

SOCIAL POLICY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
29TH JUNE – 1ST JULY 2009

Paper to be presented in the stream – Children and Families

Families' Outsourcing of Male Domestic Jobs: Implications for (gender) equality

Majella Kilkeyⁱ, Ania Plomienⁱⁱ and Diane Perronsⁱⁱⁱ

Work in progress

Comments very welcome

ⁱ Department of Social Sciences, University of Hull, UK. Email: M.M.Kilkey@hull.ac.uk

ⁱⁱ Gender Institute, London School of Economics, UK. Email: A.Plomien@lse.ac.uk

ⁱⁱⁱ Gender Institute, London School of Economics, UK. Email: D.Perrons@lse.ac.uk

Abstract

Research over the last decade has documented the return of paid domestic labour across many European societies. This scenario is part of the broader process of the commoditisation of social reproduction, which has accompanied the displacement of the male-breadwinner family model by the dual-worker / one-and-a-half-worker model in some states in the context of little or no re-alignment in the sexual division of domestic labour. The main focus of research has been on the outsourcing of female areas of domestic work, namely cleaning and care-giving, and despite Cancedda's (2001) observation of evidence across Europe of commoditisation of stereotypically masculine domestic chores such as gardening and household repair/maintenance, there has been little or no empirical investigation of the phenomenon. This paper is concerned with addressing that gap. Drawing on analysis of the UK Time Use Survey, it firstly documents the scale and characteristics of UK households' outsourcing of typically male areas of domestic work. It then seeks to locate the processes underlying this phenomenon, as well as its implications, drawing on the analysis of in-depth interviews with both partners in couple households with dependent children which buy-in help with male domestic work on a repeated basis. The analysis suggests that there are strong parallels with the commoditisation of female areas of domestic work, with the outsourcing of male domestic jobs being found to play an important role in couples' strategies for reconciling work and rest of life. In particular, the attempt by men to conform to the normative expectation of the 'good father' – someone who combines breadwinning with nurturing and a more active and involved role in raising children – in the context of a largely unsupportive institutional framework, emerges as a key factor underlying couples' decision to outsource male domestic jobs. Moreover, there is evidence that men are doubly "let off the hook", since a common outcome in households of outsourcing of male domestic jobs is that responsibility for its management falls to female partners. These findings are then considered in relation to the broader questions of the gender use of time and gender equality within the contemporary work-life balance policy regime in the UK.

Introduction

In the early 1980s Gershuny (1985) predicted that as the cost of purchasing domestic technologies declined relative to incomes, we would become a self-servicing society. Evidence derived from empirical studies in that period seemed to support his prediction. Most notably, Pahl's (1984) Isle of Sheppey investigation of which tasks households do and the source of the labour for them, pointed to an increasing rate of self-provisioning – 'the production of goods and services outside the market by household members for their own use and enjoyment' (Pahl and Wallace 1985: 219). From the 1990s onwards, however, academic commentary has highlighted a counter-tendency towards domestic outsourcing – 'the process of replacing unpaid household production with market substitutes' (Bittman, Matheson and Meagher 1999: 249). Studies of the levels of domestic outsourcing tend to adopt a broad definition of domestic labour which incorporates both stereotypically masculinised (e.g. household and garden maintenance and repair) and feminised (e.g. cleaning, care-giving, cooking) household chores (Bittman, Matheson and Meagher 1999; Spitze 1999; Cancedda 2001; Baxter, Hewitt and Western 2008; de Ruijter and van der Lippe 2009).¹ Their results indicate that not only is the tendency towards outsourcing apparent for both male- and female-typed tasks, but that in some situations outsourcing is more prevalent in the case of the former (Bittman, Matheson and Meagher 1999; Spitze 1999). Despite such evidence, research exploring the processes underpinning domestic outsourcing has tended to focus on female areas of domestic work, namely cleaning and care-giving.² A common theme in that research is that the outsourcing of female areas of domestic labour in many societies, is rooted in professional women's 'time squeeze', created on the one hand by women's, especially mothers', increased attachment to the labour market, and on the other hand, by the failure of both the state and men to take more responsibility for care and domestic labour. The question of what accounts for the apparent

¹ Time Use Survey data reveal that in practice, albeit with cross-national differences in degree, there is a gendered division of labour in the distribution of household tasks with men more likely to do gardening, household repairs and maintenance and women more likely to do food preparation, laundry, ironing, cleaning and childcare (see for example Aliaga 2006: Table 2).

² See for example, Cox 2006; Gregson and Lowe 1994; McDowell et al. 2005 on England; Degiuli 2007; Escrivá 2005; Lazaridis 2007; Pojmann 2006 on Southern Europe; Akalin 2007 on Turkey; Platzer 2006 on Sweden; Hochschild 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001 on the USA; Constable 1997 on Hong Kong; Moors and de Regt 2007 on the Middle East; Anderson 2000; Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003; Cancedda 2001; Lister et al. 2007; Parreñas 2001 & 2005; Sarti 2006 on cross-national comparisons; and most recently Lutz's (2008) edited collection covering a wide range of European and other countries.

contemporary growth in the outsourcing of stereotypically male jobs in and around the home, however, remains to be explored.³

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to such an exploration.⁴ In doing so, we recognise that the drivers underpinning the trend towards the outsourcing of male domestic labour are likely to be complex and multiple, involving shifts in cultural norms and values as well as material circumstances (Wallace 2002; Baxter, Hewitt and Western 2008; de Ruijter and van der Lippe 2009). As Pahl (1984) has suggested, for any one household, the patterns and rationale of self-provisioning and outsourcing are also dynamic, shifting as households move through what he terms the ‘domestic lifecycle’. We have quite a specific focus in this paper, however, on households which contain dependent children and a resident father. This focus has been determined in large part by the adoption of gender as an analytical framework. More precisely, our aim is to situate an understanding of the outsourcing of male domestic labour within the context of a broader concern about the shifting gender regime in the UK particularly as it relates to paid work and care, and in such a way which recognises explicitly that men, as well as women, are the objects of normative prescriptions and policy interventions about the appropriate relationship to paid work and care.

The paper is organised in four further sections. In the first, we provide an account of the empirical research which underpins the paper. In the second, we draw on analysis of the UK 2000 Time Use Survey (UK2000TUS), to document the scale and characteristics of households’ outsourcing of domestic labour in general and typically masculinised areas of domestic labour in particular. While the analysis focuses on all households initially, it proceeds to drill down to examine in greater depth outsourcing in couple households with dependent children. In the third section, we explore the processes underlying the outsourcing of male domestic labour in such households. To do so we draw on the preliminary analysis of our in-depth interviews with households containing a dependent child/ren and a resident father which buy-in help with male domestic work on a repeated basis. The analysis suggests that there are strong parallels with the commoditisation of female areas of domestic work, with the outsourcing of male domestic jobs being found to

³ The research gap is beginning to be addressed: see Cox (2008) on the handyman company ‘Hire-a-Hubby’ in New Zealand, and Ramirez and Hondagneu-Sotelo’s (2009) research on immigrant Mexican men working as maintenance gardeners in Los Angeles’ suburbs.

⁴ The paper stems from an ongoing research project on the gendered understandings of the relationship between globalisation, migration and social reproduction that takes account of the ethnic, ‘race’, and class dimensions that underpin contemporary migration processes, financed by the Economic and Social Research Council, grant RES-000-22-2590.

play an important role in couples' strategies for reconciling work and rest of life. In particular, the attempt by men to conform to the normative expectation of the 'good father' – someone who combines breadwinning with nurturing and a more active and involved role in raising children – in the context of little or no adjustment to their pattern of paid work, emerges as a key rationale for couples' decisions to outsource male domestic jobs. In the fourth and final section, we situate our findings within the particular institutional regime around paid work and care to have emerged in the UK since 1997. Here we examine the implications for gender equality in particular, while at the same time acknowledging that there are implications for other social divisions too, including class.

Data, definitions and methods

This paper is based on two main sources of data. The first is a secondary analysis of the UK2000TUS, which was designed to provide information on the scale and characteristics of the outsourcing of traditionally male domestic tasks by private households in the UK. The data set is particularly appropriate for this purpose because it records households' receipt of external help with various tasks including household and garden maintenance, and its characteristics (the provider, whether paid for, frequency and duration of help). In addition, it also allows for analysis of the characteristics of those households buying in help with such tasks. Given the overall small scale of the survey, the analysis is necessarily descriptive and limited in the degree of disaggregation.

The second source of data is a series of in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face with both partners in couple households with dependent children which buy-in help with male domestic work on a repeated basis.⁵ As reflected in time use surveys (e.g. Lader et al. 2006), tasks associated with typically male domestic areas of responsibility include DIY repairs and gardening. While some of the traditionally male jobs entail highly skilled or regulated forms of labour requiring certification (for example installation of gas appliances) and have long been marketised, our focus is on less skilled, smaller scale and non-regulated aspects of household work which appear to be increasingly commoditised and often generate firm and individual handyman services (Kilkey and Perrons 2010). Examples of stereotypically masculine domestic chores outsourced to handymen include landscaping and lawn care, assembling garden sheds, paving driveways, repairing fences, changing locks, replacing taps, fixing leaks, mounting shelves, hanging pictures and

⁵ We are also interviewing handymen and preliminary findings from these interviews have been reported in Kilkey, Perrons and Plomien (2009) and in Perrons, Plomien and Kilkey (2009).

mirrors, attaching fixtures, painting and decorating, etc. These household repair and maintenance jobs encompass thus a wide range of skills and demand a varied level of expertise, frequency, time, and tools.

We draw on interviews with 25 households with a resident father and dependent children, interviewing mothers and fathers separately (yielding a total of 50 individual interviews), using semi-structured interviews.⁶ The interviews explore why and how households outsource stereotypically male domestic tasks, how such practices affect their time-use patterns as well as models of gender and parenting relations, and the extent to which outsourcing facilitates reconciliation of work and family life, especially for fathers. The outsourcing of handyman jobs is analysed in the context of commoditisation of social reproduction more broadly, and in the context of normative assumptions of what constitutes ‘good parenting’ and ‘good fathering’.

As our wider project aims at a broader gendered analysis of the relationship between globalisation, migration, and social reproduction through the lens of the ‘migrant handyman phenomenon’, we focus the qualitative part of our study in and around London – a key destination city for migrant workers (Datta et al. 2006) – but also include households residing in other areas of England (mostly North Eastern England) in order to establish which findings are specific to London and which are more geographically generalisable. The recruitment of participants for household interviews relies on researchers’ networks, adverts placed in print and electronic media related to parenting or life-style themes, leafleting and snowballing.

Our participants tend to be higher income earners, where the combined net monthly income of both partners ranges between £ 2 000 and more than £ 11 000, with the majority of the household’s being in the range of £ 5 000 to £ 6 000 – corresponding with the top quintile group of household disposable income based on national statistics (Jones, Annan and Shah 2008). The majority of the households are dual income earners, where men are employed full time and women are employed either full- or part-time. In some of the cases, however, women are currently on maternity leave, while in still others they are ‘economically inactive’.

Since the qualitative component of the study is still in progress, the findings discussed in this paper are based on preliminary analysis.

⁶ Not all interviews with household members have been completed at the time of writing this paper.

Households' outsourcing of male domestic tasks: evidence from the UK2000TUS⁷

Results from our analysis of the UK2000TUS provide some evidence of the scale and characteristics of households' outsourcing of domestic labour in general and typically masculinised areas of domestic labour in particular. Table 1 provides information on households' consumption of paid domestic and care services. The major services are window cleaning consumed by 30 per cent of households and vehicle servicing, (15 per cent); services which have for a long time been provided by specialist suppliers and so excluded from our analysis, though interestingly, these activities are traditionally male areas of responsibility. Excluding these, somewhat surprisingly given the dominant focus of academic and social commentary, the data reveal that stereotypically female and male areas of housework (taken separately from care) may not differ greatly in the extent of their commoditisation, with almost equal proportions reporting paying specialists for household repairs/construction and gardening/plant watering (6 per cent for each), as for house-cleaning/tidying (6 per cent) and ironing (3 per cent).⁸ Child care accounts for 4 per cent and care of the elderly 1 per cent, again perhaps lower than might be expected given the focus of academic research (see Table 1).

[Table 1 about here]

There is evidence though that the frequencies with which households buy-in help differ across male and female areas of domestic responsibility. Thus, in respect of cleaning/tidying and ironing, the most common pattern is to buy-in help on a weekly basis, found for 53 and 47 per cent of households respectively. This is in contrast to outsourcing of repairs and construction, which the majority of households (63 per cent) reported having done just once in the last four weeks. These variations most likely reflect the nature of the tasks *per se* rather than their gendered distribution, with cleaning and ironing requiring more frequent and regular attention than household repairs/construction, regardless of the type and age of house. Support for such a view comes from the evidence on the frequency with which households buy-in help with gardening. For this job, almost two-thirds of households reported having bought-in help at least twice in the last four weeks, with 25 per cent having done so four times over that period, exhibiting more in common with cleaning/tidying and ironing than with repairs/construction.

⁷ Material presented in this section is to be published in Kilkey and Perrons 2010.

⁸ Bittman, Matheson and Meagher's (1999) analysis of Australian data for the period 1993-94 also found high levels of household outsourcing of gardening / lawn mowing. However, while they found a considerable gap between the rate at which households outsource gardening/lawn mowing on the one hand (9 per cent) and cleaning (4 per cent) on the other hand, we have not found this in our analysis.

Focusing on household repair/construction and gardening/plant tasks respectively, Tables 2 and 3 compare the profiles of those households which outsource these jobs and those which do not. Households which outsource repair/construction tasks are more likely (and to a degree which is statistically significant), to have dependent children, have labour market income, not be pensioners, and to buy-in help with a wide range of other domestic / care services as well, thus providing some evidence that outsourcing is associated with time-squeeze. The use of commoditised garden services, however, does not appear as strongly associated with time-squeeze: thus for example, such households when compared with households which do not outsource garden/plant work tend not to have dependent children and are more likely to be pensioner households. This finding serves as an important reminder that the outsourcing of domestic work is a process with multiple dynamics, including demographic ageing, and specifically in the case of gardening, physical fitness.

[Tables 2 and 3 about here]

In Table 4, we exclude pensioner households, focusing only on non-pensioners and further drilling down to exclude all but couples with dependent children. Examining households which outsource repairs/construction and/or garden/plant care by households' earning pattern, we see further evidence of a link between a tendency to outsource and those households most vulnerable to time-squeeze. Thus, households with both partners in paid work are more likely to outsource than single-earner households. Of further interest is that male breadwinner households are more likely to outsource typically male areas of domestic labour than are female breadwinner households. This suggests that *male* time-squeeze in particular may lead households to outsource. Additionally, it may be that for men who stay at home to raise children, the doing of male domestic labour, as has been found in Andrea Doucet's (2006) study, is a way to affirm traditional masculinity in a situation where it is perceived to be under threat through the absence of paid work and the doing of traditionally female work in the home.

What is also of interest in the data is the way that one and a half earner households outsource to a greater degree than dual earner households. This would appear to counter the time squeeze hypothesis but nonetheless could be consistent with the combined time squeeze and resources argument (Baxter et al 2009), a finding that has some support from our preliminary findings from interviews with households (see below). A further possibility, and one being pursued in our qualitative research, is that while male time is saved through the outsourcing of their domestic chores, this work still has to be managed

by the household, something that can more easily be accomplished in one and a half earner households. If so, outsourcing of male areas of domestic work would involve a double transfer from the man to the woman in the household and from the household to the market, an outcome which is also in evidence in our preliminary findings from interviews with households (see below).

[Table 4 about here]

Outsourcing of male domestic tasks as a household strategy to reconcile work and family life

Results from our preliminary analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with partners in households with dependent children and a resident father which use handyman services supports the findings from the UK2000TUS (see above) that outsourcing of domestic work is a process with multiple dynamics. Lack of skill and experience required to perform typically masculine forms of domestic labour is particularly important in households in which neither of the partners had ever done such jobs themselves. In households which had done these tasks themselves in the past (usually men, but in some cases also women), the change of personal circumstances has triggered the decision to outsource them to handymen. For example, an important aspect weaving through the respondents' accounts is affordability associated with social mobility, both in terms of participants' own life courses and in comparison with their parents' generation. Other reasons include buying a house which is more maintenance-intensive than a flat, or becoming an owner-occupier and wanting a professional to do these jobs 'properly', that is, to a higher standard than could be achieved with own effort. However, the arrival of children and continued involvement in full-time employment of fathers and full- or part-time paid work patterns of mothers appears as the main rationale for couples' decisions to outsource male domestic jobs.

One reason for why fathers (and mothers) find it difficult to engage in repair, re-decoration, or maintenance tasks is that the presence of small children makes it impractical or inconvenient to do so – for employed parents the only time available is in the evenings or at the weekend when children are in bed or at home, and noisy, messy, and lengthy jobs cannot be completed. Another, and more pronounced reason, is the time squeeze associated with working and parenting - limited time is allocated to paid work and to unpaid care of children and family activities, while household chores are put-off or outsourced.

With respect to time pressures, outsourcing of stereotypically male forms of domestic responsibilities allows men to dedicate more time to paid employment. For example, a father of three comments:

... in our previous house ... I was working into the evenings sorting something out on a house, handyman, DIY kind of scale, and being physically exhausted such that, you know, the next day I would work exhausted and, you know, still do some more the next evening ... So not doing those jobs has kind of given me a bit more of an impulse to do more work, um, both more efficiently and ... for longer hours...I work... much, much later than I used to, I mean, I always used to work pretty late ... and sometimes I'm not back 'til 9 ... if I came home any earlier it would end up as kind of emails and odds and sods ... and partly just the sheer volume of work ... (HH_04_M)

Thus, family decisions to outsource handyman-type jobs relieve men from household chores to dedicate more time to career advancement – a parallel, albeit on a smaller scale, with the outsourcing of typically female domestic labour enabling women to participate in the paid labour force.

Men's success in paid employment, often underpinned by full-time and long working hours, is still an important aspect of male identity of being a good provider and a good father. Indeed, breadwinning gains significance when children begin to arrive on the scene. A mother of two noted that her partner:

...got much more serious about a career when I was pregnant ... I think he just got much more 'oh right, better crack on' ... because it was unclear whether I would go back to work ... but I think he was prepared for that ... (HH_10_W)

And the father confirms this:

... Yes I think I've probably become a bit more pushy about...getting wage rises since...I have become much more money conscious since I've had children... (HH_10_M)

The male breadwinner model, despite being supplemented by dual or one-and-a-half arrangements, is still strongly entrenched in women's and men's attitudes. Even when couples believe in gender equality with respect to division of labour, the arrival of children puts that notion to the test. The tensions and the ensuing changes expressed in the following statement by a mother of three working part-time reflect the attitudinal and performative adjustments made by many of our participants:

...he sees himself as a realised father and ... initially I thought ... gender balance would be a bit more balanced and we would both do an equal amount of share and caring ... I've been sort of pushed, constrained, to part-time employment, but also chosen part-time ... he wouldn't be able to breastfeed ...but what he would do, he would be a fabulous provider, a fantastic breadwinner, he would completely make sure that we had a roof ... over our heads ... a high quality of life ... and standard of living... (HH_02_W)

Indeed, consistently with data on the impact of parenthood on employment (e.g. EC 2009) most of the fathers we have interviewed have continued to work full-time or have

increased their work effort in terms of time, while mothers have cut back. Only in one case was there a gender-role reversal, where a father has expressed a clear desire to scale back on paid work in exchange for more time spent on unpaid care of his young daughter but was not successful in negotiating such an arrangement with his partner.

Breadwinning, however important to our participants, is no longer a sufficient element of good fathering. Being a hands-on dad is becoming increasingly significant and this view is held by men and women alike. Although men tend to report that they have not given fathering styles or ideals much thought before they have had children, most are interested and actively involved in the everyday child care tasks, such as taking children to school, preparing meals for them, or giving them baths and putting them to bed – and not just fun weekend activities which were typical of their own fathers' involvement when traditional gender roles were more strongly pronounced. For instance, a father of two divides his time into several chunks dedicated to working and parenting:

...generally I try and see them, even if it means working in the evenings more, or working before they get up, so sometimes I'll start the day at sort of 4:30, 5 in the mornings, so that I can see the boys when they wake up at 7, spend some time with them, come in, work, go home, see the kids, have their bath, work again... (HH_03_M)

But, there are clear tensions between contemporary breadwinning and fathering. Sometimes breadwinning gets in the way of fathering, as when this father of three feels he cannot properly play with his youngest son because of all the unfinished work tasks on his mind:

I am particularly bad at ... where you're kind of sitting on the floor pretending to be, um, you know, a big bad wolf blowing down a house and [my youngest son] ... will want that of course to be a hundred percent full on and I'm trying to do it ... but also thinking 'damn, I've got that email... so how am I gonna do that, ooh, right, yeah, I'm a wolf, yes, sorry' and ... I wish I could switch off from work at that kind of level to engage with ...mucking about kind of stuff... (HH_04_M)

And sometimes the work-father conflict demonstrates itself the other way around, where active fathering keeps one away from performing paid-work tasks, as in the case of this father of two:

...that pressure ... or that pressure to do whatever ... that's always slightly at the back of my mind, even when I'm with them. So, you know, when I'm putting them to bed I sometimes hurry to put them to bed a bit because then I can read just while they're dropping off to sleep (HH_10_M)

With the time squeeze related to paid employment and care of children, outsourcing of traditionally masculine forms of domestic labour is often associated with creating a work-life balance for men. This includes more time for fathers to spend with children (providing temporary relief for mothers normally responsible for care), more time

for a range of day-to-day domestic responsibilities (for example cooking, grocery shopping or cleaning) – leading to redistribution of traditionally female tasks in some households – and finally, more time for leisure spent with the whole family which is most evident at the weekends or during holidays, which would have to be sacrificed if households did not outsource certain jobs to handymen or gardeners. Indeed, men and women state that it is more important for fathers to dedicate time for children and the family than to DIY-type jobs. There are, therefore, strong parallels between the commoditisation of female and male areas of domestic work as outsourcing of labour associated with male responsibilities plays an important role in couples’ strategies for reconciling work and family life. However, men attempt to conform to the normative expectation of the ‘good father’ – someone who combines breadwinning with a more active role in raising children – by scaling down on various aspects of their private life (such as leisure or typically male domestic responsibilities) rather than adjusting or cutting back on paid work.

Moreover, there is evidence that men are doubly “let off the hook”, since a common outcome in households of outsourcing of male domestic jobs is that responsibility for its management falls to female partners. More often than not, it is women who initiate the organisation of handyman work by drawing up lists of tasks needing attention, contacting and selecting appropriate tradesmen, negotiating payments, and overseeing the completion of the various jobs. So, while traditionally these kinds of jobs have been male areas of responsibility, in the middle and upper-middle income households this has ceased to be the case both in terms of execution and organisation of work. Indeed, men are still perceived to be responsible for such jobs as when ‘*they’ve got to be coerced into doing it*’ (HH_10_W), but are no longer required or interested in fulfilling this responsibility as it falls on women to see the job gets done. For instance, this mother of one who is in full-time paid work gives the following answer to the question whether her partner is responsible for typically male domestic tasks:

...Not really. I tend to take more responsibility for ... yeah, I think I manage more ... these kind of labour ... which is why it was interesting that when we got ... [a handyman] to come and do the painting ... he didn’t really know how to deal with me. He was automatically dealing with [my husband] and actually [my husband] has really got nothing to do with ... but I do try to get him on board. I do try to encourage him to take responsibility for things as well....since we’ve started buying in services ... it’s almost as if he’s let off the hook completely ... and he just doesn’t ... he doesn’t even He might disagree, he might think he does, but I think he just kind of doesn’t even think about it anymore... (HH_08_W)

Women take responsibility for these jobs because they are at home more, because their work is deemed more flexible, or because it is more important to them than their partners

that the jobs get done. Thus, in some cases, the total burden of paid and unpaid work continues to be greater for mothers than fathers. Although we observe a clear attitudinal and performative shift in fathering, where men believe that they should be more hands on parents and where households resort to outsourcing of typically male forms of domestic work as a strategy to realise this ideal by creating more time for childcare and family activities, the division of labour remains stubbornly gendered. Analysis of the lived experience of working parents suggests that fathering is still less active or intense than mothering (see also Dermott 2008), and somewhat paradoxically, the normative ideal of ‘the new father’ encounters significant obstacles upon the arrival of children and results in a re-traditionalisation of gender roles.

Concluding comments: situating the outsourcing of male domestic labour within UK policy

While it is widely recognised that reconciling paid work and family life has long been a practice of women, there has been less concern about whether and how men might employ strategies to help combine paid work with family responsibilities (Kilkey 2006). In large part, this is because the UK’s male breadwinner model, which defined men’s family responsibilities almost exclusively in economic terms, was assumed to negate work-family conflict for men. In recent years however, there has been a range of well-documented shifts bound up with post-industrial social and economic transformations, which change the terrain on which men (as well as women) must practice work and family. One such shift is the growing expectation for more active, involved and hands-on fathering, particularly as it relates to middle-class families (Dermott 2008; Featherstone 2009). The re-framing of what fathers should be doing reflects in part the demands, often conflicting, of some feminist and some men’s political movements (Featherstone, Rivett and Scourfield 2007). It also, however, increasingly reflects the interests of the political and economic elite, since the rationale for greater father involvement is connected to the discourse of ‘social investment’ - a “child-centred social investment strategy” (Esping-Andersen 2002, 20), in which children are seen as “citizen-workers of the future” (Lister 2003, 427). From this perspective, father involvement is advocated for the positive developmental impact it has on children, the next generation of workers (Kilkey 2006).

Results of the preliminary analysis of our interviews with couples with dependent children, suggest that such normative expectations about fathers’ involvement with children, are leading contemporary fathers (often in partnership with mothers) to be more

reflexive about the precise ways in which employment and family are configured in their lives. There was little evidence among the fathers we have interviewed, though, of any significant scaling back of paid work; indeed, for some, becoming fathers led to an intensification of their commitment to paid work, a finding which as we noted above is consistent with other research. Yet, as is evidenced in time-use surveys (e.g. Lader, Short and Gershuny 2006) and in other qualitative research (Dermott 2008), men do spend more time caring for their children than previously (although still significantly less than mothers), and this would seem to be the case for our fathers too. A key question, therefore, is if fathers are not working less, where has this ‘new-father time’ come from? Our research suggests that for some men at least, time for fathering is being made by outsourcing jobs that they have hitherto been responsible for around the home, such as repairs, maintenance and gardening.

This private solution to resolving *men’s* work/family conflicts is related to the particular policy framework around the reconciliation of work and family life to have emerged in the UK over the last decade or so.⁹ Since 1997 New Labour has gone a considerable way in reversing the non-interventionist orthodoxy dominant in liberal / male breadwinner welfare regimes, and has introduced a range of policies designed to help families reconcile paid work and family life. Mothers, rather than fathers, however, have been the main target of such initiatives. Thus, for example, in terms of ‘care-leaves’, the emphasis has been mostly on extending maternity leave, rather than parental leave (Lewis 2009), and the provisions that have been introduced to allow fathers time off to care, have been described as “little more than tokenistic” (Lister 2006, 319), attaching in particular, poor levels of wage replacement. While the UK labour market is one of the most flexible in the EU, regulation to shift the balance of power from employers to workers in the determination of working patterns, has remained weak. Most notably, flexible working rights in the UK award only the right to *request* to work flexibly, and have been taken up overwhelming by women (Bell and Bryson 2005). Undoubtedly, for some categories of male workers, the high levels of (employer-determined) atypical working patterns, such as shift working, are facilitating more father-time (Lewis 2009).¹⁰ For professional and managerial men, however, this does not seem to be the case. When compared with their intermediate and manual level counterparts, such men have access to better employer-

⁹ This argument is given full consideration in Kilkey 2010.

¹⁰ This arrangement is unlikely to be costless in other aspects of life though, for example partner-relations, since it is often associated with shift parenting.

provided entitlements around the reconciliation of work and family life and have greater time-autonomy in their workplace (Crompton and Lyonette 2008; Fagan et al 2008). However, evidence suggests (ibid) that they do not feel able to take advantage of the opportunities, and experience (as do their female counterparts) higher levels of work-life conflict. In part this is because as Fagan et al (2008: 200) note “...flexibility and discretion can go hand-in-hand with a sense of obligation to work long hours when required to cover variable or persistently heavy workloads”. In part, it is also because they have career and promotion aspirations, which are associated with increased levels of work intensity (Crompton and Lyonette 2008).

Policies in the UK, therefore, have done little to alter fathers’ working patterns. By contrast, the expectation that women adjust paid work to fit around raising children, at least in the early years, has been reinforced. This helps to explain our finding that the outsourcing of male domestic jobs often leads to a transfer of responsibility for getting them done from men to women, and has implications for gender equality in terms of domestic workloads. That we have also found that the outsourcing of domestic labour is related to the availability of sufficient resources, suggests implications in terms of class inequalities too in the options available to families around the reconciliation of work and family life. In particular, there may be implications for a classed ability of fathers to conform to the new ideals of fathering. In the context of our wider research project, which involves interviews with migrant men to whom male areas of domestic labour are being outsourced, we are also examining the ways in which migrant-status constrains the ability of fathers to conform to (UK) expectations of the ‘good father’.

References

- Akalin, A. (2007) 'Hired as a Caregiver, Demanded as a Housewife. Becoming a Migrant Domestic Worker in Turkey', in *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 14: 3, pp. 209-225.
- Aliaga, C. (2006) 'How is the time of women and men distributed in Europe?', *Statistics in Focus, Population and Social Conditions*, 4/2006, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Anderson, B. (2000) *Doing the Dirty Work? The Global Politics of Domestic Labour*, London: Zed Books.
- Anderson, B. and O'Connell Davidson, J. (2003) 'Is trafficking in human beings demand driven? A multi-cultural pilot study', *International Organisation for Migration Research Series No. 15*, Geneva: International Organisation for Migration.
- Baxter, J., Hewitt, B. and Western, M. (2009) 'Who uses paid domestic labor in Australia? choice and constraint In hiring household help', *Feminist Economics* 15 (1) 1-26.
- Bell, A. and Bryson, C. (2005) 'Work-Life balance – still a “women's issue”?', in A. Park, J. Curtice, K. Thomson, C. Bromley, M. Phillips and M. Johnson (eds) *British Social Attitudes, 22nd Report*, London: Sage.
- Bittman, M., Matheson, G. and Meagher, G. (1999) 'The Changing Boundary Between Home and Market: Australian trends in outsourcing domestic labour', *Work, Employment and Society*, 13, 2, 249-273.
- Cancedda, L. (2001) *Employment in Household Services*. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.
- Constable, N. (1997) *Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Filipina Workers*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Cox, R. (2008) 'Hired hubbies and mobile mums: discourses of skill and the gendering of paid work in the home', Paper presented at the Domestic work and the making of the modern world Conference, Warwick University, May 2008.
- Cox, R. (2006) *The Servant Problem: Domestic employment in a global economy*, London: I B Tauris.
- Crompton, R. and Lyonette, C. (2008) 'Mothers' employment, work-life conflict, careers and class', in J. Scott, S. Dex, H. Joshi (eds) *Women and Employment. Changing Lives and New Challenges*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

- Datta, K., McIllwaine, C., Evans, Y., Herbert, J., May, J. and Wills, J. (2006) *Work and Survival Strategies among Low-Paid Workers in London*, London: Queen Mary, University of London.
- Degiuli, F. (2007) 'A Job with No Boundaries. Home Eldercare Work in Italy', in *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 14: 3, pp. 193-207.
- Dermott, E. (2008) *Intimate Fatherhood*, London: Routledge.
- Doucet, A. (2006a) *Do men mother? Fathering, care and domestic responsibility*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Escrivá, A. (2005) 'Aged global care chains: a Southern-European contribution to the field' *Conference on Migration and Domestic Work in Global Perspective*, Wassenaar, 26-29 May 2005. www.nias.knaw.nl/en/ [Accessed 1/09/06]
- Esping-Andersen, G. (2002) 'Towards the Good Society, Once Again?', in Esping-Andersen, G., Gallie, D., Hemerijck, A. and Myles, J. (2002) *Why We Need a New Welfare State*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- European Commission (EC) (2009) Indicators for monitoring the Employment Guidelines including indicators for additional employment analysis 2009 compendium, version of: 22/04/2009.
- Fagan, C., McDowell, L., Perrons, D. Ray, K. and Ward, K. 'Class differences in mothers' work schedules and assessments of their 'work-life balance' in dual-earner couples in Britain', in J. Scott, S. Dex, H. Joshi (eds) *Women and Employment. Changing Lives and New Challenges*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Featherstone, B. (2009) *Contemporary Fathering. Theory, Policy and Practice*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Featherstone, B., M. Rivett, and J. Scourfield. (2007) *Working with men in health and social care*. London: Sage.
- Gershuny, J. (1985) 'Economic Development and Change in the Mode of Provision of Services', in N. Redclift and E. Mingione (eds) *Beyond Employment. Household, Gender and Subsistence*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Gregson, N. and Lowe, M. (1994) *Servicing the Middle Classes*, London: Routledge.
- Hochschild, A.R. (2000) 'Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value', in Hutton, W. and Giddens, A. (eds) *On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism*, London: Jonathan Cape.

- Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (2001) *Doméstica. Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*, Berkley: University of California Press.
- Jones, F., Annan, D. and Shah, S. (2008) 'The distribution of household income 1977 to 2006/07' in *Economic and Labour Market Review*, 2 (12), Office for National Statistics.
- Kilkey, M. (2010) 'Domestic and care work in the UK: locating men in the configuration of welfare, care, gender and migration regimes', in *Social Policy and Society*, Themed Section *Domestic and care work at the intersection of welfare, gender and migration regimes: European experiences* (Guest Editors M. Kilkey, H. Lutz and E. Palenga-Möllenbeck).
- Kilkey, M. (2006) 'New Labour and Reconciling Work and Family Life: Making it Fathers' Business?', in *Social Policy and Society* 5: 2, pp. 167-75.
- Kilkey, M., and Perrons, D. (2010) 'Gendered divisions in domestic-work time: the rise of the (migrant) handyman phenomenon', forthcoming in *Time and Society*
- Kilkey, M., Perrons, D. and Plomien, A. (2009) 'Migrant handymen in the UK: A case-study of migrant-niche formation' presented at the BSA Annual Conference, Cardiff 16-18 April
- Lader, D., Short, S. and Gershuny, J. (2006) *The Time Use Survey 2005. How we Spend our Time*, London: Office for National Statistics.
- Lazaridis, G. (2007) '*Les Infirmières Exclusives* and Migrant Quasi-Nurses in Greece', in *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 14: 3, pp. 227-245.
- Lewis, J. (2009) *Work-Family Balance, Gender and Policy*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Lister, R. (2003) 'Investing in the Citizen-workers of the Future: Transformations in Citizenship and the State under New Labour', in *Social Policy and Administration*, 37: 5, pp. 427-43.
- Lister, R. (2006) 'Children (but not women) first: New Labour, child welfare and gender', in *Critical Social Policy*, 26: 2, pp. 315-35.
- Lister, R., Williams, F., Anttonen, A., Bussemaker, J., Gerhard, U., Heinen, J., Johansson, S., Leira, A., Siim, B., Tobio, C. and Gavanas, A. (2007) *Gendering citizenship in Western Europe*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Lutz, H. (2008) (ed). *Migration and Domestic Work. A European Perspective on a Global Theme*. Avebury: Ashgate.

- McDowell, L., Ray, K., Perrons, D., Fagan, C. and Ward, K. (2005) 'Women's Paid Work and Moral Economies of Care', in *Social and Cultural Geography*, 6: 2, pp. 219-35.
- Moors, M. and De Regt, M. (2007) 'Migrant domestic workers in the Middle East: Gender, vulnerability and irregularity', Paper presented at the Mobilities Conference, Amsterdam School for Social Science Research, Amsterdam 24th – 26th January 2007.
- Pahl, R.E. (1984) *Divisions of Labour* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Pahl, R.E. and Wallace, C. (1985) 'Household Work Strategies in Economic Recession', in N. Redclift and E. Mingione (eds) *Beyond Employment. Household, Gender and Subsistence*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Parreñas, R. (2001) *Servants of Globalisation: women, migration and domestic work*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Parreñas, R. (2005) *Children of Global Migration: transnational families and gendered woes*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Perrons, D., Plomien, A. and Kilkey, M. (2009) 'From post-socialism to neo-liberalism? Gendered understandings and experiences: insights from the migrant handyman sector in the UK' presented at International Geographical Union Commission on Gender and Geography Conference, May 22-24, Szeged-Timisoara.
- Platzer, E. (2006) 'From Private Solutions to Public Responsibility and Back Again: The New Domestic Services in Sweden', in *Gender and History*, 18: 2, pp. 211-221.
- Pojmann, W. (2006) *Immigrant Women and Feminism in Italy*, Ashgate: Avebury.
- Ramirez, H. and P. Hondagneu-Sotelo 2009. Mexican Immigrant Gardeners: Entrepreneurs or Exploited Workers? *Social Problems* 56: 70-88.
- De Ruijter, E. and van der Lippe, T. (2009) 'Getting Outside Help. How Trust Problems Explain Household Differences in Domestic Outsourcing in the Netherlands', *Journal of Family Issues*, 30: 1, pp. 13-27.
- Sarti, R. (2006) 'Domestic Service: Past and Present in Southern and Northern Europe', in *Gender and History*, 18: 2, pp. 222-245.
- Spitze, G. (1999) 'Getting help with housework', *Journal of Family Issues*, 20, pp. 724-46.
- Wallace, C. (2002) 'Household Strategies: Their Conceptual Relevance and Analytical Scope in Social Research', *Sociology*, 36: 2, pp.275-92.

Table 1: Households' consumption of paid domestic/care services in 'last four weeks'

<i>Service</i>	<i>% of households paying for help from people whose job it is</i>
Childcare	4
Care of elderly or sick	1
Cleaning, tidying up	6
Ironing clothes	3
Repairs and construction	6
Gardening and plant watering	6
Window cleaning	30
Vehicle servicing, inc. car repair	15
Other *	7

Source: Authors' analysis of the UK2000TUS. Total number of households = 6414.

Notes: * Includes among others, food preparation, cleaning the car, taking care of pets, doing household accounts and transport or removals.

Table 2: Profile of households which buy-in help with repairs/construction compared with households which do not

<i>Compared with households which do not, those buying in help with repairs/construction are more likely to: *</i>	<i>Statistically significant (p<0.05)</i>
Have child/ren 15 or under	Yes
Be a non-pensioner household	Yes
Have earnings from employment/self-employment	Yes
Have an annual gross income of at least £15,640	Yes
Buy-in help with childcare	Yes
Buy-in help with cleaning/tidying-up	Yes
Buy-in help with ironing	Yes
Buy-in help with garden work	Yes
Buy-in help with window cleaning	Yes

Source: Authors' analysis of the UK2000TUS.

Notes: * Only statistically significant results are reported in the Table. Thus, while compared with those which do not, households which buy-in help with repairs/construction are more likely than other households to buy in help with food preparation, with the care of the sick or elderly, with vehicle repair/servicing, with watering plants, with transport/removals and with cleaning the car, the differences are not statistically significant.

Table 3: Profile of households which buy-in help with garden work/watering plants compared with households which do not

<i>Compared with households which do not, those buying in help with garden/plant care are more likely to: *</i>	<i>Statistically significant (p<0.05)</i>
Have no child/ren 15 or under	Yes
Be a pensioner household	Yes
Have an annual gross income of at least £15,640	Yes
Buy-in help with cleaning/tidying-up	Yes
Buy-in help with repairs / construction	Yes
Buy-in help with window cleaning	Yes

Source: Authors' analysis of the UK2000TUS.

Notes: * Only statistically significant results are reported in the Table. Thus, while compared with those which do not, households which buy-in help with gardening and watering plants are more likely to have no earnings from employment/self-employment, and to buy in help with: food preparation, ironing, care of sick or elderly, cleaning the car, shopping/errands and household accounts; the differences are not statistically significant.

**Table 4: Outsourcing of male areas of domestic labour by household earnings pattern
(Non-pensioner couple households with child/ren under 15 only)**

<i>Household earning pattern</i>	<i>% outsourcing repairs/construction and/or garden/plant care</i>	<i>% not outsourcing repairs/construction and/or garden/plant care</i>	<i>N</i>
Male only earner	12	88	375
Female only earner	10	90	80
Male Full-time / Female Part-time	15	85	389
Dual Full-time	13	87	238
Other *	4	96	127

Source: Authors' analysis of the UK2000TUS.

Notes: * Includes households with no earners and male part-time/female full-time earning and dual part-time earning households.