# *Limits of welfare. How the family remains pivotal for work attitudes in the "youth enabling" welfare state of Denmark*

# Limits of Welfare. How the family remains pivotal for work attitudes in the "youth enabling" welfare state of Denmark

Christoph Arndt and Carsten Jensen

Abstract: Denmark is well known as a highly "de-familiarized" welfare state. Generous welfare programs have been instituted to make young adults independent of the traditional family structure. These "youth enabling" policies – such as student aid and free education throughout the academic system – have been in place for several decades and could plausibly affect how work attitudes are transmitted from one generation to the next. Relying on ten in-depth family interviews with three generations of family members, the chapter explores whether that is the case. It turns out that families, as expected, does not play much of a role economically or hierarchically. Yet, as far as the interviews of the chapter allows us to conclude, work attitudes nevertheless remains highly dependent upon family background.

**Keywords:** youth transitions, Denmark, work attitudes, intergenerational inequalities, social mobility, parental support, economic self-sufficiency, self-efficacy

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## 1. Introduction

Since the large-scale expansion of the welfare state in the 1960s, Denmark has become one of the most defamiliarized countries in the world; although, as we will also detail below, this does of course not mean that family background has become irrelevant. In Chevalier's (2016) terminology, Denmark's policy approach is so-called enabling youth citizenship, entailing encompassing social programs aimed at the young in combination with deep integration of the young into the labor market (see also Esping-Andersen 1999; 2009; Jensen 2008; Korpi et al. 2013). In general, most maintenance claims against parents stops when the young turn 18, the same time as the young is imbued with all other social rights (with a few exceptions if the young lives at home with the parents).

The Danish educational system is one-track throughout the primary and lower secondary levels, meaning that children are taught the same curricula from first to ninth grade (typically from their sixth to their fiftheenth or sixteenth year). Teachers' autonomy in specifying the content of classes is relatively high, although the recent decades have witnessed the introduction of a number of national standardised tests and mandatory curricula elements, which have reduced autonomy somewhat (Gustafsson 2012). Children are obliged to follow classes to ninth grade after which they can either exit the educational system or enroll in high school or a vocational training program. 16 percent of young between 16 and 29 years of age did not have any other training than ninth grade (AE Rådet 2016). High schools are organized into general, business, and technical high schools. A majority of students enroll into the general high school (*almen gymnasium),* which is preparatory for further tertiary education, where the business and technical schools are both vocational and preparatory. As such, they consistute hybrids between the classic general high schools and vocational training programs. The vocational training system is distinct from most Continental European vocational training systems by its emphasis on school-based training with only a modest element of firm-based training – and then normally in the form of traineeships rather than regular jobs, even though these traineeship frequently lead to the student's first job. Compared to countries such as Austria and Germany this means that student's skills are less tied to the needs of individual firms, creating a more flexible labor force (Busemeyer 2009). At the tertiary level, Denmark is characterized by five regular universities and a large number of vocational colleges often aimed at specific job functions such as nursing. Education, including tertiary education, in Denmark is free-of-charge with only minor expenses related to books and other training equipment paid out-of-pocket by the

young. Almost 40 percent of the Danish population aged 25-34 have finished a tertiary education, up 10 percentage points compared to those 55-69 years old (Statistics Denmark 2017). In 2013, public spending on education stood at 4.5 percent of GDP compared to the EU22 average of 3.3, and public spending on tertiary education was 1.6 percent of GDP compared to the EU22 average of 1.2 percent of GDP (OECD 2017).

Student aid is the key cash benefit program aimed specifically at the young. Compared to many other continental European countries, student aid is typically independent of family income and is not considered a family program. Rather, it is aimed directly at the student individually and intended to allow the student to maintain a living without recourse to the parents. Although in practice, parents often provide additional financial help, it is possible for most to make a living independently of their families. In 2017, the student stipend for young living away from their parents is 806 euro per month. All students may, additionally, loan 414 euro per month and another 206 euro if they themselves have children. The loans are state-backed and come with a relatively low interest rate, making them attractive for students. By 2016, 323,800 students received the student stipend, up from a little more than 200,000 in 2008 (Statistics Denmark 2017). In 2012, just 42.9 percent of the 15-29 year olds lived with adults, while the OECD average was 72.5 percent.

As a result of the free education and comparably generous student aid, social mobility is relatively high in Denmark. By one estimate, children with parents with a university degree are three times more likely to get a university degree themselves. This would indicate some support for arguments from the relative risk aversion theory where parents shield their offspring against downward mobility or arguments on social reproduction at a first glance. However, this figure should be compared with, for instance, Austria or Germany where the likelihood is five times greater indicating higher social mobility in Denmark (OECD 2016; see also Corak 2013 for alternative measure of social mobility using intergenerational income elasticities).

A key feature of the Danish system is the generous childcare and maternity leave, which allows young people, especially women, to combine education and work, on the one hand, with childrearing, on the other (Esping-Andersen 1999; 2009; Jensen 2008; Korpi et al. 2013; Jensen and van Kersbergen 2017). Parents can already use public nurseries (*vuggestuer*) shortly after the child is born to re-enter the labor force immediately. Among children 0-2 years old, 65 percent are enrolled in nurseries, while kindergarten enrollment stands at 95 percent among those 3-5 years old. Both of these numbers are among the highest in Europe. Public spending

on such childcare sums up to 1.4 percent of GDP, again among the most generous in Europe. Mothers also have the right to 14 weeks of paid maternity leave, which can be extended to up to 52 weeks for both parents afterwards. Taken together, this typically means that a mother returns to her workplace during the first year after the child was born given the rather encompassing childcare facilities (nurseries and kindergartens) for children below school age (OECD 2017).

Perhaps as a consequence, female employment rates tend to be high among the Danish young. Counting both full and part time, the employment rate for females whose youngest child is 0-2 years old is 75.8 percent, increasing to a staggering 86.4 percent for those whose youngest child is 6-14 years old. The OECD average is 53.2 and 73 percent, respectively. In 68.2 percent of all families with at least one child aged 0-14 years old both partners work full time. This is the highest full-time employment rate for couples in the world.

However, the generous childcare and maternity leave programs also have other, and sometimes less benign, effects (Datta Gupta et al. 2008; Mandel and Shalev 2009). The long maternity leaves – and the fact that paternity leave is much less widespread with only around 5 percent of all leave time going to males – means that females typically experience substantially more career interuptions than men. Such career interruptions have been documented to adversely affect wages also years down the road, thus creating a wage gap between the sexes. It has been speculated that part of the wage gap occurs because females that makes use of their extensive maternity leave rights (especially when they have two or three children as associated leave breaks) simply have less time on the labor market. Another part of the depression presumably occurs because young females are regarded as a less stable workforce than men exactly because they often interrupt their career – and therefore may be deselected for promotion. The extensive use of childcare may also play a role for the wage gap. Childcare is normally available from the morning until the (early) afternoon. Since careermaking often requires working longer hours, this can conflict with picking up the children. This, too, entails that many women choose to forego career advancement. Finally, and probably as a partial result of these factors, Danish women frequently select into working in the public sector where working conditions tend to be comparably good and working hours well-structured – but where pay is also substantially lower than in the private sector. Both the wage and the gender gap between the Danish public and private sectors is, indeed, among the highest in the OECD.

The Danish welfare state is, in sum, clearly youth enabling and perhaps especially so for young females that to a far lesser extent than elsewhere need to choose between having a (fulltime) job and a family. There are downsides to the model, as just explained, not least in terms of a persistent wage gap that have proven hard to eradicate because it stems from the very design of the welfare state, which in and of itself is hugely popular and therefore virtually impossible to reform. Still, there is a social underbelly. Although there are comparably few young labor market outsiders in Denmark, the proportion of young 15-29 years old neither in education, training nor employment – the so-called NEETs – was nevertheless still 10.7 percent in 2014 (OECD 2017). Youth poverty have also been a rising problem, albeit from very low levels, so that around 7 percent of young 18-29 years old non-students live below the povery line (AE Rådet 2010).

As will become evident below, these marginalized young are not well-represented in our sample of Danish families. Here only one family is really exposed to economic hardships and more serious problems with long-term unemployment of the kids with the other nine families doing at least ok. In this respect, our chapter has a clear middle class bias, which needs to be acknowledged beforehand when comparing our Danish case with some of the other country chapters. On the other hand, this naturally also reflects the lived experience of most Danish youth, which, broadly, are empowered with many important social rights, making them economically secure and free of the traditional family hierarchy. As we show below, this is also manifest in the interviews from Denmark. Although families clearly function as a transmission belt of values, attitudes and resources, they are non-hierarcal and economic issues are typically not salient.

## 2. Economic self-sufficiency and family background

We conducted 32 interviews for ten families in total with five interviewers[1]. The same interviewer was responsible for all family members in a given family. We used the recruitment

[1] All the interviewers were student assistants from the Department of Political Science at Aarhus University when the interviews were conducted. Also note that we had the chance to interview four members of respondent number 8's family, bringing the total number of interviews from 30 to 32. This was particularly fortunate since this respondent comes from the family that are most socio-economically marginalized.

criteria described in Chapter X, where the student assistants used their networks and personal contacts to find respondents matching the criteria. Since Denmark is not a very large country, and the main geographical divide is urban-rural, we recruited five young people from the second largest city Aarhus, which also harbors the largest university, and five young people from medium-sized cities and rural areas in Denmark. The respondents from Frederikshavn and Ravnshøj also cover *Udkantsdanmark*, a term used for peripheral areas that experience economic and demographic difficulties. Udkantsdanmark literally means 'outer edge Denmark' and covers those very rural regions with a low population density, lower average incomes, higher unemployment rates, higher shares of people on cash benefits such as social assistance and the early retirement scheme Førtidspension, higher average age as young people have moved away, and declining numbers of inhabitants. Most of the municipalities from Udkantsdanmark are located on the Western coast of the Jutland peninsula, to the North of the city of Aalborg, the island Lolland-Falster, and the smaller islands in the Baltic Sea (e.g. Læsø or Samsø). All families have Danish names and almost every participant was of Danish origin, but there were also family members with Australian roots in one case.

The female student studying social science in Aarhus, receives the student stipend and also works in her leisure time. She reported no immediate fiscal problems. The male student is originally from the countryside and is going to start at the Aarhus School of Marine and Technical Engineering. He currently is taking preparation classes and doing some occasional jobs after having stopped a former job as car mechanic. The young unemployed female from Aarhus is on unemployment benefits after having work as sales assistant. She admitted that she sometimes spends too much, but also considers herself as somebody who does not spend money that she does not have. The male unemployed from Frederikshavn, a peripheral town in Northern Jutland, is actively seeking for a job, but did not say anything direct on his primary source of income. He and members of his family, however, said that the family's budget has always been tight. The male working in the family business (farmer in the country side on Fyn) does not experience any financial problems. His female pendant working in a Christmas tree farm in Aarhus has no fiscal problems and a stable income from the business and the student grant since she is also studying history of literature. The female in employment has no fiscal problems and was satisfied with her income.

As mentioned in the introduction, all but one family appear to be well functioning, by which we mean that none of the families seem malfunctioning or socio-economically marginalized,

with only one clearly less resourceful than the others. Although Denmark host fewer of such families compared to most other countries (Jensen and van Kersbergen 2017), the fact that we have no real completely marginalized family at all in the sample probably reflects the sample bias. Most notably, it is probably only possible to organize interviews from three generations with families that are relatively functional.

## 3. Transmission of attitudes, values and actions

One common denominator in many families was that the children were proud of their parents. This is because the parents told their offspring to be economic and not to waste money for too many useless things. This occurred in all family situations and indicates that an authoritative parenting style also matters in a universal welfare state context as children adopt values such as responsibility and self-control for their later lifes and acknowledge this. Two examples from very different family situations show that:

> ”*My parents have always been very economic, which I also can see in myself since I'm also thinking very economic. And saving*.” (unemployed, rural, male – brother)

> “*Well, I guess it was very ordinary [her childhood]. We were no rich family. So, there was no money left for all kinds of other things. But I'm living a good and healthy life.*” (employed, rural, female)

One main difference in the attitudes of the young Danes was the personal approach to risk-taking and decision-making. The respondents who grew up with a family business, or have regular employment, have a proactive attitude towards work, life, and leadership:

> Q: “*What is the most important things your parents have taught you?*”
>
> A: “*Well, it is important that everything is only worth doing if you get satisfied with it. And that responsibility is not a bad thing. Neither is it a bad thing to be the one who pushes forward. It can be hard and frustrating to always be the one who pushes forward, but that is not a bad thing. It also means that you get access to all the nice things*.” (family business, urban, female)

"*My fear was a dull factory job, a nine to five job. So, it was nice to reach the other side and do something creative, where it is fun to be at work. And I tried to make my hobby into a profession* (…)." (employed, urban, male)

Responding to the interviewer's question whether a nine-to-five job was a no go, the young male said:

"*Yes, eventually I would have seen enough of it as I could see with my father, he is standing in the shop day in and out. When I got older, I could of course see that it is more than that what he is doing. But I should not stand in a shop and under no circumstances work at the municipality*." (employed, urban, male)

Q: "*What do you think regarding the decisions on your education, do you think that you made the decisions on your own or have your parents have been involved?*"

A: "*No, I decided completely on my own. There was no pressure or so – I took the decisions. And I have, so to say, done it differently than many others. I went to Jutland to get away from this place. I haven't lived at my parents place since I was 16.*" (family business, urban, female)

This reflects a pro-active attitude and also risk-taking attitude since moving from home at 16 and starting an own education has made him mature and responsible. It again illustrates that the parenting style still matters in a country with a very comprehensive role of the state in the educational sector. It also allowed this person be attached to the family by continuing the family business. Moreover, taking responsibilities shows a clear goal orientation for a young adult. A similar parenting style leading was reported by the mother of the young employed female:

A: "*What do you think is the most important thing you passed on her and your other children?*"

Q: "*To make decisions on your own. I believe that this is the most important thing they got*." (employed, rural, female – mother)

The unemployed respondents showed a mixed picture as to whether they risk-taking or risk-averse and whether they take initiatives and are focused. This might also be related to the length of their unemployment spell since the female young unemployed only recently lost her job and comes from a more ambitious family, while the male unemployed comes from a family that had financial problems for a longer period after the father became unemployed and had health

problems. In this family obeying rules and norms was considered important, but own initiative and focus was not always present (Soenens and Vansteenkiste 2010). The father of the unemployed female seems to have a more authoritative parenting style:

> "*But I believe it is my feeling that she got something out of it. Yes, you should achieve something. (…). And to have a good network. And yes, it is about attitudes, behavior and behaving properly*." (unemployed, urban, female – father)

In contrast, the father of the young unemployed male told that is was very important for him that his children should become decent people:

> "*They should be decent young people (…). Don't making trouble or something like this […] They should be decent. Calm and easy, behaving properly. To learn and save something. I think I've told them something*." (unemployed, rural, male – father)

This is more of an authoritarian style leading to a rather passive approach to life on the children's side. One illustrative aspect is that the son has not pursued his main goal of becoming a journalist, but got vocational training as shop assistant before he became unemployed:

> "*To begin with, this was not my priority. In fact, I wanted to become a journalist, preferably for sports. But at some point I thought, well, I can't focus so much on this… there are so many different things with the language and the grammar and those things. Things, I didn't really like those days. So, sales assistant as second priority.*" (unemployed, rural, male)

His younger brother is also unemployed and has difficulties in focusing and setting realistic goals:

> "*What should I say? My largest dream is to produce animated cartoons. As long as I can create, as long as I can create this or that. Just that. It is of no importance to me whether I'm the boss or the subordinate as long as I have a position, where I can create something*." (unemployed, rural, male – brother)

> *"Well, every time in school when I was supposed to create something, I was always the one responsible for that. And so I always have … even though I don't regard myself as a leader, so I always took the chance as leader in school. (…). So, I can well see it in*

*myself … maybe I have leadership experience, that should be it. If I now create my own cartoon series, one needs to go first."* (unemployed, rural, male – brother)

Even though becoming a cartoon producer signals some risk-taking attitude, the lack of self-reflection – as exemplified by regarding school work as leadership experience – and focus means that the two unemployed brothers will have difficulties in getting economically self-sufficient. On balance, the evidence so far suggests that authoritatative parenting styles are common in Denmark since children have adopted values such as the development of autonomy from their parents.

As in other countries, we also find a certain match between the values and attitudes. Accordingly, the type of informants that were risk-taking and independent often appears to have inherited their values from their families. Especially in case of the entrepreneurs and those who work in the family businesses, do we find values of self-direction and self-enhancement which have been transmitted from parents to children. Particularly the young male self-employed entrepreneur from Aarhus, who runs a start-up in the medical industry seems to have similar values as his father, a dentist with a shared private clinic. Both emphasize self-direction, competitiveness, and independence:

Q: "*Well, it turned out in high school that I am more interested in becoming an entrepreneur, but still. I can remember that I in fact was to visit some private hospitals because I wanted… Should it be business or should it be even more, doctor that is. And so I went out and visited some directors from private hospitals to see what type of world these people live(d) in*."

– "*So there was some form of leitmotif?"*

– "*Well, the leitmotif must have been that it always had something to do with health. (…) I don't think that I could do something within a completely random branch, so if I had a company that lays pipes into the ground. I don't think that I could accept this.*" (self-employed, urban, male)

And turning to the father of the male entrepreneur:

Q: "*Can you remember how he [name removed] was in school*?"

A: "*Well, he was very, how should I say, competitive [uses the English and not the Danish word in the original; the mother in this family is native Australian, so the family*

*members sometimes use English terms]. Yes, and in school. And he is almost always [competitive] in what he is doing. And he is also bright. And he has particularly been good in findings others, who also were bright. He was good in finding friends who could make him better. And hopefully make them better as well – but he was really good at this. Not only in school, but in general.*" (self-employed, urban, male – father)

We find similar values with regard to independence and self-direction among the young female employed in the family's business.

"*The benefits are clearly with the responsibility. You get more responsibility than you would get in all kinds of others company at this point in time [refers to her age]. I've already gotten 12 years of experience in this field, this also means that I have a value for this company.*" (family business, urban, female)

With respect to the unemployed young people, we again find a crucial difference since the young female from Aarhus inherited achievement-oriented values from her family, while the unemployed male and his family appear much less concerned about achievements in this sense. In the latter case, we can clearly observe a permissive and somewhat neglectful parenting style. The following exchange illustrates first how the young female is proud of her educational achievement and also praises her father:

A: "*I'm really proud of my master's degree*."

Q: "Why?"

A: "*Well, it is because I'm the first in the family, and in this respect it went really well. Not that I thought it [the degree] was so good, but it was just that I came through. […] There were many in my class who should [have a degree]. But afterwards I thought a little more [about it] and it is really nice.*" (unemployed, urban, female)

She further admires her father, who started as warehouseman and has now a supervising position at Falck (a Danish ambulance and assistance service), for his achievements and success:

"*I really admire my father today, and think about these things if I should get married at some time. I can't image that I should not be called [family name], this is of course my father's name. Because that's what I am [family name's] daughter – and this is*

*good to be since I'm a little proud of this even though I don't really know where this comes from*." (unemployed, urban, female)

Her mother also stressed the importance of achievement and hard work:

*"Yes. Yes, I do that in order to challenge [the kids] to some things in between, those young people. But I believe that one ought to this. Once in a while one needs to challenge the young people so that they don't take everything for granted*." (unemployed, urban, female – mother)

In contrast, the father of the unemployed male did not focus much on achievement through a good education and was less confident that he can do something in this respect.

Q: "If you now want them (the children) to continue reading/studying, is this something you talk about with *[older boy's name]*?

A: "No, it's not that way, I now well that this is not something he belives in currently. But, oh, jeg push him once in a while to pick up some courses [likely means those offered by job centre] eventually, before he knows what he wants to do. But, there is also something about getting the chances to do that when you are unemployed. (unemployed, rural, male – father)

He further characterizes his older son as calm and passive child.

*"[Older boy's name] was very quiet and calm. And he was like, how should I say … if… if… one kicked his butt, he apologized. Right?* [Father smiles]". (unemployed, rural, male – father)

In sum, we were able to locate substantial transmission of values from one generation to the next. Not least the families with young entrepreneurs and those working in family businesses exhibited values of self-direction and self-enhancement. With regard to the unemployed families, we could see a crucial difference, the family of the young unemployed male does not focus very much on achievement and is clearly pursuing a more passive or more precisely permissive neglectful approach. In this respect, the family of the young unemployed male sticks out since this is the only family were we really can see limited engagement from the parents' side when it comes to achievement and self-direction which is reflected in a more passive

approach towards life among their two boys. On the other hand, even this family wants their children to upheld virtuous such as order and decent behaviour towards others.

### 4. TResources vs. Investment

Several sets of resources appear to be of importance for the Danish respondents, including social capital related to family support and wider networks as well as cultural capital. Given the Danish welfare system, it is unsurprising that none of the families reported outright economic hardship; as such, economic support from families does not seem to have been pivotal for the job market situation of the young. Yet, family support in other areas, notably education, may have been more important. Tellingly, a clear example of the lack of such support comes from the family of the unemployed young male:

> Q: "*Have you ever done homework together with your children?*"
>
> A: "*Yes, but only at the beginning of primary school and then I couldn't keep up anymore*." (unemployed, rural, male – father)

The Danish respondents – both the young and their parents and grandparents – also frequently refer to the importance of networks for getting a job, especially the first job. Yet, it is also obvious from the interviews that not all respondents are equally well positioned in this regard which illustrates that social capital does still matter in a universal welfare state. Even though her mother has stressed the importance of networks, the young unemployed female, for instance, observe that she has had very little in terms of network to help her locate a job.

> "*It is very much me, on my own. I don't have a lot of network. I don't have anyone in my family or anything, who knows anyone. So, it is a little bit myself have to stand on my own two legs and trying to create some contacts*" ( unemployed, urban, female)

Compare this statement with the following exchange between an interviewer and a young employed female, which reflects the almost casual sentiment about networks among many of the (self-)employed young and their families:

> Q: "*How did you get it [the job]*?
>
> A: "*It was something I was offered*."

Q: "*By who?*"

A: *Well, actually by a friend of mine*." (employed, rural, female)

It is worth stressing that the lack of network expressed by the young unemployed woman, in fact, is not shared by her mother who actually got her jobs via her network:

> "*Well, I think – when I went over to Vulcan [the first company she worked for], that was my mother's brother who knew they had a vacant job over there. So I have actually never written a job application. When I went to Falck [the next job] there were someone who knew someone out here in Sejs [the town the family now lives in] and then I applied for that*." (unemployed, urban, female – mother)

The different experiences of the mother and her daugther points hints how the relevant social networks may be widely distinct across generations. Certainly, the fact that the mother was able to secure jobs via networks have not helped the daughter. This, in turn, points to the relevance of more abstract resources, not least those related to the concept of cultural capital. None of our respondents report (extensive) engagement in classic Bourdeiusian cultural capital activities such as going to art museums or listening to classic music. Still, while high-culture is off the table in all families, there are clear-cut differences nonetheless. Take these two statements from a young unemployed female and young self-employed female, respectively, as examples:

> "*I think we always just watched a lot of movies and mostly just at home. We may also have been going to the cinema from time to time. I don't recall we ever did any sports or the like together*." (unemployed, urban, female)

> "*We did a lot of stuff – and many really good family activities. One thing was sports, and you had to attend something. And I also did piano – and badminton and handball, among other things. They were good, especially my mother, to create interesting experiences. So we went out a lot, e.g. to musicals. […] It was emphasized a lot that you had to express yourself creatively. If you wanted to paint, then that's what you pursued and the entire family got engaged*." (self-employed, rural, female)

It is obvious that the latter family not simply emphasized doing "a lot of stuff", but also that the young and her siblings in general were encouraged to come up with new activities themselves within a range of spheres.

There is also one interesting case of a network build up at school, which later motivated the young employed male from Aarhus to build up work relations outside Denmark and to consider a job in another country.

> *Q: "Do you know others – you studied or worked together with – who went abroad?"*
>
> *A: "Yes, I have someone, somebody I went to school with in Grenå (small suburb of Aarhus), who got a trainee position in San Francisco at a company producing video games. So I have some contacts around, in nice places. One of them went to Australia because he got a girl friend at the uni, he is from there. Sitting Down Under with gaming (means development of video games)."*
>
> *Q: "Is this something inspiring you?"*
>
> *A: "Yes, I think it's really great. He got an Australian girl friend there, and they took a half year off (means sabbatical), and so he build up a portfolio to apply there. And this is something really great, that he dared, and now we travel a lot, [Name of Respondent's girlfriend] and me, and that's a big thing – to see the world through ones work is great.* (employed, urban, male)

Taken together, we interpret the material collected as suggestive evidence that both resources and investment matters. The interviewed youth not only varies in terms of the resources available to them – such as existing networks, but their parents clearly also see such resource availability as an investment. In the context of the Danish welfare state, however, it is important to note that direct material investments come with a much smaller premium than in most other countries. With high-quality education assesable free-of-charge and relatively generous student aid and loans, the need for parents to adopt an investment strategy to avoid downward mobility is less pronounced tha most other places. Interestingly, none of the interviewees has mentioned the encompassing role of the state in education and child-rearing as reason for their development and socialization directly.

## 5. (Grand)parenting style and context factors

One obvious transmission mechanism is conversations about work at home. In general, most families did not talk extensively about work, which is probably unsurprising, but there are

variations, which once again delineates the unemployed from the rest of the respondents. Here are two statements as illustrations:

> Q: "*Did they [the parents] talk about work at home?*"
>
> A: "*I don't recall that at all.*"
>
> Q: "*So you didn't have any impression of their work life as a child?*"
>
> A: "*No, I wouldn't say so*." (unemployed, urban, female)

> "*It has always been very free. People [in the family] shared what they had been up to and told about their day. There's been room for even very unimportant stuff, like my sister recounting what classes she had that day. And then there was room for discussing the world situation*." (family business, urban, female)

She also points to the importance of informal knowledge beyond her formal education gained through working in the family business that is useful for her when taking over the business from her parents:

> "*In terms of education, I have a high school diploma (almen gymnasium) and I have a bachelor in history and prepare for my master's degree in history of literature" […]*
>
> *"It's not the company per se that made it, but I've been officially employed here since I was 13, and we had always been fully included in things that are going on here. So you can say that I have quite some inofficial education, because I gained an enormous amount of knowledge (means through work in family business).*" (family business, urban, female)

She also points to the cultural activities that her family pursued during her childhood, which points to the transmission of cultural capital and keeping the family together trough activities:

> "*We also went sailing me and my little brother, where my father was instructor. And I played handball, where my mother was coach. It was mainly those things, we did, when we were little. Afterwards, we did play a lot of music, but it has also been something we do together. So there have been a lot of out of house actitivies*." (family business, urban, female)

Her mother further stresses the familiy's cohesion in this regard:

> "*Well, being a member of this family means also that one as a child had to come up with something. Not that I mean child labour, but you had to contribute something. Because we were supposed to help each other. Moreover, we always went for skiing during holidays, and we sail a lot together. So they (the children) are always with us. And there is a eason for that they'r still around (in the family's house). They visit us a lot, and this goes on and on. So, yes, we have done everything together*." (family business, urban, female – mother)

This indirect form of transmission is arguably the most pervasive form found in the interviews. By contrast, both parents and children agree that the young ones rarely has been expected to undertake specific types of education or enter specific kinds of occupations. A typical example of is this:

> "*We expected that you [the child] did the best you could. Then we would be satisfied. There has never been any expectation of fantastic grades. If you did what you could, then we can't expect anything more*." (Mother, family business, urban)

An exception is the female self-employed who recounts how the parents had…

> "*Huge expectations! They really wanted that I continued studying. They were very proud; I got good grades in school, and none of the boys showed they could get that. And my mother is not very strong academically. I didn't understand it then, but I do today. She wanted to be a kindergarten teacher, but didn't have the skills. So that's what she wanted for me: To study and move on along that road."* (self-employed, rural, female)

Paradoxically, this respondent quit school to start her own business. So, while she ended out a success by her own – and this book's – standard, she clearly disappointed a mother who had wanted her to pursue a (by Danish standard, at least) much more conventional career path.

When it comes to economic capital, this family was also able to support her daughter and granddaughter from early on.

> "*We did have everything – our house, and… and I'm sitting and can stay in the house, this is simply great. And economically speaking, there we did very well. And we could*

*save up for a rainy day and give our children a shilling* [use old word skilling for some money].” (self-employed, rural, female – grandmother)

“*Yes, I never… had thought during my childhood that we lacked money. Or that there was something that we could not afford. And there was never the phrase: That we cannot afford*.” (self-employed, rural, female – mother)

*“Well, we had never… We had never really lacked something – We always had a good income. We did have a good income and [name of mother] has worked all the time, so economically speaking, we always had done what we wanted.”* (self-employed, rural, female – mother)

More broadly, all families report engaging in activities together, not least leisure activities. This may reflect a bias in the sampling of families: it is only possible to interview three generations of the same family if it is (reasonably) well-functioning. Partly, this may also reflect the Danish welfare system where material living conditions tend to be smaller between families and that many of the relevant policies were already in place in the 1970s.

## 6. Conclusion

We can, by way of conclusion, return to the three overarching research questions of the book. The first research questions asked how socialization works within family? Does family matter in terms of investments, in terms of resources, or both? We found that both clearly mattered, but also that there were little explicit concern about downward mobility as the investment perspective expects. This may simply reflect the national context were downward mobility is a smaller problem than most other places. This is also reflected in the way parenting style moderates the transmission process, which is the second research question. Although a generalization, we can interpret the parenting style as a mix between authoritative and permissive indulgence. All parents were concerned about the well-being and success of the children, but all also believed that the youth’s free choice of education and occupation was a high priority and a value in and of itself.

The third research question asked how the country context (welfare state arrangements) moderates the transmission process. The Danish case presented in this chapter is interesting

because of the concerted effort of the welfare state to enable the youth, an effort that was commenced as far back as the 1960s and which, consequently, plausibly has been affecting several generations of Danes by now. The enabling happens both via the educational system and childcare and leave policies. Education is essentially free-of-charge from first grade and up throughout the PhD-level – and the educational system generally facilitates a wide variety of study choice from the ninth grade onwards. Student aid is paid to all students above the age of 17, although most generously for students living away from their parents. In combination, this means that social mobility is fairly high since the young are able to select the education best suited for them given their inate qualities and preferences. Childcare and maternity leave is also very generous and allow especially young women to reconcile worklife with raising a family. Historically, jobs in the public care sector was also among some of the first jobs females entered into in the 1960s and subsequent decades. Female employment rates are, as a result, high by international comparison, although it is worth stressing that the generous female-friend policies actually constitute something of a double-edged sword because they also create extensive career interruptions.

Based on the 32 interviews with 10 families, it appears reasonable to conclude that attitudes, values, and resources all to a certain extent are transmitted from one generation to the next within families. Broadly, respondents with a job exhibited attitudes such as a willingness to take risks and self-reflection, whereas at least one of the unemployed, and the associated family, did much less so. In terms of values, it was also possible to discern a greater emphasis on self-direction and achievement among the respondents with jobs (or undertaking a study). Social and cultural capital appeared important for the respondents, and also here there were differences between the respondents. Still, it is worth stressing that all families essentially were well functioning and that the observed differences were rather marginal, with the possible exception of the unemployed family from the rural area. Moreover, it became clear that the role of family regarding the offspring´s ability to be self-sufficient was still existent. Accordingly, defamiliarization through the welfare state has not fully dissolved this aspect of intergenerational transmission of values and parents can still affect the self-sufficiency of their children. One complementary explanation for this may be the Danish welfare system that not only creates relatively low levels of inequality overall, but facilitates a high degree of integration of the young into the labor market and society in general from early on.

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