of caring for children, the aged and the helpless.' It is committed to 'allow women to choose work rather than the household', providing substantial state-provided child-care from an early age. Taxes are typically high, but in general this is understood by citizens to be in their best interests as a society more broadly, giving the state a high degree of legitimacy (Eriksen 2014). It is also crucial, argues Eriksen, to building a sense of community coherence and safety: in place of the need for competitive or intensive parenting, parents in Norway know that they can rely on the state to provide for their children, and competition for nurseries, schools and universities (for example) is less intense.

In opposition to this 'social-democratic' model, the British system has been classified as a (neo) 'liberal welfare state' (Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2011). Here, Esping-Andersen notes that the main features are 'means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers or modest social-insurance plans'; 'Benefits cater mainly to a clientele of low-income, usually working class, state dependants' (2006: 167). Taxes tend to be lower than in social democratic states and a narrative of the '(un)deserving poor' dominates discussions of public finances (*Guardian* 2012). Not surprisingly (like the US, which might be said to be an even more extreme example) this infrastructure has been linked to the pervasive appeal or spread of intensive parenting, where individual parents must work hard to 'cultivate' their children in a concerted way, to ensure their success in life (Lareau 2003).

The commitment to foster the capacity for individual independence seen in many Nordic states does not sit easily with the more 'intensive' model of parenting, described above, which stresses the importance of 'familisation' (individual, family-based, and embodied care for children), rather than allowing for a more socially based or shared model. Indeed, it sits much more easily in liberal welfare states like the UK, with their implicit support for the traditional model of the family and a stay-at-home, usually female, carer.

Recently, to counter this 'gender inequality' in parenting in the UK – and its knock-on effect on men and women's working lives – there have been efforts to get fathers more 'involved' in parenting. Fatherhood has become politicized, with many calling for better 'work-life balance' policies to alleviate gender inequality in parenting (such as split parental leave and flexible working policies, Author 2014, Baird and O'Brien 2015, Twamley and Schober 2019). Many of those calling for these changes look to the Scandinavian countries as an example of 'best practice' – since many of them have long embodied a commitment to 'equality' and fairness at the legislative level.

Norway, for example, operates the 'use-it-or-lose-it' system whereby a substantial amount of parental leave is allocated to the partner or father but is lost to the family unit if not taken up (Bradnth and Kvande 2009); this leave is paid at or nearly at full salary.ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, childcare is almost fully subsidized and represents an average expense of less than 5% in terms of household outgoings (the OECD average is 12%, Daycare Trust 2014, Statistics Norway 2015). By contrast, the UK technically operates a system of 'Shared Parental Leave' whereby a mother can 'transfer' leave to her partner, but this is typically unpaid or paid at a very low statutory rate at less than a quarter of the average wage. Furthermore, childcare on average amounts to 30% of disposable household income in the UK (ibid), making decisions around working patterns a particularly fraught one for many parents, again linked to wider intersectional concerns. (These economic constraints do not just affect parents, of course; see Vergara et al, this issue on children's 'ethical reflexivity' around debt management in neoliberal settings as part of caring relationships within families).

The suggestion here is that these state infrastructures represent (and inform) different cultural ideas around family life (for all members), reproduction and social solidarity more widely. In turn, these expectations are reflected in other social institutions, such as schools or indeed the media itself. There is therefore an interesting process of mirroring going on in each location (of parenting culture and social policy respectively) that makes these two countries ideal case studies for an investigation into the iterative relationship between social norms and state infrastructure.

Changing cultures of parenting: diffusion and cohesion

In Norway, preliminary research indicates that a similar trend in parenting culture has been observed to that in the UK, with scholars noting that it has gradually become more 'intensive' as part of a turn towards a more neoliberal agenda, albeit not to such a great extent. Frønes (2007) describes contemporary Norway as 'parent-oriented', noting that parents invest more time and energy in their children than ever before, and where parenting tasks are becoming more demanding. Like the UK, contemporary parenting has therefore been defined as 'involved parenting' – a parenthood that centres on the child and the child's needs, and where parents bear a fundamental responsibility for the child's future. Aarseth and Andersen's (2012) work on middle class parents, as well as Bendixsen's and Danielsen's research on parenting and diversity, also shows how family-life has become a project to be managed and worked at (2018).

Indeed, this is particularly the case for the newly 'elite' families in Scandinavia reported as grappling, historically for the first time, with wanting their children to be socialized according to social values of 'sameness', whilst also making them competitive in the increasingly global capitalist market and therefore invest in them in ways familiar to US and UK parents, often with the aid of nannies or au-pairs (Aarseth 2018).

Indeed Aarseth's work in Norway in particular brings to the fore the question of individualism/ collectivism. What scholars of 'parenting culture' in neoliberal contexts observe is that the task of raising the next generation has become highly fragmented and detailed, with a keen focus on the everyday practices of daily life (such as practices around eating or sleeping). Rather than 'socialising' children into a set of shared social values, a more individualised perspective means that the aim is to raise 'successful individuals' who are able to 'be themselves' (Author 2013, and clearly this is premised on a highly reductive vision of 'the child'). This sits well within an intensive parenting ethos, but less well where there is a focus on communality, sameness and 'being social' (see also Bach 2017 on the Danish case).

In thinking anthropologically about the politics of cultural translation (see Author 2013) this paper considers the ways in which messages about 'good parenting' are mobilized by various actors, including children – and adopted, resisted or reconfigured in these two cultural settings. In terms of resistance to this model of 'parenting', for example, Eldén and Anving (talking about middle class families in Sweden, 2019) include accounts from children, who are largely skeptical of the intensive 'quality time' approach to childcare, and are instead keen to spend time with their parents, during mundane activities of cooking and bathing, rather than having this 'dirty work' outsourced to an au-pair.

In general, however, whilst there are signs of growing stratification and increasing visibility of neoliberal discourses in Norway, there are important differences between the UK and Norway, specifically around gender (Gullvåg Holter 2014). Whilst in the UK researchers have explored if and how more intensive forms of fathering is 'on the rise' (Shirani et al 2012), Norwegian research indicates that a more active role for fathers and norms promoting a shared parenthood has been developing for some time (Lorenzen 2012, Bjornholt 2014), and point to their shifting role in Norwegian society (Aarseth 2011). In part, this is explained by a policy context which has long championed an 'equality' ethos. ^{iv}

Certainly, knowledge concerning the cultural presumptions underlying ways of 'doing parenthood' (or 'doing childhood') is essential for understanding how trust, belonging and support for central societal values are preserved (and changed) particularly in the context of a culturally plural and increasingly cosmopolitan setting (Bendixsen and Danielsen 2018). How has this more individualized model of parenting diffused differently in Norway and the UK in accordance with different cultural and political histories (that is, according to gender, ethnic and class differences)? Is it the case that Norway is following in the footsteps of the UK in terms of the intensification of parenting, or is this too simplistic a way of framing this issue?

Parenting, childhood and social antagonism: Three examples

The suggestion here is that an individualised approach to parenting, so common in policy, which stresses the importance of the parent-child relationship to ultimate outcomes not only eclipses other social relations key to the parenting relationship, but also has the potential to erode notions of social trust or solidarity. Thus the three examples which follow focus on areas of hypothetical tension relating to 'parenting' and social reproduction, as a means of thinking through the potentials and challenges of building social trust in using a more societal conception of raising children. To do this, this section draws on work in childhood studies to articulate the ways in which children are engaged in building and breaking solidarities, caring and being cared for being socialized and socializing others (whether that be adults or other children).

Parents and non-parents

In the UK, an individualized narrative around parenting (in policy as well as academic and media discourses) increasingly presents children as a morally loaded 'lifestyle choice' for which parents should (and do) take sole and full responsibility (Bristow 2014). Thus an antagonism between parents and non-parents has become increasingly visible as a form of social categorization – most notably in the workplace, particularly around parents' entitlement to leave and flexible working. As the press would have it, this has become a battle between the 'breeders' and the 'child-free-by-choicers', with campaigns for 'personal leave' to be available to employees for reasons other than child care (Bristow 2014, see also Rosen and Suissa, this issue v)

In the UK, childcare is understood as the responsibility of the family unit, with many scholars pointing out that the assumption childcare should rest with the individual parents is not only an expression of a neoliberal, individualistic era (Gillies 2009, Fraser 2013), but also one which exacerbates a segregation between parents and non-parents. This could arguably also be framed as part of a general loss in social responsibility for raising the next generation.

Instead, the suggestion here is that if we took a *societal* conception of raising children, this could lead to a society-wide organised system of care for children, and corresponding re-organisation of the work-place. Working with similar ideas of sociality, but from a social policy perspective, Sandel notes that the challenge for contemporary policy-makers is to 'imagine a politics that takes moral... questions seriously, but brings them to bear on broad economic and civic concerns' (2009: 262). Looking at institutions in the US such as national service and public schooling, for example, he rejects a utilitarian approach to the common good that prioritises the maximisation of welfare, on the grounds that justice should not become a simple 'matter of calculation' rather than of principle. He also rejects the choice-oriented (or 'freedom-based') approaches of both libertarians and liberal-egalitarians for failing to provide anything other than 'individual preference' as the guiding principle on public policy design. Instead, revisiting ideas from Aristotle, he argues for the cultivation of virtue and reasoning on questions of policy in which 'value' to the common good becomes paramount. To use the idea of the common good is not to imply that children are a resource from which we all stand to benefit. Rather, this focus on virtue and

what we really 'value', socially, is helpful in discussions around parenting/childing as a more societal endeavor, in that it helps us think beyond the more typical, neoliberal framings of relations of social reproduction, which tend to rest on ideas of competition, individualisation or familisation (e.g. Gillies 2011).

To this extent, with a social understanding of the importance of childcare for all, the tensions between parents and non-parents described might well be lessened, as they would not be pushed back onto individuals and employers (Bristow 2014). This makes this an interesting issue to compare with Norway, then, since there the state demonstrates a financial commitment to children's care through heavily subsidised childcare and flexible working arrangements for parents – seemingly without courting the tensions mentioned above. Indeed, preliminary research suggests that this tension (between parents and non-parents) is not one that is considered culturally salient as a form of social labelling, and certainly not one voiced in the media (Bendixsen and Danielsen 2018).

And what of children? Theoretically it is interesting to consider whether this represents a different vision of the family life to that in the UK, and how, if at all, an increasing 'intensification' of parenting outlined above is likely to alter this. The Nordic states are frequently held up as the 'gold standard' of equality legislation, but how that actually works itself out in practice is generally less clear-cut (Simonardottir 2016). Certainly, the role of children themselves as active participants in being or shaping 'the future' (Rosen and Suissa, this issue) is reflected in a commitment to children's rights at the level of policy and practice in the Scandinavian context (Qvortrup 2009). Clearly, children *are* active participants in building relations with adults (and between adults) in ways that span the parent/non-parent boundary, something which is often eclipsed by the narrow focus on 'parenting' in policy and indeed academic discourse (Patino, this issue, discusses adult-child interactions in a US school).

Migration and intergenerational change

Taking a historical angle, essential to exploring notions of social trust over time, the second example is that of intensive parenting and intergenerational relationships, with special attention to issues of migration, diversity and coherence (Bendixsen and Danielsen, 2018; Franceschelli, 2018).

Scholars working on parenting culture in the UK have observed that one of the negative effects of a more intensive, expert-driven individualistic approach to parenting is the impact on intergenerational transmission. A cultural context that views parents as inadequate in the face of the task of 'building tomorrow' means that parents have become seen in need of ever more expert guidance in carrying out this task (Lee et al, 2014). Arguably, this contemporary, expert-based parenting culture has not only had an effect on parents' own subjectivities, but it has magnified a disruption to any sense of cultural transmission between grandparents, parents and children. Grandparents are routinely presented (in the UK) as not to be trusted as they are 'out of touch' or not 'up to date' on the most recent parenting methods and advice. Children, by contrast, are often instrumentalised in schemes to 'educate' parents about, for example, healthy

eating or environmentalism (Furedi 2008). It is crucial then to consider intergenerational shifts in parenting culture, as well as at the effect of an individualization of parenting on those intergenerational relationships themselves.

As UK and Norwegian societies become ever more globalized and 'multicultural,' new parenting norms, ideologies and practices are emerging, not least at the instigation of children themselves who often act as interlocutors for their parents (and grandparents) – something that is of particular concern for the state and notions of social coherence and nation-building (Crafter and Iqbal 2016).

In the context of rising ethno-nationalism and historically high levels of migration, Gullestad has written about the Norwegian model of social equality as one which champions 'sameness' rather than 'difference', in contrast to the 'multi-cultural' model usually promoted in the UK (2002). Working in urban contexts of high migration in Norway (and, importantly, in the context of the ascension of a right-wing party to power) Bendixsen and Danielsen have explored how notions of diversity (and disruption) are experienced by Norwegian parents (2018). Encouragingly, they document parents' accounts of concern about 'other peoples' children' in this context, as part of efforts to extend 'intensive' parenting beyond the nuclear family, seeing socialization as a collective endeavor through what they term 'inclusive' parenting. Thus, as the work of Vergara (this issue) also acknowledges, we also need to think about how an intensification of parenting in certain contexts has the potential to *create* coherence within – as well as between – particular groups, as part of this process of 'integration' not least as a product of children's engagement in these social networks (see also Author, 2013).

In London, Vincent et al's work on children's friendships (2017) also makes an argument about the importance of peer relations to the building of social solidarity, particularly in 'super diverse' contexts. Focussing on friendships across ethnic and class differences they highlight both the potentials and challenges of relationships between children across class boundaries, not least when these are mediated by parental anxieties, seeing these as examples of 'efforts to forge relationships across difference' (2017: 1987). However, these are recognized to be fragile ones under threat from a declining sense of social trust as part of a wider 'hostile environment' towards migrants (Guardian 2017)

This issue therefore highlights some of the problems of thinking about parenting as simply an individualistic matter, as it is so often framed in policy discourse. In contexts of historically high migration (and a rise in right-wing, nationalist rhetoric across Europe) a risk-conscious, neo-liberal understanding of social reproduction threatens attempts to build social trust and arguably encourages a turn away from 'others', whether from different cultural backgrounds, or arguably even a different generation. A more social conception allows space for an appreciation of peer and other adult-child relations in the creation of social relations.

Fertility and inequality

The final example looks particularly at how the intensification of parenting has differently affected would-be parents in the UK and Norway, in the context of different regulatory regimes, suggesting that an individualized approach is corrosive to notions of solidarity and trust between citizens. In a more individualised, intensive parenting culture, which stresses personal fulfilment through parenthood, becoming a (biological) parent has not only become seemingly more feasible for many couples, but the social role has been inflated in congruence, frequently being framed as a 'human right' (Strathern 1993). In line with a focus on tensions (Rosen and Newberry 2018, Rosen and Suissa, this issue), then, this example considers how the inflation of the parenting identity has led to feelings of exclusion and segregation at the wider social level, for those who cannot 'achieve' it (Author 2017). These issues are particularly timely, given recent debates in each country about how far the state should pay for couples to receive fertility treatment (recent headlines in the UK reveal that in many areas of the country, IVF treatment will be scrapped on the National Health Service due to cost-cutting, *Independent* 2017).

Recent work on the subject of egg-donation explores these issues around individualisation and social reproduction in a cross-cultural comparative framework (Marre et al 2017). In the UK, individuals are (currently) able to receive treatment with donor eggs on the NHS, where in Norway, this is currently prohibited due to concerns about coercion (although the Biotechnology Council has advised changing this law, Melhuus 2005). Instead, patients seeking treatment through egg donation typically engage in what has been called 'fertility tourism' or 'Cross Border Reproductive Care' in search of egg-donors, with Spain being one of the most popular destinations (Pennings and Gurtin 2012, Marre et al 2017). This example therefore prompts us to think about 'trust' and 'solidarity' not only in access to reproductive technologies, but also 'what counts' in the creation of kinship and national communities, not least as this relates to any children born as a result of that treatment (Cheney 2018).

In thinking about the relationship between the intensification of parenting, reproductive technologies and neoliberalism it is important to think specifically about the nature of 'individualisation'. As both a product of an intensified parenting culture, as well as one of its greatest catalysts, reproductive technologies could be read as the example *par excellence* of the individualisation of a social problem. **Instead, if we take a more social view, this might better be understood** as a problem with the way society is structured (in terms of, for example fertility decline and the pressure to become established in one's career). Instead, infertility is increasingly tackled in ways that makes individuals accountable for their reproductive trajectories, emphasizing and enabling ever further the importance of the biological relation (Inhorn and Van Balen 2002).

The problem then, is that paradoxically, many individuals (and couples) seeking fertility treatment narrate their inability to have children as a form of social exclusion (from a peer group), whilst those who are parents *also* report a sense of segregation from society as a whole. In both cases, this individualization is antithetical to the case of family life and social reproduction, which has traditionally been about creating connections (see Author 2017). Roman's work in Sweden (2014), for example, reveals the paradox of individualization in the

contemporary era: having children is itself considered a 'risk project', minutely planned by couples to counter the threat to individual autonomy and therefore family life itself.

Whilst of course children are not 'active' participants in the forging (or breaking) of these relationships between fertile and infertile adults, it is nevertheless critical to think about the notion of 'the child' in these debates, even when this is at the conceptual (or rather, pre-conception) level. In Cheney's work, for example, we see how 'the best interests of the child' is configured in debates around international commercial surrogacy, usually from within a children's rights perspective. She argues instead for the importance of empirical work with children conceived by such arrangements, and a theoretical perspective which has relationality at heart (2018, see also Lee, Macvarish and Sheldon 2017, who look at the 'Welfare of the Child' question with respect to the policing of potential parents). These kinds of questions prompt us to think about the relationship between individualism and community relations as they relate to the role of the state in subsidising treatment (and by extension, who can afford to become a parent at all). An individualized perspective on 'parenting' plays into a more divisive approach to reproduction and the redistribution of resources across society, and thus has potentially corrosive effects on relations of solidarity.

Discussion: Solidarity, care and the 'common good'

Bringing together insights from childhood with work in parenting culture studies, in parallel with ideas around social solidarity, the article suggests that concepts such as 'gemeinschaft' (Tonnies) 'trust' (Eriksen) or the 'common good' (Sandel) can be useful in re-thinking the way social reproduction is framed, in both academic and policy debates. Certainly, childhood studies helps us see the ways in which 'parenting culture studies' too readily eclipses the perspectives of, and potential for, children to build social relations, helping us re-think underlying notions of socialisation, authority and categories of adulthood and childhood in turn.

Politically, rhetoric in Europe has been increasingly focused on the individual's private 'choices', meaning that structural challenges to collective duties of care often fall outside the remit of equality and anti-discrimination policies (Browne 2013, Baird and O'Brien 2015). But how free are people – as parents, non-parents or even children – to make these 'choices' about their work and home lives? In the context of cuts to public services (in the UK) on the one hand, and the obsession with parenthood on the other, what is society actually doing about being and raising children? In this particular political climate, childcare and reproduction provides an interesting 'litmus test' for policy-makers in thinking about a range of other issues relating to the allocation of state resources. This also clearly has implications for what Eriksen (and indeed Marx, Tonnies and Weber) say about solidarity, particularly in the context of rising diversity. In taking a more social perspective on the question of reproduction, the ways that we – children and adults (parents and non-parents) – care for each other can be foregrounded, and therefore made central to project of building social solidarity. To this extent the 'reading across' of the two fields of parenting culture and childhood studies can be fruitful to this endeavour.

Further, through a comparative perspective, this paper aims to re-frame the debate around 'parenting' as one beyond the individual family, to become one of the 'common good', from which we all – parents, non-parents and children, have a stake in. This opens up, it is hoped, new avenues in how we could approach the 'problem' of raising the next generation as a *societal* rather than an individual one.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the relationship between 'parenting' and trust, and the ideas of adulthood and childhood on which it rests. Thinking about parenting as a societal endeavour, whereby all of us – children, parents and non-parents care for each other - challenges the individualised model of the neoliberal 'parent' and 'child' within the new 'parenting culture' and helps us approach the question of building social solidarity afresh. The suggestion is that an 'intensification' of parenting has a potentially corrosive effect on notions of trust and social cohesion, looking at the potential implications of this through three examples. Whilst a social democratic welfare state infrastructure (as seen in Norway) clearly goes some way to curbing the worst excesses of a more neoliberal individualised 'intensive' parenting culture evident in the UK, it's clear that the spread of this culture is on the rise, creating novel tensions and forms of inequality in the Nordic context. To put it another way, how long will Norwegian parents continue to leave their children in prams outside shops?

References

- Aarseth, H. (2011) *Moderne familieliv. Den likestilte familiens motivasjonsformer*. Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.
- Alanen, L. (2011) 'Generational Order', in J. Qvortrup, W. Corsaro and M.-S. Honig (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. pp. 159-74
- Alanen and Mayall, B. (2001) *Conceptualizing Child- Adult Relations* London: Falmer
- Bach, D. (2017) 'The civilized family life : childrearing in affluent families.' In Gilliam, L. and Eva Gulløv. *Children of the welfare state: civilising practices in schools, childcare and families*. London : Pluto Press. Pp. 194-235.
- Baird, M, and O'Brien M. (2015) 'Dynamics of parental leave in Anglophone countries: the paradox of state expansion in liberal welfare regimes'. *Community Work and Family* 18.
- Barlow, K. and Chapin, B.L. (2010) 'The practices of Mothering: An Introduction', in *Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology, ETHOS*, 38(4): 324-338
- Bauman, Z. (2005) *Liquid Life* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. New Delhi: Sage
- Beck, U. (2000) 'Risk Society Revisited: Theory, Politics and Research Programmes', in Adam, Beck, and Van Loon. (eds.), *The Risk Society and Beyond: Critical Issues for Social Theory*. London: Sage, pp. 211 -229
- Bendixsen, S. and Danielsen, H. (2018) 'Other people's children: inclusive parenting in a diverse neighborhood in Norway.' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (Online first).
- Bjørnholt, M. (2014) *Modern Men: A Norwegian 30-Year Longitudinal Study of Intergenerational Transmission and Social Change*. Örebro Studies in Gender Research, 3. Örebro: Örebro universitet. Doctoral dissertation
- Brandth, B, and Kvande, E. (2009) "Norway: The Making of the Father's Quota." In Kameman, S and Moss, P (eds). *The Politics of Parental Leave Policies: Children, Parenting, Gender and the Labour Market* Bristol: The Policy Press. Pp 191-207
- Bristow, J. (2014) 'Who cares for children? The problem of intergenerational contact' in Lee, E. Bristow, J. Faicloth, C. and Macvarish, J. 2014 *Parenting Culture Studies* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Browne, J. (2013) 'The Default Model: Gender Equality, Fatherhood and Structural Constraint', *Politics & Gender. Official Journal of the American Political Sciences Association (APSA)*. Vol 9, Issue 02. pp. 152-173.

- Burman, E. (2017) *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*, London: Routledge.
- Crafter, S., & Iqbal, H. (2016). 'Child language brokering in cultural contact zones: Young people's experiences of critical moments'. Presented at: Special Interest Group 10, 21 & 25 Conference of the European Association for Research in Learning and Instruction.
- Cheney, K. (2018) 'International commercial surrogacy: Beyond feminist conundrums and the child as product' in Rosen, R. and Twamley, K (eds). *Feminism and the Politics of Childhood: Friends of foes?* UCL Press pp. 155-172.
- Daycare Trust. (2014) 'Childcare Costs Survey 2014'. London: Daycare Trust <http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/childcare-costs-surveys>
- Dermott, E. 2008 *Intimate Fatherhood: A Sociological Analysis* London: Routledge.
- Dixon (2015) cited in *The Atlantic*. 'Why are little kids in Japan so independent?' <http://www.citylab.com/commute/2015/09/why-are-little-kids-in-japan-so-independent/407590/>
- Douglas, S. and Michaels, M. (2004) *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined All Women*. New York: Free Press.
- Eldén, S and Anving, T. (2019) *Nanny Families: Practices of Care by Nannies, Au Pairs, Parents and Children in Sweden*. Bristol: Bristol University Press
- Eriksen, T. H. (2014) 'Who or What to Blame' *European Journal of Sociology*, Volume 55, Issue 02, August 2014, pp 275-294
- Esping-Andersen, G. (2006) 'The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism'. *The Welfare State Reader*. Pierson, C and Castles, F. (Eds). London: Polity Press.
- Ferragina, E and Seeleib-Kaiser, M (2011) 'Thematic Review: Welfare regime debate: past, present, futures?' *Policy & Politics*, Volume 39, Number 4, October 2011, pp. 583-611(29)
- Franceschelli, M. 2018. *CCÀ SEMU. Here we are, lives on hold in Lampedusa* Available: <https://vimeo.com/264381307>
- Furedi, F. (2002) *Paranoid Parenting: Why ignoring the experts may be best for your child* Chicago: Chicago Review Press
- Furedi, F. (2008) *Paranoid Parenting*. London: Continuum
- Fraser, N. (2013) *Fortunes of Feminism: From state-managed capitalism to neoliberal crisis*. New York: Verso.
- Frønes, I. (2007) *Moderne barndom*. Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk
- Gatrell, C. (2005) *Hard Labour: The sociology of parenthood* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Giddens, A. (1999) 'Risk and Responsibility', in *Modern Law Review*, 62 (1): 1-10

Gillies, V. (2009) 'Understandings and experiences of involved fathering in the United Kingdom: exploring classed dimensions', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 624, 49-60

Gillies, V. (2011) 'From function to competence: engaging with the new politics of family', *Sociological Research Online*, 16(4), 11, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/16/4/11.html>

Guardian (2012) 'Rich and Poor: Deserving and undeserving' <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/27/rich-poor-deserving-undeserving>

Guardian (2013) 'Childcare – like life – is about so much more than economics.' <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/27/rich-poor-deserving-undeserving>

Guardian (2014) 'Cost of childcare is barrier to working more, says two-thirds of mothers' <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2014/jan/23/cost-childcare-barrier-work-mothers-survey>

Guardian (2015) 'Shared parenting leave: nightmare new rules, or the first baby steps to equality?' <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2015/apr/11/shared-parental-leave-rules-equality>

Guardian (2017) 'Hostile environment': the hardline Home Office policy tearing families apart'. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/nov/28/hostile-environment-the-hardline-home-office-policy-tearing-families-apart>

Gullestad, M. (1984) *Kitchen-Table Society. A Case Study of the Family Life and Friendships of Young Working-Class Mothers in Urban Norway*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Gullesatad, M. (2002) 'Invisible Fences: Egalitarianism, Nationalism and Racism' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* Volume 8, Issue 1, pages 45-63, March

Gullvåg Holter, O. (2014) "'What's in it for Men?": Old Question, New Data' *Men and Masculinities*, Vol. 17 (5)

Hays, S. (1996) *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press.

Hendry, J. (1986) *Becoming Japanese: The world of the pre-school child*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Independent. (2017) 'Patients facing 'postcode lottery' after NHS budgets slashed' <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/ivf-nhs-treatment-fertility-lists-wait-patients-lottery-budget-cuts-a8028116.html>

- Inhorn, M C., and van Balen, eds, F. (2002) *Infertility Around the Globe: New Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lareau, A. (2003) *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. By Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Laslett, B. and Brenner, J. 1989. 'Gender and social reproduction: historical perspectives'. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 15:381-404
- Lee, E. Bristow, J. Faicloth, C. and Macvarish, J. (2014) *Parenting Culture Studies* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Lee, E., Macvarish, J. and Sheldon, S. (2017). 'After the 'need for....a father': 'The welfare of the child' and 'supportive parenting' in UK assisted conception clinics'. *Families, Relationships and Societies* [Online] 6:71-87.
- Lorenzen, J. (2012) *Fra farskapets historie i Norge. Fra 1850 til 2012*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget
- Macvarish, J. (2016) *Neuroparenting: The expert invasion of family life*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Marre, D. Beatriz San Román & Diana Guerra (2017) 'On Reproductive Work in Spain: Transnational Adoption, Egg Donation, Surrogacy' *Medical Anthropology* 1-16.
- Melhuus, M. (2005) 'Better safe than sorry'. Legislating assisted conception in Norway' i Christian Krhohn-Hansen og Knut Nustad (eds) *State Formation: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.
- Murphy, E. (2003) 'Expertise and forms of knowledge in the government of families', *The Sociological Review*, 51(4), 433-462.
- Nelson, M. (2010) *Parenting Out of Control: Anxious parents in uncertain times* New York and London: New York University Press
- O'Brien, M and Twamley, K (2016) 'Fathers taking leave alone in the UK - a gift exchange between mother and father?' in O'Brien M and K Wall (Eds) *Fathers on leave alone and gender equality: An international comparative perspective*, London: Springer
- Penn, H. (2011) 'Travelling policies and global buzzwords: How international non-governmental organizations and charities spread the word about early childhood in the global South', *Childhood*, 18(1): 94-113.
- Pennings, G. and Grtin, Z. (2012) 'The legal and Ethical Regulation of Transnational Donation'. In M. Richards, J. Appleby & G. Pennings (eds.) *Reproductive Donation: Bioethics, Policy and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. PAGES
- Qvortrup, J., Corsaro, W., and Honig, M (2011). 'Why Social Studies of Childhood?

- An Introduction to the Handbook' in Qvortrup, J., Corsaro, W., and Honig, M (eds). *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan. Pp. 1-18
- Ramaekers, S. and Suissa, J. (2011) *The Claims of Parenting: Reasons, Responsibility and Society*, Contemporary Philosophies and Theories in Education 4. London: Springer.
- Roman, C. 2014. 'Children and risk: a qualitative study on Swedish IT specialists' transition to parenthood' *Families, Relationships and Societies*, Volume 3, Number 3, November, pp. 443-457(15)
- Rosen, R. and Newberry, J. (2018) 'Love, labour and temporality: Reconceptualising social reproduction with women and children in the frame', in Rosen, R. and Twamley, K. (eds), *Feminism and the politics of childhood: Friends or foes?*, London, UCL Press. pp. 117-33.
- Sandel, M. (2009) *Justice: What's the right thing to do?* London: Penguin.
- Shirani, F. Henwood, K. and Coltart, C. (2012) 'Meeting the challenges of intensive parenting culture: gender, risk management and the moral parent'. *Sociology*. 46(1) 25-40.
- Simonardottir, S. (2016) 'Constructing the attached mother in the "world's most feminist country"' *Women's Studies International Forum* 56 (2016) 103 –112
- Spyros, S, Rosen, R. and Cook, D.T. (2018). 'Introduction: Reimagining Childhood Studies: Connectivities ... Relationalities ... Linkages ... ' in *Reimagining childhood studies*. London: Bloomsbury Academic pp. 1-20.
- Strathern, M. (1993). *Reproducing the Future: Anthropology, Kinship and the New Reproductive Technologies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Statistics Norway 2015. Earnings of all Employees.
<http://www.ssb.no/en/arbeid-og-lonn/statistikker/lonnansatt>
- Tönnies, F. (1887) *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Leipzig: Fues's Verlag. (Translated, 1957 by Charles Price Loomis as *Community and Society*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.)
- Vincent, C. Neal, S. and Iqbal, H. (2017) "Encounters with Diversity: Children's Friendships and Parental Responses." *Urban Studies* 54 (8): 1974–1989
- Westerling, A. (2016). 'Parenthood and We-ness in Everyday Life: Parenting Together Apart.' In A. Sparrman, A. Westerling, J. Lind, & K. I. Dannesboe (Eds.), *Doing Good Parenthood: Ideals and Practices of Parental Involvement* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Studies in Family and Intimate Life (1 ed., pp. 127-136).

ⁱ Use of this framework is not to argue for a return to romanticised forms of 'gemeinschaft' society (where forms of stratification and exclusion were arguably more pronounced) but rather to see how these heuristic concepts might help us think through shifting conceptions of trust and its implications for social reproduction.

ⁱⁱ As is discussed further below, this correlates with historically lower levels of migration to Norway than either the UK or the US.

ⁱⁱⁱ Recent changes in Norway's government, have led to proposals for a reduction in the amount of non-transferable parental leave to 10 weeks, making this an interesting time to explore these issues.

^{iv} This commitment to gender equality seems to be shifting in these 'elite' families, where many women, unusually for Norway, stop work or move to part-time hours so as to focus on a more intensive form of mothering.

^v This intersects with the availability of contraception, abortion and the new reproductive technologies which have meant having children is ever more a 'choice'

Introduction

What is the relationship between the way we raise the next generation and wider social relations? Drawing on theoretical discussions around risk and trust this paper ‘thinks through’ the subjects of parenting and social solidarity, with the aid of a comparative perspective.

Many scholars, particularly in Anglophone countries, have observed that mothers and fathers are now expected to do much more explicit ‘parenting’ than in the past (Hays 1996, Lee et al. 2014). This has led to theorisations of an ‘intensification’ of parenting, linked, in particular, to (neo)liberal welfare states (Lareau 2003, Nelson 2013, see also introduction, this issue). For the purposes of a comparative look into the reception, rejection, transformation and potential effect of these discourses, Norway has been chosen as a ‘social democratic’ state with an alternative historical orientation to the UK on questions of welfare and equality.

In particular, the paper considers the effect of a more individualistic narrative around parenting on notions of solidarity and trust in the two settings. This provides a means of discussing broader theoretical concerns around risk and responsibility, especially as they intersect with our ideas of childhood and adulthood. In short, the paper suggests that an individualised understanding of ‘parenting’ is problematic, as it has potentially corrosive effects on notions of social solidarity – a phenomenon arguably visible in the UK already. Whilst this has been tempered by Norwegian social democracy, this is changing with the global spread of neoliberal ideologies.

By drawing on theories of social trust and the ‘common good’ (Eriksen, 2014; Tonnies, 1887; Sandel 2009) to analyze the rise and impact of intensive parenting, the paper uses insights from both parenting culture and childhood studies to argue for a societal conception of parenting where the ways that we – including children and adults (parents and non-parents) – care for each other is central to the potentials and challenges of building solidarity. To make this argument, the paper considers three examples in social reproduction where tensions might be expected to be particularly pronounced, such as between parents and non-parents, between fertile and infertile citizens, and between the generations, in the context of rising migration. In bringing insights from childhood and parenting culture studies to bear on both academic and policy understandings of parenting, it explores how we – children as well as adults – are active in shaping ideas about good parenting and social solidarity, both within and beyond family units. In short, an individualised perspective on the ‘parenting’ relationship is not only highly reductive, it is also damaging to the project of building tomorrow.

‘Intensive’ parenting

Parenting has long been considered of great importance when it comes to the transmission of social norms and values, the continuation of kinship, family and household, and for reproducing local and national communities (Barlow and Chapin, 2010). It is understood here as an element of ‘social reproduction’, as

used by feminist scholars. As part and parcel of the perpetuation of gender and class relations:

[s]ocial reproduction includes the care and socialization of children and care of the elderly or infirm. Social reproduction includes the organization of sexuality, biological reproduction, and how food, clothing, and shelter are made available. Most social reproduction occurs within the family unit...variations in the distribution of the work of social reproduction are affected by the family, market, community, and state. (Laslett and Brenner, 1989: 381).

Recent sociological work has also situated 'parenting' as critical for understanding contemporary changes in society – particularly in the US and the UK but also further afield (Faircloth 2013). Drawing attention to broader socio-cultural processes within those societies that have cast contemporary child rearing as a highly important yet problematic sphere of social life, this work starts from the premise that raising children has become a more complex task, culturally, than it used to be in the past. Furedi, for example says the following:

Child-rearing is not the same as parenting. In most human societies there is no distinct activity that today we associate with the term parenting. In agricultural societies, children are expected to participate in the work and routine of the community and are not regarded as requiring special parenting attention or care ... The belief that children require special care and attention evolved alongside the conviction that what adults did mattered to their development. These sentiments gained strength and began to influence public opinion in the nineteenth century. The work of mothering and fathering was now endowed with profound importance. It became defined as a distinct skill that could assure the development of character traits necessary for a successful life ... Once children are seen as the responsibility of a mother and father rather than of a larger community the modern view of parenting acquires salience. (Furedi, 2002, p. 106)

From this point of view, a trajectory towards placing particular significance on the role and contribution of the parent, using their 'skills' to ensure a child's 'successful life', has a long history. However, it is also recognized that 'parenting' has acquired specific connotations more recently, certainly within neoliberal Euro-American settings. If one looks closely at the question of raising the next generation, for example, it will become clear this is rarely discussed as a communal task or the responsibility of adult society as a whole. Rather, it is discussed as an individualized 'parenting strategy' (whether around discipline, eating and sleeping patterns or otherwise).

Chiming with work done by modernization theorists (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1999) a key conceptual assumption is that children are particularly vulnerable to risk in the early years, such that a developmental 'blueprint' can be set during this period, engendering a highly deterministic, heavily loaded understanding of the parenting relationship (see also Macvarish 2016, Burman 2017, introduction, this issue). Recognizing the gendered dimension to these changes, much work in

the US and the UK has drawn on the concept of 'intensive mothering' (Hays, 1996) in understanding the experiences of contemporary women to describe an idealized, child-centred, expert-guided interaction with their children (Hays, 1996: x, see also Lee et al., 2014, see introduction, this issue).

In the introduction to this special issue, the editors elaborate on the inevitable relation between the 'vulnerable child' and the 'risky parent', noting that in such conceptions 'the child' becomes merely an 'outcome' of parental input, and a trope rather than an active contributor to the relationship. Alanen and Mayall's (2005) suggestion that 'childing' be the logical partner to 'parenting' is a welcome intervention, and whilst this paper focuses largely on the parental experience of the relationship, this is not to endorse the idea that socialization or 'parenting' is a unilateral or 'downwards' process. Indeed, much work in childhood studies has highlighted the extent to which children are active in caring relationships across the generations and beyond (e.g. Alanen, 2011, Spyrou, Rosen and Cook 2018). In challenging this academic lacunae, and thinking through children's roles (as conduits, mediators and agents) in building and breaking solidarities, it is critical that we take into account both their positions of being 'socialized' and 'cared for' as well as they 'caring for' and 'socializing' others, whether that be children or adults.

Of course, the perception of what is a 'good parent' (or 'good child') is culturally, historically and ideologically rooted, and affects individuals in different ways according to a range of intersectional factors, such as class or ethnicity. Nevertheless, the traction of this more individualised and competitive approach to parenting is intimately linked to wider cultural norms as well as state infrastructures, which differ dramatically in terms of welfare and resources for education and care (e.g. lack of school places, which puts extra pressure on parents to 'go the extra mile' (Lareau 2003, Nelson 2010)). Drawing on classical theoretical concerns, this article therefore asks how we might use ideas like 'trust' and 'solidarity' to challenge popular, policy and indeed academic understandings of 'parenting', which tend to conceptualize it as an individualized relationship. Instead, what might be gained in thinking about it as more *social* endeavor that necessarily involves all adults and children?

Theoretical context: Parenting, social solidarity and trust

The Norwegian anthropologist Eriksen has argued that the recent turn towards 'intensive' or 'paranoid' parenting (Furedi 2008) represents a shift in our very notions of personhood, responsibility and trust (2015). Using insights from classical social theorists, Eriksen evokes debates about the relationship between 'gemeinschaft' and 'gesellschaft', as used by thinkers such as Tonnies and Weber (Tonnies 1887, Weber 2012). For Weber, these are ideal types referring to social relationships based on informal, personal and 'community' ties in the former, and indirect, formal or 'society' ties in the latter (2012). The term is used here in a Weberian sense to refer to a sense of social cohesion and commitment to others, which is not only kin-based, but formed from a sense of 'we-ness' more broadly (Westerling, 2016). Solidarity of this sort matters in thinking about the project of 'building tomorrow'; that is, to discussions and decisions about who counts as a member of the 'we' – a highly politicized issue in the context of

ethno-nationalism (Rosen and Suissa, this issue), but not one necessarily determined by that, either within or beyond transnational borders. Solidarity, as understood here, is premised in many ways on an idea of trust and shared values, and this paper asks how trust is impacted by the rise of neoliberal, risk-conscious intensive parenthood. It also considers other means by which we might cultivate a sense of social solidarity.

Certainly, Eriksen suggests that there has been a loss of community or 'trust' in recent years, as part of the turn towards the 'risk society' that Giddens et al. describe (Giddens 1999). He gives the example that in the past, mothers in the UK would leave prams outside the shop whilst they carried out errands, or informally arrange for friends to do the school run; today, this would be unthinkable (and probably a prosecutable offence).ⁱ To this extent, the loss of 'solidarity' or 'trust' might best be read as one consequence of the growing individualization of adult-child relations, itself a product of a more neoliberal turn in the management of personal and family life: one cannot trust others to who do not have as much of a stake in that child's future (and see Rosen and Suissa, this issue, on how this has become politicized in the UK). Arguably this has even extended to intimate and family relations, such that the mother cannot trust anyone – even her partner or parents – to look after her child in the 'right' way (Wolf 2011; discussed further below).

Further, in line with work on risk consciousness, whether this is an actual or an imagined loss of social cohesion the effects are the same: People do not leave their children outside shops because they perceive solidarity, or 'trust' to have eroded (see also Bristow 2014). A focus on these *conceptions* therefore has important implications for both theory and policy. Arguably, the notion that the adult generation has a responsibility for nurturing the next generation was historically something that was taken for granted (Furedi 2008). Even if as an adult one was childless, this did not mean that one was indifferent to the next generation (Rosen and Suissa, this issue).

Today (in the US and the UK at least) Furedi argues that something has changed, in part as a result of contemporary political shifts. Now that parenting has become more individualized, he argues that there has been an estrangement from responsibility. The presumption of generational responsibility that has historically underpinned child-rearing has become disorganized. This means, he argues, that there has been a breakdown in the very notion of adult (and indeed childhood) identity. Whilst this can of course be welcomed in some sense – breaking down traditional power relations, for example – Furedi identifies this as a historically novel development, such that adults are no longer confident in their ability to act as authority figures *per se* to the next generation. Instead, parents are positioned, by policy makers at least, as a risk factor – both omnipotent and yet the ultimate cause of their children's problems, and in need of expert guidance. And whilst 'good parenting' in this model is ostensibly child-centred, it is arguably one where children *qua* children are eclipsed as participants in 'building tomorrow' and understood merely as outcome of parenting skills (again, this intersects with Rosen and Suissa's argument, this issue)

Furedi diagnoses this as a crisis of adulthood, where being a 'grown up' is no longer valued (or socially signified) in the same way as the past – in line with the shift towards uncertain, 'liquid' or 'reflexive' modernity that Bauman describes (2005). Because of this confusion, relationships between adults and children are ever more subject to juridification – that is, to rules about both formal and informal contact (see Bristow 2014 on the increased policing of adult-child relations in the form of CRB checks or similar in the UK, for example). This is historically and culturally specific: in Japan, for example, small children – aged only 2 or 3 – routinely take the subway alone, without parental supervision (Dixon 2015). Dixon notes that one reason for the unusual degree of independence of Japanese children is not (only) self-sufficiency, but rather, 'group reliance'. He observes that children learn early that 'any member of society can be called on to help or serve others' and that a 'sense of trust and co-operation occurs, often unspoken or unsolicited' (Dixon 2015, see also Hendry, 1986, on neighbourhood based 'techniques of training' for young Japanese children).

By contrast, where children might once have relied on adults to help them when they encountered day-to-day adversity, today, in the UK, many adults would be wary about getting involved with a child they were not related to, and children are taught from an early age about 'stranger danger' and to be suspicious of unknown adults. As Bristow argues, recognition that some adults may harm children has become transposed, in the form of society-wide regulatory projects regulating inter-generational contact, into the sensibility that *all* adults should be vetted in case they might pose a danger to children (2014). To give a more extreme example, in New York, a woman who let her 9-year old ride the subway was labelled 'the world's worst mom' (*Washington Post* 2015). In short, a substantive element of the interpersonal relationship (between adults and children) gets lost in this transformation of personhood in the new parenting culture (see also Ramaekers and Suissa, 2011).

As is examined below, this has had a knock-on effect on social solidarity or 'trust' more broadly – to the extent that active suspicion and resentment between adults (whether parents or not) about their caring rights and responsibilities are becoming increasingly commonplace. In parallel, children themselves have become de-responsibilised, leading some to argue that we need to return to a more 'free-range' approach to parenting (Skenazy, in Lee et al 2014.) recognizing children as willing and able to take responsibility for themselves from a much earlier age. At the same time, critics have noted that this continues to rely on a deterministic, individualized model of the parent-child relationship. Instead, these authors advocate that that the ways in which we engage in processes of social reproduction should be understood as precisely that – social (Bristow, 2014, Lee et al 2014.).

In the three examples discussed below, areas of potential social tension are explored in more depth, probing specifically why a more individualized approach to parent-child (or adult-child) relations is problematic. The suggestion is that relations between parents and non-parents (for example) act as a 'pressure point,' where a sense of social solidarity is particularly under threat from a more individualized understanding of 'parenting'. A more stratified

perspective on the question of social reproduction (i.e., with a shared sense of responsibility for raising the next generation) by contrast, opens up new avenues for the re-imagining of social trust.

State infrastructure and social reproduction: A comparative perspective

Norway and the UK have deliberately been selected as comparative case studies for the purposes of this paper. Like the Japanese example, traditionally, Norwegian society has been understood as one where neoliberal individualization, and the effects thereof, would be less far-reaching than the UK, given a different historical, political and cultural orientation towards social justice, family life and social cohesion. Eriksen, for example, suggests that the loss of trust he describes in the US and the UK has not been experienced in Norway to such an extent – parents will still leave their prams outside shops, and arguably the effects of this individualization of the responsibility for child care are less extreme (2014).

Esping-Andersen's seminal (if controversial) *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* categorises Norway as one of the 'social democratic' welfare states. He says of these states: 'The ideal is not to maximise dependence on the family, but capacities for individual independence (2006: 169). The state opts to 'take direct responsibility of caring for children, the aged and the helpless.' It is committed to 'allow women to choose work rather than the household', providing substantial state-provided child-care from an early age. Taxes are typically high, but in general this is understood by citizens to be in their best interests as a society more broadly, giving the state a high degree of legitimacy (Eriksen 2014). It is also crucial, argues Eriksen, to building a sense of community coherence and safety: in place of the need for competitive or intensive parenting, parents in Norway know that they can rely on the state to provide for their children, and competition for nurseries, schools and universities (for example) is less intense.

In opposition to this 'social-democratic' model, the British system has been classified as a (neo) 'liberal welfare state' (Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser, 2011). Here, Esping-Andersen notes that the main features are 'means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers or modest social-insurance plans'; 'Benefits cater mainly to a clientele of low-income, usually working class, state dependants' (2006: 167). Taxes tend to be lower than in social democratic states and a narrative of the '(un)deserving poor' dominates discussions of public finances (*Guardian* 2012). Not surprisingly (like the US, which might be said to be an even more extreme example) this infrastructure has been linked to the pervasive appeal or spread of intensive parenting, where individual parents must work hard to 'cultivate' their children in a concerted way, to ensure their success in life (Lareau 2003).

The commitment to foster the capacity for individual independence seen in many Nordic states does not sit easily with the more 'intensive' model of parenting, described above, which stresses the importance of 'familisation' (individual, family-based, and embodied care for children), rather than allowing for a more socially based or shared model. Indeed, it sits much more easily in liberal welfare states like the UK, with their implicit support for the traditional model of the family and a stay-at-home, usually female, carer.

Recently, however, to counter this 'gender inequality' in parenting in the UK – and its knock-on effect on men and women's working lives – there have been efforts to get fathers more 'involved' in parenting. Fatherhood has become politicized, with many calling for better 'work-life balance' policies to alleviate gender inequality in parenting (such as split parental leave and flexible working policies, Faircloth 2014, Baird and O'Brien 2015, Twamley and Schober 2019). Many of those calling for these changes look to the Scandinavian countries as an example of 'best practice' – since many of them have long embodied a commitment to 'equality' and fairness at the legislative level.

Norway, for example, operates the 'use-it-or-lose-it' system whereby a substantial amount of parental leave is allocated to the partner or father but is lost to the family unit if not taken up (Bradnth and Kvande 2009); this leave is paid at or nearly at full salary. Similarly, childcare is almost fully subsidized and represents an average expense of less than 5% in terms of household outgoings (the OECD average is 12%, Daycare Trust 2014, Statistics Norway 2015). By contrast, the UK technically operates a system of 'Shared Parental Leave' whereby a mother can 'transfer' leave to her partner, but this is typically unpaid or paid at a very low statutory rate at less than a quarter of the average wage. Furthermore, childcare on average amounts to 30% of disposable household income in the UK (ibid), making decisions around working patterns a particularly fraught one for many parents, again linked to wider intersectional concerns. (These economic constraints do not just affect parents, of course; see Vergara et al, this issue, on children's 'ethical reflexivity' around debt management in neoliberal settings as part of caring relationships within families).

The suggestion here is that these state infrastructures represent (and inform) different cultural ideas around family life (for all members), reproduction and social solidarity more widely. There is therefore an interesting process of mirroring going on in each location (of parenting culture and social policy respectively) that makes these two countries ideal case studies for an investigation into the iterative relationship between social norms and state infrastructure.

Changing cultures of parenting: diffusion and cohesion

In Norway, preliminary research indicates that a similar trend in parenting culture has been observed to that in the UK, with scholars noting that it has gradually become more 'intensive' as part of a turn towards a more neoliberal agenda, albeit not to such a great extent. Frønes (2007) describes contemporary Norway as 'parent-oriented', noting that parents invest more time and energy in their children than ever before, and where parenting tasks are becoming more demanding. Like the UK, contemporary parenting has therefore been defined as 'involved parenting' – a parenthood that centres on the child and the child's needs. Aarseth and Andersen's (2012) work on middle class parents, as well as Bendixsen's and Danielsen's research on parenting and diversity, also shows how family-life has become a project to be managed and worked at (2018). Indeed, this is particularly the case for the newly 'elite' families in Scandinavia reported as grappling, historically for the first time, with wanting their children

to be socialized according to social values of 'sameness', whilst also making them competitive in the increasingly global capitalist market and therefore invest in them in ways familiar to US and UK parents, often with the aid of nannies or au-pairs (Aarseth 2018).

Indeed Aarseth's work in Norway in particular brings to the fore the question of individualism/ collectivism. What scholars of 'parenting culture' in neoliberal contexts observe is that the task of raising the next generation has become highly fragmented and detailed, with a keen focus on the everyday practices of daily life (such as practices around eating or sleeping). Rather than 'socialising' children into a set of shared social values, a more individualised perspective means that the aim is to raise 'successful individuals' who are able to 'be themselves' (Faircloth 2013, and clearly this is premised on a highly reductive vision of 'the child'). This sits well within an intensive parenting ethos, but less well where there is a focus on communality, sameness and 'being social' (see also Bach 2017 on the Danish case).

In thinking anthropologically about the politics of cultural translation (see Faircloth 2013) this paper considers the ways in which messages about 'good parenting' are mobilized by various actors, including children – and adopted, resisted or reconfigured in these two cultural settings. In terms of resistance to this model of 'parenting', for example, Eldén and Anving (talking about middle class families in Sweden, 2019) include accounts from children, who are largely skeptical of the intensive 'quality time' approach to childcare, and are instead keen to spend time with their parents, during mundane activities of cooking and bathing, rather than having this 'dirty work' outsourced to an au-pair.

In general, however, whilst there are signs of growing stratification and increasing visibility of neoliberal discourses in Norway, there are important differences between the UK and Norway, specifically around gender (Gullvåg Holter 2014). Whilst in the UK researchers have explored if and how more intensive forms of fathering is 'on the rise' (Shirani et al 2012), Norwegian research indicates that a more active role for fathers and norms promoting a shared parenthood has been developing for some time (Lorenzen 2012, Bjornholt 2014), and point to their shifting role in Norwegian society (Aarseth 2011). As noted, this is partly explained by a policy context which has long championed an 'equality' ethos.ⁱⁱ

Certainly, knowledge concerning the cultural presumptions underlying ways of 'doing parenthood' (or 'doing childhood') is essential for understanding how trust, belonging and support for central societal values are preserved (and changed) particularly in the context of a culturally plural and increasingly cosmopolitan setting (Bendixsen and Danielsen 2018). How has this more individualized model of parenting diffused differently in Norway and the UK in accordance with different cultural and political histories? Is it the case that Norway is following in the footsteps of the UK in terms of the intensification of parenting, or is this too simplistic a way of framing this issue?

Parenting, childhood and social antagonism: Three examples

The suggestion here is that an individualised approach to parenting, so common in policy, which stresses the importance of the parent-child relationship to ultimate outcomes not only eclipses other social relations key to the parenting relationship, but also has the potential to erode notions of social trust or solidarity. Thus the three examples which follow focus on areas of hypothetical tension relating to 'parenting' and social reproduction, as a means of thinking through the potentials and challenges of building social trust in using a more societal conception of raising children.

Parents and non-parents

In the UK, an individualized narrative around parenting (in policy as well as academic and media discourses) increasingly presents children as a morally loaded 'lifestyle choice' for which parents should (and do) take sole and full responsibility (Bristow 2014). Thus an antagonism between parents and non-parents has become increasingly visible as a form of social categorization – most notably in the workplace, particularly around parents' entitlement to leave and flexible working. As the press would have it, this has become a battle between the 'breeders' and the 'child-free-by-choicers', with campaigns for 'personal leave' to be available to employees for reasons other than child care (Bristow 2014, see also Rosen and Suissa, this issue ⁱⁱⁱ)

In the UK, childcare is understood as the responsibility of the family unit, with many scholars pointing out that the assumption childcare should rest with the individual parents is not only an expression of a neoliberal, individualistic era (Gillies 2009, Fraser 2013), but also one which exacerbates a segregation between parents and non-parents. This could arguably also be framed as part of a general loss in social responsibility for raising the next generation.

Instead, the suggestion here is that if we took a *societal* conception of raising children, this could lead to a society-wide organised system of care for children, and corresponding re-organisation of the work-place. Working with similar ideas of sociality, but from a social policy perspective, Sandel notes that the challenge for contemporary policy-makers is to 'imagine a politics that takes moral... questions seriously, but brings them to bear on broad economic and civic concerns' (2009: 262). Looking at institutions in the US such as national service and public schooling, for example, he rejects a utilitarian approach to the common good that prioritises the maximisation of welfare, on the grounds that justice should not become a simple 'matter of calculation' rather than of principle. He also rejects the choice-oriented (or 'freedom-based') approaches of both libertarians and liberal-egalitarians for failing to provide anything other than 'individual preference' as the guiding principle on public policy design. Instead, revisiting ideas from Aristotle, he argues for the cultivation of virtue and reasoning on questions of policy in which 'value' to the common good becomes paramount. To use the idea of the common good is not to imply that children are a resource from which we all stand to benefit. Rather, this focus on virtue and what we really 'value', socially, is helpful in discussions around parenting/childing as a more societal endeavor, in that it helps us think beyond the more typical, neoliberal framings of relations of social reproduction, which

tend to rest on ideas of competition, individualisation or familisation (e.g. Gillies 2011).

To this extent, with a social understanding of the importance of childcare for all, the tensions between parents and non-parents described might well be lessened, as they would not be pushed back onto individuals and employers (Bristow 2014). This makes this an interesting issue to compare with Norway, then, since there the state demonstrates a financial commitment to children's care through heavily subsidised childcare and flexible working arrangements for parents – seemingly without courting the tensions mentioned above. Indeed, preliminary research suggests that this tension (between parents and non-parents) is not one that is considered culturally salient as a form of social labelling, and certainly not one voiced in the media (Bendixsen and Danielsen 2018).

And what of children? Theoretically it is interesting to consider whether this represents a different vision of the family life to that in the UK, and how, if at all, an increasing 'intensification' of parenting outlined above is likely to alter this. The Nordic states are frequently held up as the 'gold standard' of equality legislation, but how that actually works itself out in practice is generally less clear-cut (Simonardottir 2016). Certainly, the role of children themselves as active participants in being or shaping 'the future' (Rosen and Suissa, this issue) is reflected in a commitment to children's rights at the level of policy and practice in the Scandinavian context (Qvortrup 2009). Clearly, children *are* active participants in building relations with adults (and between adults) in ways that span the parent/non-parent boundary, something which is often eclipsed by the narrow focus on 'parenting' in policy and indeed academic discourse (Patico, this issue, discusses adult-child interactions in a US school).

Migration and intergenerational change

Taking a historical angle, essential to exploring notions of social trust over time, the second example is that of intensive parenting and intergenerational relationships, with special attention to issues of migration, diversity and coherence (Bendixsen and Danielsen, 2018; Franceschelli, 2018).

Scholars working on parenting culture in the UK have observed that one of the negative effects of a more intensive, expert-driven individualistic approach to parenting is the impact on intergenerational transmission. A cultural context that views parents as inadequate in the face of the task of 'building tomorrow' means that parents have become seen in need of ever more expert guidance in carrying out this task (Lee et al, 2014). Arguably, this contemporary, expert-based parenting culture has not only had an effect on parents' own subjectivities, but it has magnified a disruption to any sense of cultural transmission between grandparents, parents and children. Grandparents are routinely presented (in the UK) as not to be trusted as they are 'out of touch' or not 'up to date' on the most recent parenting methods and advice. Children, by contrast, are often instrumentalised in schemes to 'educate' parents about, for example, healthy eating or environmentalism (Furedi 2008). It is crucial then to consider intergenerational shifts in parenting culture, as well as at the effect of an

individualization of parenting on those intergenerational relationships themselves.

As UK and Norwegian societies become ever more globalized and ‘multicultural,’ new parenting norms, ideologies and practices are emerging, not least at the instigation of children themselves who often act as interlocutors for their parents (and grandparents) – something that is of particular concern for the state and notions of social coherence and nation-building (Crafter and Iqbal 2016). In the context of rising ethno-nationalism and historically high levels of migration, Gullestad has written about the Norwegian model of social equality as one which champions ‘sameness’ rather than ‘difference’, in contrast to the ‘multi-cultural’ model usually promoted in the UK (2002). Working in urban contexts of high migration in Norway (and, importantly, in the context of the ascension of a right-wing party to power) Bendixsen and Danielsen have explored how notions of diversity are experienced by Norwegian parents (2018). Encouragingly, they document parents’ accounts of concern about ‘other peoples’ children’ in this context, as part of efforts to extend ‘intensive’ parenting beyond the nuclear family, seeing socialization as a collective endeavor through what they term ‘inclusive’ parenting. Thus, as the work of Vergara (this issue) also acknowledges, we also need to think about how an intensification of parenting in certain contexts has the potential to *create* coherence within – as well as between – particular groups, as part of this process of ‘integration’ not least as a product of children’s engagement in these social networks (see also Faircloth, 2013).

In London, Vincent et al’s work on children’s friendships (2017) also makes an argument about the importance of peer relations to the building of social solidarity, particularly in ‘super diverse’ contexts. Focussing on friendships across ethnic and class differences they highlight both the potentials and challenges of relationships between children across class boundaries, not least when these are mediated by parental anxieties, seeing these as examples of ‘efforts to forge relationships across difference’ (2017: 1987). However, these are recognized to be fragile ones under threat from a declining sense of social trust as part of a wider ‘hostile environment’ towards migrants (Guardian 2017)

This issue therefore highlights some of the problems of thinking about parenting as simply an individualistic matter, as it is so often framed in policy discourse. In contexts of historically high migration (and a rise in right-wing, nationalist rhetoric across Europe) a risk-conscious, neo-liberal understanding of social reproduction threatens attempts to build social trust and arguably encourages a turn away from ‘others’, whether from different cultural backgrounds, or arguably even a different generation. A more social conception allows space for an appreciation of peer and other adult-child relations in the creation of social relations.

Fertility and inequality

The final example looks particularly at how the intensification of parenting has differently affected would-be parents in the UK and Norway, in the context of different regulatory regimes, suggesting that an individualized approach is corrosive to notions of solidarity and trust between citizens. In a more

individualised, intensive parenting culture, which stresses personal fulfilment through parenthood, becoming a (biological) parent has not only become seemingly more feasible for many couples, but the social role has been inflated in congruence, frequently being framed as a 'human right' (Strathern 1993). In line with a focus on tensions (Rosen and Newberry 2018, Rosen and Suissa, this issue), then, this example considers how the inflation of the parenting identity has led to feelings of exclusion and segregation at the wider social level, for those who cannot 'achieve' it (Faircloth 2017). These issues are particularly timely, given recent debates in each country about how far the state should pay for couples to receive fertility treatment (recent headlines in the UK reveal that in many areas of the country, IVF treatment will be scrapped on the National Health Service due to cost-cutting, *Independent* 2017).

Recent work on the subject of egg-donation explores these issues around individualisation and social reproduction in a cross-cultural comparative framework (Marre et al 2017). In the UK, individuals are (currently) able to receive treatment with donor eggs on the NHS, where in Norway, this is currently prohibited due to concerns about coercion (although the Biotechnology Council has advised changing this law, Melhuus 2005). Instead, patients seeking treatment through egg donation typically engage in what has been called 'fertility tourism' or 'Cross Border Reproductive Care' in search of egg-donors, with Spain being one of the most popular destinations (Pennings and Gurtin 2012, Marre et al 2017). This example therefore prompts us to think about 'trust' and 'solidarity' not only in access to reproductive technologies, but also 'what counts' in the creation of kinship and national communities, not least as this relates to any children born as a result of that treatment (Cheney 2018).

In thinking about the relationship between the intensification of parenting, reproductive technologies and neoliberalism it is important to think specifically about the nature of 'individualisation' (Faircloth and Gurtin 2017). As both a product of an intensified parenting culture, as well as one of its greatest catalysts, reproductive technologies could be read as the example *par excellence* of the individualisation of a social problem. Instead, if we take a more social view, this might better be understood as a problem with the way society is structured (in terms of, for example fertility decline and the pressure to become established in one's career). Instead, infertility is increasingly tackled in ways that makes individuals accountable for their reproductive trajectories, emphasizing and enabling ever further the importance of the biological relation (Inhorn and Van Balen 2002).

The problem then, is that paradoxically, many individuals (and couples) seeking fertility treatment narrate their inability to have children as a form of social exclusion (from a peer group), whilst those who are parents *also* report a sense of segregation from society as a whole. In both cases, this individualization is antithetical to the case of family life and social reproduction, which has traditionally been about creating connections (see Faircloth 2017). Roman's work in Sweden (2014), for example, reveals the paradox of individualization in the contemporary era: having children is itself considered a 'risk project', minutely planned by couples to counter the threat to individual autonomy and therefore family life itself.

Whilst of course children are not 'active' participants in the forging (or breaking) of these relationships between fertile and infertile adults, it is nevertheless critical to think about the notion of 'the child' in these debates, even when this is at the conceptual (or rather, pre-conception) level. In Cheney's work, for example, we see how 'the best interests of the child' is configured in debates around international commercial surrogacy, usually from within a children's rights perspective. She argues instead for the importance of empirical work with children conceived by such arrangements, and a theoretical perspective which has relationality at heart (2018, see also Lee, Macvarish and Sheldon 2017, who look at the 'Welfare of the Child' question with respect to the policing of potential parents). These kinds of questions prompt us to think about the relationship between individualism and community relations as they relate to the role of the state in subsidising treatment (and by extension, who can afford to become a parent at all). An individualized perspective on 'parenting' plays into a more divisive approach to reproduction and the redistribution of resources across society, and thus has potentially corrosive effects on relations of solidarity.

Discussion: Solidarity, care and the 'common good'

Bringing together insights from childhood and parenting culture studies, in parallel with ideas around social solidarity, the article suggests that concepts such as 'gemeinschaft' (Tonnies) 'trust' (Eriksen) or the 'common good' (Sandel) can be useful in re-thinking the way social reproduction is framed, in both academic and policy debates. Certainly, childhood studies helps us see the ways in which 'parenting culture studies' too readily eclipses the perspectives of, and potential for, children to build social relations, helping us re-think underlying notions of socialisation, authority and categories of adulthood and childhood in turn.

Politically, rhetoric in Europe has been increasingly focused on the individual's private 'choices', meaning that structural challenges to collective duties of care often fall outside the remit of equality and anti-discrimination policies (Browne 2013, Baird and O'Brien 2015). But how free are people – as parents, non-parents or even children – to make these 'choices' about their work and home lives? In the context of cuts to public services (in the UK) on the one hand, and the obsession with parenthood on the other, what is society actually doing about being and raising children? In this particular political climate, childcare and reproduction provides an interesting 'litmus test' for policy-makers in thinking about a range of other issues relating to the allocation of state resources. This also clearly has implications for what Eriksen (and indeed Marx, Tonnies and Weber) say about solidarity, particularly in the context of rising diversity. In taking a more social perspective on the question of reproduction, the ways that we – children and adults (parents and non-parents) – care for each other can be foregrounded, and therefore made central to project of building social solidarity.

Further, through a comparative perspective, this paper aims to re-frame the debate around 'parenting' as one beyond the individual family, to become one of the 'common good', from which we all – parents, non-parents and children, have a stake in. This opens up, it is hoped, new avenues in how we could approach the

'problem' of raising the next generation as a *societal* rather than an individual one.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the relationship between 'parenting' and trust, and the ideas of adulthood and childhood on which it rests. Thinking about parenting as a societal endeavour, whereby all of us – children, parents and non-parents – care for each other challenges the individualised model of the neoliberal 'parent' and 'child' within the new 'parenting' culture and helps us approach the question of building social solidarity afresh. The suggestion is that an 'intensification' of parenting has a potentially corrosive effect on notions of trust and social cohesion, looking at the potential implications of this through three examples. Whilst a social democratic welfare state infrastructure (as seen in Norway) clearly goes some way to curbing the worst excesses of a more neoliberal individualised 'intensive' parenting culture evident in the UK, it's clear that the spread of this culture is on the rise, creating novel tensions and forms of inequality in the Nordic context. To put it another way, how long will Norwegian parents continue to leave their children in prams outside shops?

References

- Aarseth, H & Andersen, L (2012) 'Den likestilte familien i et klasseperspektiv: Mellom selvutfoldelse og felleskap', in: Ellingsæter & Widerberg (red.), *Velferdsstatens familier. Nye sosiologiske perspektiver*. Gyldendal Akademisk, pp. 191 – 2107/2008
- Aarseth, H. (2018) 'Fear of Falling – Fear of Fading: The Emotional Dynamics of Positional and Personalised Individualism'. *Sociology* 1-16.
- Aarseth, H. (2011) *Moderne familieliv. Den likestilte familiens motivasjonsformer*. Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.
- Alanen, L. (2011) 'Generational Order', in J. Qvortrup, W. Corsaro and M.-S. Honig (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan. pp. 159-74
- Alanen and Mayall, B. (2001) *Conceptualizing Child- Adult Relations* London: Falmer
- Bach, D. (2017) 'The civilized family life : childrearing in affluent families.' In Gilliam, L. and Eva Gulløv. *Children of the welfare state: civilising practices in schools, childcare and families*. London : Pluto Press. Pp. 194-235.
- Baird, M, and O'Brien M. (2015) 'Dynamics of parental leave in Anglophone countries: the paradox of state expansion in liberal welfare regimes'. *Community Work and Family* 18.
- Barlow, K. and Chapin, B.L. (2010) 'The practices of Mothering: An Introduction', in *Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology, ETHOS*, 38(4): 324-338
- Bauman, Z. (2005) *Liquid Life* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. New Delhi: Sage
- Beck, U. (2000) 'Risk Society Revisited: Theory, Politics and Research Programmes', in Adam, Beck, and Van Loon. (eds.), *The Risk Society and Beyond: Critical Issues for Social Theory*. London: Sage, pp. 211 -229
- Bendixsen, S. and Danielsen, H. (2018) 'Other people's children: inclusive parenting in a diverse neighborhood in Norway.' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (Online first).
- Bjørnholt, M. (2014) *Modern Men: A Norwegian 30-Year Longitudinal Study of Intergenerational Transmission and Social Change*. Örebro Studies in Gender Research, 3. Örebro: Örebro universitet. Doctoral dissertation
- Brandth, B, and Kvande, E. (2009) "Norway: The Making of the Father's Quota." In Kameman, S and Moss, P (eds). *The Politics of Parental Leave Policies: Children, Parenting, Gender and the Labour Market* Bristol: The Policy Press. Pp 191-207

Bristow, J. (2014) 'Who cares for children? The problem of intergenerational contact' in Lee, E. Bristow, J. Faicloth, C. and Macvarish, J. 2014 *Parenting Culture Studies* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Browne, J. (2013) 'The Default Model: Gender Equality, Fatherhood and Structural Constraint', *Politics & Gender. Official Journal of the American Political Sciences Association (APSA)*. Vol 9, Issue 02. pp. 152-173.

Burman, E. (2017) *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*, London: Routledge.

Crafter, S., & Iqbal, H. (2016). 'Child language brokering in cultural contact zones: Young people's experiences of critical moments'. Presented at: Special Interest Group 10, 21 & 25 Conference of the European Association for Research in Learning and Instruction.

Cheney, K. (2018) 'International commercial surrogacy: Beyond feminist conundrums and the child as product' in Rosen, R. and Twamley, K (eds). *Feminism and the Politics of Childhood: Friends of foes?* UCL Press pp. 155-172.

Daycare Trust. (2014) 'Childcare Costs Survey 2014'. London: Daycare Trust <http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/childcare-costs-surveys>

Dermott, E. 2008 *Intimate Fatherhood: A Sociological Analysis* London: Routledge.

Dixon (2015) cited in *The Atlantic*. 'Why are little kids in Japan so independent?' <http://www.citylab.com/commute/2015/09/why-are-little-kids-in-japan-so-independent/407590/>

Douglas, S. and Michaels, M. (2004) *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined All Women*. New York: Free Press.

Eldén, S and Anving, T. (2019) *Nanny Families: Practices of Care by Nannies, Au Pairs, Parents and Children in Sweden*. Bristol: Bristol University Press

Eriksen, T. H. (2014) 'Who or What to Blame' *European Journal of Sociology*, Volume 55, Issue 02, August 2014, pp 275-294

Esping-Andersen, G. (2006) 'The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism'. *The Welfare State Reader*. Pierson, C and Castles, F. (Eds). London: Polity Press.

Faircloth, C. (2014). 'Intensive parenting and the expansion of parenting' in Lee, E. Bristow, J. Faicloth, C. and Macvarish, J. *Parenting Culture Studies* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 25-51.

Faircloth, C. (2013) *Militant Lactivism? Infant feeding and maternal accountability in the UK and France*. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books.

Faircloth, C., Hoffman, D. and Layne, L. (eds) (2013) *Parenting in Global Perspective: Negotiating ideologies of kinship, self and politics*. London and New

York: Routledge.

Faircloth, C., Grtin, Z. (2017). 'Fertile connections: Thinking across assisted reproductive technologies and parenting culture studies' *Sociology*, Volume: 52 issue: 5, page(s): 983-1000

Ferragina, E and Seeleib-Kaiser, M (2011) 'Thematic Review: Welfare regime debate: past, present, futures?' *Policy & Politics*, Volume 39, Number 4, October 2011, pp. 583-611(29)

Franceschelli, M. 2018. *CC SEMU. Here we are, lives on hold in Lampedusa* Available: <https://vimeo.com/264381307>

Furedi, F. (2002) *Paranoid Parenting: Why ignoring the experts may be best for your child* Chicago: Chicago Review Press

Furedi, F. (2008) *Paranoid Parenting*. London: Continuum

Fraser, N. (2013) *Fortunes of Feminism: From state-managed capitalism to neoliberal crisis*. New York: Verso.

Frnes, I. (2007) *Moderne barndom*. Oslo: Cappelen Akademisk

Gatrell, C. (2005) *Hard Labour: The sociology of parenthood* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Giddens, A. (1999) 'Risk and Responsibility', in *Modern Law Review*, 62 (1): 1-10

Gillies, V. (2009) 'Understandings and experiences of involved fathering in the United Kingdom: exploring classed dimensions', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 624, 49-60

Gillies, V. (2011) 'From function to competence: engaging with the new politics of family', *Sociological Research Online*, 16(4), 11, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/16/4/11.html>

Guardian (2012) 'Rich and Poor: Deserving and undeserving' <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/27/rich-poor-deserving-undeserving>

Guardian (2013) 'Childcare - like life - is about so much more than economics.' <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/27/rich-poor-deserving-undeserving>

Guardian (2014) 'Cost of childcare is barrier to working more, says two-thirds of mothers' <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2014/jan/23/cost-childcare-barrier-work-mothers-survey>

Guardian (2015) 'Shared parenting leave: nightmare new rules, or the first baby steps to equality?' <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2015/apr/11/shared-parental-leave-rules-equality>

Guardian (2017) 'Hostile environment': the hardline Home Office policy tearing families apart'. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/nov/28/hostile-environment-the-hardline-home-office-policy-tearing-families-apart>

Gullestad, M. (1984) *Kitchen-Table Society. A Case Study of the Family Life and Friendships of Young Working-Class Mothers in Urban Norway*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Gullesatad, M. (2002) 'Invisible Fences: Egalitarianism, Nationalism and Racism' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* Volume 8, Issue 1, pages 45–63, March

Gullvåg Holter, O. (2014) "'What's in it for Men?": Old Question, New Data' *Men and Masculinities*, Vol. 17 (5)

Hays, S. (1996) *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press.

Hendry, J. (1986) *Becoming Japanese: The world of the pre-school child*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Independent. (2017) 'Patients facing 'postcode lottery' after NHS budgets slashed' <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/ivf-nhs-treatment-fertility-lists-wait-patients-lottery-budget-cuts-a8028116.html>

Inhorn, M C., and van Balen, eds, F. (2002) *Infertility Around the Globe: New Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lareau, A. (2003) *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. By Berkeley: University of California Press.

Laslett, B. and Brenner, J. 1989. 'Gender and social reproduction: historical perspectives'. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 15:381-404

Lee, E. Bristow, J. Faicloth, C. and Macvarish, J. (2014) *Parenting Culture Studies* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Lee, E., Macvarish, J. and Sheldon, S. (2017). 'After the 'need for....a father': 'The welfare of the child' and 'supportive parenting' in UK assisted conception clinics'. *Families, Relationships and Societies* [Online] 6:71-87.

Lorenzen, J. (2012) *Fra farskapets historie i Norge. Fra 1850 til 2012*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Macvarish, J. (2016) *Neuroparenting: The expert invasion of family life*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Marre, D. Beatriz San Román & Diana Guerra (2017) 'On Reproductive Work in Spain: Transnational Adoption, Egg Donation, Surrogacy' *Medical Anthropology* 1-16.

- Melhuus, M. (2005) 'Better safe than sorry'. Legislating assisted conception in Norway' i Christian Krhohn-Hansen og Knut Nustad (eds) *State Formation: Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.
- Nelson, M. (2010) *Parenting Out of Control: Anxious parents in uncertain times* New York and London: New York University Press
- O'Brien, M and Twamley, K (2016) 'Fathers taking leave alone in the UK - a gift exchange between mother and father?' in O'Brien M and K Wall (Eds) *Fathers on leave alone and gender equality: An international comparative perspective*, London: Springer
- Penn, H. (2011) 'Travelling policies and global buzzwords: How international non-governmental organizations and charities spread the word about early childhood in the global South', *Childhood*, 18(1): 94-113.
- Pennings, G. and Gürtin, Z. (2012) 'The legal and Ethical Regulation of Transnational Donation'. In M. Richards, J. Appleby & G. Pennings (eds.) *Reproductive Donation: Bioethics, Policy and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. PAGES
- Qvortrup, J., Corsaro, W., and Honig, M (2011). 'Why Social Studies of Childhood? An Introduction to the Handbook' in Qvortrup, J., Corsaro, W., and Honig, M (eds). *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan. Pp. 1-18
- Ramaekers, S. and Suissa, J. (2011) *The Claims of Parenting: Reasons, Responsibility and Society*, Contemporary Philosophies and Theories in Education 4. London: Springer.
- Roman, C. 2014. 'Children and risk: a qualitative study on Swedish IT specialists' transition to parenthood' *Families, Relationships and Societies*, Volume 3, Number 3, November, pp. 443-457(15)
- Rosen, R. and Newberry, J. (2018) 'Love, labour and temporality: Reconceptualising social reproduction with women and children in the frame', in Rosen, R. and Twamley, K. (eds), *Feminism and the politics of childhood: Friends or foes?*, London, UCL Press. pp. 117-33.
- Sandel, M. (2009) *Justice: What's the right thing to do?* London: Penguin.
- Shirani, F. Henwood, K. and Coltart, C. (2012) 'Meeting the challenges of intensive parenting culture: gender, risk management and the moral parent'. *Sociology*. 46(1) 25-40.
- Simonardottir, S. (2016) 'Constructing the attached mother in the "world's most feminist country"' *Women's Studies International Forum* 56 (2016) 103 –112

Spyros, S, Rosen, R. and Cook, D.T. (2018). 'Introduction: Reimagining Childhood Studies: Connectivities ... Relationalities ... Linkages ...' in *Reimagining childhood studies*. London: Bloomsbury Academic pp. 1-20.

Strathern, M. (1993). *Reproducing the Future: Anthropology, Kinship and the New Reproductive Technologies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Statistics Norway 2015. Earnings of all Employees.

<http://www.ssb.no/en/arbeid-og-lonn/statistikker/lonnansatt>

Tönnies, F. (1887) *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Leipzig: Fues's Verlag. (Translated, 1957 by Charles Price Loomis as *Community and Society*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.)

Twamley, K. and Schober, P. (2019) 'Shared parental leave: exploring variations in attitudes, eligibility, knowledge and take-up intentions of expectant mothers in London.' *Journal of Social Policy*. [Volume 48, Issue 2](#) April, pp. 387-407

Vincent, C. Neal, S. and Iqbal, H. (2017) "Encounters with Diversity: Children's Friendships and Parental Responses." *Urban Studies* 54 (8): 1974–1989

Washington Post (2015) 'I let my 9 year old ride the subway alone and I got labeled the world's worst mom.'

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/01/16/i-let-my-9-year-old-ride-the-subway-alone-i-got-labeled-the-worlds-worst-mom/>

Weber M (2012) *Collected Methodological Essays* (ed HH Bruun and S Whimster; trans. HH Bruun). London: Routledge.

Westerling, A. (2016). 'Parenthood and We-ness in Everyday Life: Parenting Together Apart.' In A. Sparrman, A. Westerling, J. Lind, & K. I. Dannesboe (Eds.), *Doing Good Parenthood: Ideals and Practices of Parental Involvement* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Studies in Family and Intimate Life (1 ed., pp. 127-136).

ⁱ Use of this framework is not to argue for a return to romanticised forms of 'gemeinschaft' society (where forms of stratification and exclusion were arguably more pronounced) but rather to see how these heuristic concepts might help us think through shifting conceptions of trust and its implications for social reproduction.

ⁱⁱ This commitment to gender equality seems to be shifting in these 'elite' families, where many women, unusually for Norway, stop work or move to part-time hours so as to focus on a more intensive form of mothering.

ⁱⁱⁱ This intersects with the availability of contraception, abortion and the new reproductive technologies which have meant having children is ever more a 'choice'