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## A typology of work-family arrangements among dual-earner couples in Norway

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*Ragni Hege Kitterød and Trude Lappegård*

## **A typology of work-family arrangements among dual-earner couples in Norway**

**Abstract:**

An important aim of Norwegian work-family policies is to promote a dual-earner, equal-sharing family model, but we do not really know how common this family type is. By means of a multinomial latent-class model we develop a typology of dual-earner couples with children based on the way the partners allocate paid and unpaid work between them. We estimate four classes. One fourth of the couples belong to the Neo-Traditional class, where the mother often works part time and shoulders the domestic duties, whereas the father works full time or long hours. The Gender-Equal Light type, which comprises one third of the couples, has a similar, but less extreme gender disparity of paid and unpaid duties. In the both the Generalized Gender-Equal type (23 percent) and the Specialized Gender-Equal type (18 percent) the partners share paid and unpaid work fairly equally between them, but the spouses specialize more in different family tasks in the latter than in the former type. An equal sharing of paid and unpaid work is most likely when the partners are well educated, both partners work regular hours and the father has public-sector employment. A neo-traditional practice is likely when the partners have less education, the mother has health problems, the father works in the private sector, and the partners work non-regular hours.

**Keywords:** Division of paid and unpaid work, dual-earner couples, gender equality, typologies.

**JEL classification:** J22, J24, J45, J48

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**Discussion Papers**

comprise research papers intended for international journals or books. A preprint of a Discussion Paper may be longer and more elaborate than a standard journal article, as it may include intermediate calculations and background material etc.

## **Introduction**

Norwegian work-family policies aim at promoting an equal division of paid and unpaid work between women and men. However, we do not really know how common this dual-earning, equal-sharing family model is today. Numerous studies have investigated the allocation of housework and childcare among couples in Norway (for instance Kitterød, 2002; Bernhardt et al., 2008; Kjeldstad and Lappegård, 2009) and there are also some that explore the division of paid labour (for instance Kitterød and Rønsen, 2010). Still, partners' allocation of paid and unpaid work has rarely been examined in concert, at least not with representative survey data. To be sure, in Norway as in many other countries a great many researchers have looked at couples' distribution of market work and domestic chores with qualitative data, trying to bring to the fore as much variation as possible, or looking at couples with certain characteristics. For instance, Thagaard (1996) examined the nexus of labour, power and love among couples with various employment- and career orientations, Syltevik (2000) explored the great variety in daily-life organisation and family values among couples and linked this with their relationship to the welfare state, Aarseth (2008) studied dual-career couples with high ambitions both in the labour market and at home, and with an explicit aim of sharing paid and unpaid work equally between the partners, Halrynjo and Lyng (2009) looked at the ways highly career-oriented mothers and fathers rethought their ambitions after the arrival of the first child, and Stefansen and Farstad (2010) explored child-care practices and cultural models of care among middle-class and working-class parents. These qualitative studies provide valuable knowledge about selected groups of couples, but tell less about the prevalence of various arrangements, and in what ways there are systematic differences between them.

The aim of the present paper is to develop a typology of work-family arrangements among Norwegian couples with children, utilizing representative survey data. We use information on both market work and domestic work and identify various types of couples based on the way the partners allocate these responsibilities between them. We shall estimate the frequencies of different couple types and also investigate their characteristics. Our data come from the Norwegian Generations and Gender survey (GGS) – a large representative survey providing a lot of information on peoples' life course and daily life activities. We look at married and

cohabiting parents with young children. By means of a multinomial latent-class model we shall first create a typology of various patterns of sharing paid work and domestic chores, and then investigate the characteristics of the various couple types.

Similar analyses have been undertaken in other countries as well. For instance, Hall and MacDermid (2009) presented a typology of dual-earner couples in the US. Running cluster analysis on a nationally representative sample of married dual earners they estimated four distinct couple types, based on the ways the partners divided paid and unpaid tasks between them. Deriving from both partners' time spent on employment, housework and childcare they singled out (1) a Counter-balanced type with huge differences between fathers' and mothers' domestic and employment contributions, (2) a Parallel type with much similarity between the partners' contributions, (3) a Second-shift-career type where both partners work full-time but where the father's working hours exceed the mother's and the mother devotes slightly more time than the father to housework and childcare, and finally, (4) a Second-shift-nurture type where both partners work full time, but the mother still has significantly shorter hours than the father and spends far more time on family work. Hall and MacDermid's study has served as an inspiration for our paper, but as our data and methods differ from theirs, our results are not directly comparable with theirs.<sup>1</sup>

Our analysis is exploratory in character and hence, we do not formulate a number of explicit hypotheses that are to be tested. However, in order to elicit some ideas of what couple types we may expect to find, we give a brief account of Norwegian work-family policies and of parents' employment and family work in Norway. Then we review some central theories on couples' division of labour in order to settle on what background variables to include in the multivariate analyses of the couple types' characteristics.

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<sup>1</sup> We use latent class analysis to identify the couple types, while Hall and MacDermid use cluster analysis. Moreover, we have information on the partners' share of various household tasks, but not, like Hall and MacDermid, on how many hours they actually spend on such chores. For paid work, however, we know the partners' weekly hours. Unlike Hall and MacDermid, we include information on the partners' allocation of maintenance work in the typology in addition to their allocation of housework and childcare. Finally, we use more covariates in the multivariate analysis than do Hall and MacDermid.

## **Background: Work-family policies and practices in Norway**

A symmetrical family model in which men and women participate on equal terms in family provision and share domestic tasks equally between them has been a dominating ideal in the public discourse in Norway in recent decades, and has also been an important assumption underpinning much of the welfare policy (Knudsen and Wærness, 2001). It has been a central goal in Norwegian work-family policies to enhance women's labour market participation and increase men's family involvement. Important policy measures include the supply of high quality and affordable childcare services and generous parental leave rights with a certain number of weeks reserved for the father (the father's quota). However, alongside the political ambition of dual earning and equal sharing, there is a strong focus on parental choice concerning the combination of paid labour and family work, particularly for parents with young children. This is exemplified by the implementation of the cash for childcare scheme in the late 1990s, entitling parents with children 1-2 years of age who do not use publicly subsidised kindergartens to a monthly non-taxable cash transfer. The scheme has great symbolic importance in facilitating alternatives to the dual-earner model although the take-up rate has declined significantly in recent years in tandem with the growth in public childcare places.

Skrede (2004) argues that despite the political and ideological emphasis on the dual-earner / equal-sharing model, the typical Norwegian practice can be characterised as "gender-equality light" - a soft version of gender equality. In most couples, both partners participate in paid as well as unpaid work, but men are usually still the main providers, whereas women spend most time on housework and childcare. Ellingsæter and Leira (2006) argue that although the discourse on parental choice is presented in gender neutral terms, the policies turn out to have gendered effects in that women more often than men reduce their employment when children arrive.

There has been a significant rise in women's labour market participation in Norway in recent decades, and although there may still be gendered norms regarding breadwinning, mothers' full-time work is now widely accepted in the younger generation (Knudsen and Wærness, 2001). Women's employment rate is at present only marginally lower than men's (84 and 88

per cent respectively for women and men 25-54 years of age, according to Statistic Norway's Labour Force Survey 2009), and growing proportions of women work full time. According to collective agreements, the standard working time in Norway is 37.5 hours per week, which is shorter than in many other countries. Still, about four out of ten employed women work part time and the percentage is even higher when there are children in the household. The Norwegian Work Environment act lays down parents' right to reduced hours, unless this is of serious inconvenience to the employer. There has been a decline in women's short part-time work (1-19 hours per week) in recent decades, though, and the vast majority of female part timers now have fairly long hours. Although full-time work is now increasingly common, few women work long hours, i.e. at least 45 hours per week.

The vast majority of men work full time and a significant proportion work more than normal full hours. Extremely long hours, at least 50 hours per week, have become less common, though. Only about five percent of men in their most productive years work part time. Unlike women, men rarely adapt their employed hours to their family responsibilities, but a recent analysis indicates that men do reduce their actual working hours slightly when they have very young children. Their contractual hours are hardly affected by their parental status, though (Dommermuth and Kitterød, 2009).

The Norwegian labour market is strongly gender segregated, with high percentages of women in the public sector, and in education, health and social work, and men concentrated in the private sector and in manufacture and finance. Long hours are more widespread in typical male jobs than in typical female jobs (Abrahamsen, 2002), and typical male jobs are usually better paid than typical female jobs.

The combination of employment and children has usually been framed as a challenge for mothers in Norway, but now fathers, too, are expected to balance paid work and childcare. Due to political initiatives to stimulate fathers to spend more time with their children, particularly men's improved parental leave rights, some researchers argue that we have a

father-friendly welfare state in Norway (Brandth and Kvande, 2003).<sup>2</sup> Time-use surveys suggest that a slight increase in fathers' childcare has occurred in recent decades, but on the average, fathers still do less childcare than mothers. In particular, they spend less "sole time" with children – childcare time without the presence of the other parent. This suggests that mothers continue to bear more responsibility than fathers for looking after children. However, there is less difference between fathers' and mothers' childcare than housework time. Nevertheless, the gender difference in housework involvement is dramatically diminished in recent decades, mostly due to a significant decline in women's housework, but also to a slight increase in men's housework (Vaage, 2002). Maintenance work, such as renovation, repairs, and gardening is still dominated by men, though. However, considerably less time is allocated to maintenance work than to housework and childcare. For instance, couples with school-aged children spend only about 15 percent of their total household hours on maintenance work (ibid: 62).

Hence, in spite of significant changes in women's and men's time use, there are still disparities between the mother's and the father's involvement in paid and unpaid work in many couples. This is demonstrated in studies of family work (Kjeldstad and Lappegård, 2009) as well as in studies of market work (Kitterød and Rønsen, 2010). For instance, the latter study shows that about one out of two employed women work shorter hours than their partner, about four out of ten work approximately the same number of hours as their partner, and only one out of ten works more than their partner. Although equal sharing may have become pretty common, the so-called "role-reversal model" (Haas, 2005) with the mother as the main provider and the father as the primary caregiver, seems to be a minor practice in Norway so far. The prevalence of a "second-shift practice", implying that the mother shoulders the majority of the family work even if the partners spend the same number of hours in the labour market (Hochschild, 1989), is uncertain, though.

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<sup>2</sup> A father's quota of four weeks was introduced in the parental leave scheme in 1993, and the quota is now extended to ten weeks and a further extension will soon be implemented. In addition, fathers' right to parental leave apart from the quota has become more independent of the mother's right.



## **Theories on couples' allocation of market and family work**

In the present paper we shall create a typology of couples in Norway based on the way the partners divide paid and unpaid work between them and also try to disentangle certain characteristics of the different couple types. In order to settle on what factors to include in the latter analysis we will review some central theories concerning couples' division of labour, either paid, unpaid or both. We do not aim at testing the various theories, though.

In the theory on comparative advantages (Becker, 1991), the key assumption is that the individual members of the family pool their resources and take decisions in order to maximize the joint family utility. According to the theory, the decision on how to allocate market work and domestic work between the partners is taken by comparing the husband's marginal productivity in the labour market and in domestic work with the wife's marginal productivity in the same areas. One interpretation of this is that the women's labour market participation is negatively affected by the husband's labour market resources and positively affected by her own resources. The opposite is true for the husband's labour supply. The spouse with less labour market resources is likely to perform most domestic work. Usually, the partners' marginal productivity in market work is measured by the spouses' relative wages. In this paper, we use the partners' educational attainment as a proxy for their labour market resources, as we lack good information on their wages. We also include the partners' health because good health may facilitate longer working hours and involvement in family work.

A central approach in the sociological literature on couples' division of unpaid work, and particularly routine housework, is the so-called relative resources perspective (for instance Coltrane, 2000). Housework is supposed to be dull and something that both partners try to avoid. The partner who brings most resources into the negotiations will most likely perform less housework. In empirical analyses the partners' resources are usually measured by their income or education, but in principle, all types of resources may be included. The relative resources perspective and the theory on comparative advantages tend to produce similar empirical predictions regarding couples' division of housework, although the mechanisms generating the outcome are assumed to be different. The theory on comparative advantages

presupposes a general agreement between the partners, while the relative resource perspective assumes conflict and disagreement.

The so-called time-availability perspective represents another common approach in the sociological literature on the sharing of unpaid work. The partners' paid hours are taken for granted, and the assumption is that the spouse with most available time performs most family work. The partners' labour market decisions are not explicitly discussed within this perspective. Both partners' paid hours, as well as the number of children in the household, and the age of the youngest child, are common indicators of the spouses' available time (ibid).

Couples' division of domestic duties has also been interpreted as a result of the partners' gender ideologies (ibid). The supposition is that the family work is shared in a traditional way when one or both partners hold traditional gender and family norms, and more equally when the partners express more modern gender attitudes. However, the partners' gender ideologies may be the consequence, rather than the cause, of their actual arrangement, and reverse causation cannot be ruled out, at least not with cross-sectional data.

The so-called "doing gender" perspective also plays an important role in studies of couples' allocation of work. The theory, first presented by Berk (1985), says that both men and women continuously construct and reconstruct their gender identity in their daily lives. For men, this entails undertaking typical masculine tasks, and avoiding activities with female connotations, such as housework. Accordingly, men will seek to reduce their housework whereas household chores may strengthen women's gender identity. This perspective has received some support in studies of couples' division of family work (for instance Bittman et al., 2003), and may also be a factor when the partners decide their paid working hours. Paid work is still important in men's identity construction in Norway, and breadwinner norms do prevail (Brandt and Kvande, 2003). Men's identity as main breadwinners combined with the central role that employed work plays for their self-esteem, suggests that men would prefer to work longer hours than their partners. There are also indications that women who out-earn their husbands may reduce their paid work in order to protect their partner from embarrassment (Bø, 2008).

Unlike the theories on comparative advantages and doing gender, the social-capital perspective suggests a positive relationship between the partners' labour supply. Their labour market resources are seen as a type of capital, and it is assumed that the partners may provide each other with skills, network resources and knowledge, and thereby help each other to find good jobs. Having a resourceful partner would thus facilitate employment for both men and women. In their study of Dutch couples, Verbarkel and de Graaf (2009) find that a partner's career resources, expressed in educational attainment and job level, positively affect the other partner's job level, but negatively affect his/her working hours. We argue, however, that in the Norwegian context, with more cultural and political support for full-time working mothers, there may be a positive association between one partner's labour market resources and the other partner's working hours. For instance, a resourceful partner may convey the message that paid work is important and thereby support the spouse's full-time work.

Finally, the strongly gender segregated labour market in Norway may play a role over and above the partners' resources, family situation and gender ideologies. Previous research has demonstrated that typical male and female jobs are often characterised by different "work-cultures" and practices regarding part-time, full-time and over-time work (Kjeldstad and Nymoen, 2004; Abrahamsen, 2002). Long hours are most widespread in male-dominated jobs, whereas part time and normal full hours are most common in female-dominated jobs. Hence, the partners' occupational characteristics may be important when couples decide how to allocate paid and unpaid tasks between them. Kitterød and Rønsen (2010) demonstrate a clear association between the wife's occupation and the partners' division of paid work. For instance, women in the health and social sector are more likely to work less than their spouse than women in many other occupations.

## **Data, Measurements and Method**

### **Sample**

In the empirical analysis we utilise the Norwegian Generations and Gender survey (GGS), a large representative survey from 2007 that captures a lot of information on peoples' life course and daily life activities. The gross samples consisted of 24,830 respondents 18-79

years old, and the response rate was 60 percent (Bjørshol et al. 2010). The sample units are individuals, but the respondents provide a great deal of information about their partners as well. We limit our sample to individuals living in a dual-earner couple, either formally married or cohabiting, with at least one child aged 1 to 12 years in the household. By dual earners we mean couples where both partners were gainfully employed at the time of the interview. People are classified as employed if they had worked at least one hour in the week preceding the survey or were temporarily absent from a job because of for instance illness or vacation. However, we excluded couples with children under the age of one and those where one of the partners was on parental leave. This was done because the survey information on the partners' working hours is not easily interpretable for these groups. Respondents were asked about their usual weekly working hours, and parents on leave may relate their answer to the situation before the birth of their child.

All respondents living with a partner were asked about their own and their partner's paid working hours and the way they shared various types of housework and maintenance work between them. Questions on the division of childcare tasks were posed only to those with children under the age of 13 living at home. That is why we restrict our sample to respondents with children 1-12 years. We ended up with a subsample of 2617 couples. 499 respondents with children 1-12 years were excluded because either they or their partner were not gainfully employed. The mothers and fathers in our subsample were on the average 37.1 and 39.8 years old, respectively. The vast majority of both mothers and fathers fall in the age group 30-49 years. Only 2 percent of the mothers and 7 percent of the fathers were 50 years or more, and merely 9 percent of the mothers and 4 percent of the fathers were below 30 years.

### **Variables used in the typology**

In order to construct a typology of dual-earner couples we used four dimensions of work-family arrangements: (i) each partner's usual weekly working hours, (ii) each partner's share of housework, (iii) each partner's share of childcare, and (iv) each partner's share of maintenance work. Information was provided by individual respondents, either the mother or the father in the couple.

The respondents reported their own as well as their partner's usual weekly working hours. In the analyses we distinguish between three categories, namely (1) 1-34 hours, (2) 35-44 hours, and (3) 45 hours or more. The first category mostly comprises part-time arrangements, the second category comprises normal full hours and somewhat extended hours, and the third category comprises long working hours, according to Norwegian standards. In an explorative phase we also distinguished between short and long part-time work (1-19 and 20-35 hours per week respectively), but the two groups turned out to be too similar in the division of household and childcare tasks to make sense in the typology. Working at least 45 hours per week is rather uncommon in Norway, particularly for women, but as couples where one or both partners work long hours tend to differ from other couples in the way they allocate housework and childcare, we include them as a distinct group in the classification of paid working hours.

The partners' relative involvement in housework was assessed by asking the respondent whether it was himself/herself or his/her partner that usually performed five different tasks: (a) preparing daily meals, (b) doing the dishes, (c) washing clothes, (d) shopping for food, (e) cleaning the house. Each question had six possible answers, namely "Always respondent", "Usually respondent", "Respondent and partner equally often", "Usually partner", "Always partner", and "Always or usually another person". We collapsed these answers into three categories: (1) mainly she, (2) equal share, and (3) mainly he. "Always or usually another person" was coded as (2) equal share, but few respondents reported this answer. Involvement in childcare was similarly assessed by asking the respondent whether various childcare tasks were usually undertaken by himself/herself or his/her partner. Four different tasks were mentioned: (a) dressing the children or seeing that the children are properly dressed, (b) putting the children to bed and/or seeing that they go to bed, (c) staying at home with the children when they are ill, and (d) playing with the children and/or taking part in leisure activities with them. As for housework, the answers were coded (1) mainly she, (2) equal share, and (3) mainly he. There was only one question about the division of maintenance work in the survey, namely (a) doing small repairs in and around the house. As for household and childcare, there were six possible answers that were collapsed into three categories.

The frequencies for the variables used in the typology are demonstrated in Table 1.

**Table 1** Frequencies for the variables used in the typology of work-family arrangements. Per cent (N = 2617)

Working-hours		He	She
1-34	5	43	
34-44	64	49	
45+	30	8	

  

Housework		(a) preparing daily meals	(b) doing the dishes	(c) washing clothes	(d) shopping for food	(e) cleaning the house
Mainly she	52	30	76	39	53	
Equal share	35	58	21	50	43	
Mainly he	13	12	3	12	4	

  

Childcare		(a) dressing children	(b) putting children to bed	(c) staying home with sick children	(d) playing/leisure activities
Mainly she	41	16	31	12	
Equal share	51	76	62	80	
Mainly he	2	5	6	8	
Missing	5	2	1	1	

  

Maintenance work		(a) doing small repairs in and around the house
Mainly she	4	
Equal share	14	
Mainly he	83	

The survey probably provides a more complete picture of couples' division of housework than of childcare and maintenance work. Time spent on childcare is very difficult to measure accurately. Active childcare constitutes only a small proportion of the parents' total childcare time. Much care is undertaken in tandem with leisure or housework activities, and parents often need to keep an eye on their kids, or to be on the call, without necessarily being actively involved with the children. As mothers tend to provide more of this "diffuse" childcare than fathers (Craig, 2006), the present survey may overestimate the father's share of the couple's childcare. Likewise, fathers' share of the maintenance work may be exaggerated in the

survey, since only one question is asked about this, namely one capturing repairs in and around the house. Time-use surveys show that the gender difference is less skewed when it comes to gardening and taking care of pets (including walking the dog) (Vaage, 2002:106). Accordingly, additional questions on maintenance work might give a somewhat different picture of the parents' time allocation.

### **Background variables**

In order to identify class membership in the groups estimated in the typology we introduced three sets of background variables that are central in theories and analyses on couples' allocation of work, either paid or unpaid: (i) demographic information about the children in the household, (ii) socio-demographic information about both partners, and (iii) work-place information for both partners. For the first set of variables we included number of children in the household (distinguishing between 1, 2 and 3 or more children) and age of the youngest child (distinguishing between 1-2 years, 3-6 years and 7-12 years).

The second set of variables comprises information on the partners' educational attainment, health and marital status. Education and health are important resources when it comes to labour market participation and family work. Regarding the partners' education we distinguished between low and high educational attainment (primary or secondary education versus university education) and constructed four groups of couples: (i) both low, (ii) she low – he high, (iii) she high – he low, and (iv) both high. The partners' health was measured by a question indicating whether the respondent or the partner had a long-standing illness or chronic condition. Combining information about both partners we constructed four groups: (i) none have health problems, (ii) only he has health problems, (iii) only she has health problems, and (iv) both have health problems.

Marital status is included because formally married and cohabiting couples differ in ways that may affect their division of labour. Although tax policy and the social security system have moved in the direction of equating cohabitation with marriage in Norway in the past decades, married couples still have stronger obligations of mutual economic support than cohabiting couples. Moreover, married couples are more likely to pool their economic resources than are cohabiting couples, at least those without marriage plans (Lyngstad et al. 2010), and

cohabitators are generally less serious and less satisfied with their relationships than those who are married (Wiik et al. 2009). Hence, we distinguished between formally married and cohabiting couples in the analysis.

For the last set of variables we included information about three aspects of the partners' work places: work-place sector, working-hour organisation and leading position. We differentiated between work in the private and public sector and constructed four groups: (i) both work in the private sector, (ii) only he in the private sector, (iii) only she in the private sector, and (iv) both in the public sector. Regarding working-hour organisation we distinguished between regular working hours (daily work between 6 am-18 pm) and non-regular working hours (working hours outside regular hours, for instance shift and rota) and constructed four groups: (i) both non-regular, (ii) only he non-regular, (iii) only she non-regular, and (iv) both regular hours. Holding a leading position was captured by asking whether the respondent/partner leads or coordinates other people's work. This involves a rather broad definition of being a leader, and a fairly large proportion defined themselves as a leader. The same is true for the partner. In the analysis, we distinguished between four groups: (i) both partners hold leading positions, (ii) only he holds a leading position, (iii) only she holds a leading position, and (iv) none of the partners holds a leading position. Both employees and self-employed respondents were included in the analyses. The self employed were categorised as working in the private sector and having non-regular working hours. If they had at least one employee in their business they were defined as holding a leading position, otherwise not.

Frequencies for the background variables are shown in Table 2. The categories of missing information are controlled for in the multivariate analysis (Table 4), but as there were no significant results, we do not report the coefficients.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Information on educational attainment is missing for 11 percent of the couples. This is mainly due to missing information for the partner. Data on education was linked to the survey data from Statistics Norway's educational register for the respondent and most of the partners. When the partner could not be identified in this register, the respondent was asked to give some information on the partner's educational level. Unfortunately, there were some missing answers on this question.



**Table 2** Frequencies for the background variables in the analysis. Per cent ( $N = 2617$ )

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Number of children	
1 child	23
2 children	39
3 or more children	38
Age of youngest child	
1-2 years	21
3-6 years	47
7-12 years	32
Educational attainment	
Both low	35
She low – he high	7
She high – he low	20
Both high	27
Missing	11
Health status	
None have health problems	76
Only he has health problems	10
Only she has health problems	13
Both have health problems	2
Marital status	
Cohabiting	27
Married	73
Work-sector	
Both in private	39
Only he in private	37
Only she in private	7
Both in public	15
Missing	2
Work-hour organisation	
Both non-regular	11
Only he non-regular	21
Only she non-regular	17
Both regular	52
Leading position	
Both hold leading positions	29
Only he holds leading position	33
Only she holds leading position	13
None holds leading position	24
Missing	1

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## **Analytical method**

We use a multinomial logit latent class regression model to identify the couples' (1) latent class membership probabilities, (2) item-response probabilities conditional on latent class membership and (3) logistic regression coefficients for covariates, predicting class membership. A latent class model is a technique that allows us to study the interrelationship among the observed indicators and construct discrete latent variables from two or more discrete observed variables, or to analyse a typology or characterise a set of latent types within a set of observed indicators. This method for studying categorically scored variables is analogous to factor analysis, which is used for continuous observed and latent variables. It makes possible the characterisation of a multidimensional discrete latent variable from a cross-classification of two or more observed categorical variables (McCutcheon, 1987). Also, in the latent class model an individual's observed responses are determined by a combination of the individual's latent class and random error (Collins and Lanza, 2010:47). To perform a multinomial logit latent class regression model we have used a program developed for SAS (Proc LCA) by The Methodology Center, The Pennsylvania State University. The method is not very widely used in social science, but its usefulness has for instance been demonstrated in an analysis of predictors of gender-role attitudes among Japanese women, identifying the characteristics of each class compared with the others (Yamaguchi, 2000).

## **Results**

### **Creation of Typology**

The first step was to create a typology of dual-earner couples, based on the partners' paid working hours and their division of family work. Testing for different numbers of latent classes we ended up with four classes or types of dual-earner couples. Table 3 shows the class membership probabilities as well as the item-response probabilities conditional on latent class membership on the dimensions that are summarized in table 1. First, the model constructed what we call a *Neo-Traditional* type (25%) in which work-family roles complement one another. This term has been used to describe couples that have moved away from the traditional arrangement with the man as the sole breadwinner and the woman as a full-time homemaker, but even if the women do some market work, they continue to accommodate

their careers to the needs of the family and do the majority of housework and childcare (Raley et al. 2006). Conditional on membership in the *Neo-Traditional* couple type, the probability that she works part time is 0.60, the probability that he works normal full hours is 0.52, and the probability that he works long hours is 0.43. Regarding housework, the probabilities that she is mainly, for instance, responsible for cleaning the house and preparing daily meals are 0.87 and 0.80 respectively. Also, the probabilities that she is mainly responsible for dressing the children and putting them to bed are 0.77 and 0.48 respectively. The probability that he undertakes most of the maintenance work is 0.80. This means that in this group we find couples where she most likely works part time and he works full time or extra long hours, and she conducts the larger part of both housework and childcare tasks while he undertakes the majority of the maintenance work.

The second couple type, which we label *Gender-Equal Light* (34 %) has a similar, but less extreme, gender disparity of paid and unpaid work. Conditional on membership in this group, the probability that she works part time is 0.49, the probability that she works normal full time is 0.45, the probability that he works normal full time 0.67 and the probability that he works long hours is 0.30. The probabilities that she is mainly responsible for preparing the meals and washing clothes are 0.79 and 0.75 respectively. Also, the probabilities that she is mainly responsible for dressing the children is 0.40, and the probability that the parents equally share the task of putting the children to bed is 0.90. Hence, in this group we find couples where she most likely works part time or normal full hours and he works full time, and sometimes extra long hours, and where she performs the larger share of the housework, but where childcare tasks are more equally divided between the partners than in the *Neo-Traditional* type of couples. However, maintenance work is usually carried out by the father.

**Table 3** Item-response probabilities conditional on latent class membership ( $N = 2617$ )

Classes	Neo-Traditional	Gender-Equal Light	Generalized Gender-Equal	Specialized Gender-Equal
<b>His Working hours</b>				
1-34	0.05	0.03	0.06	0.10
35-44	0.52	0.67	0.78	0.58
45+	0.43	0.30	0.16	0.32
<b>Her Working hours</b>				
1-34	0.60	0.49	0.34	0.19
35-44	0.34	0.45	0.60	0.65
45+	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.16
<b>Housework</b>				
<b>Mainly she</b>				
(a) preparing daily meals	0.80	0.79	0.06	0.25
(b) doing the dishes	0.64	0.20	0.15	0.23
(c) washing clothes	0.94	0.75	0.69	0.62
(d) shopping for food	0.62	0.54	0.12	0.11
(e) cleaning the house	0.87	0.47	0.38	0.35
<b>Equal share</b>				
(a) preparing daily meals	0.16	0.19	0.81	0.33
(b) doing the dishes	0.33	0.62	0.83	0.53
(c) washing clothes	0.05	0.23	0.28	0.28
(d) shopping for food	0.34	0.42	0.76	0.50
(e) cleaning the house	0.12	0.49	0.60	0.54
<b>Mainly he</b>				
(a) preparing daily meals	0.05	0.03	0.13	0.42
(b) doing the dishes	0.03	0.19	0.02	0.24
(c) washing clothes	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.10
(d) shopping for food	0.03	0.04	0.12	0.39
(e) cleaning the house	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.11
<b>Childcare</b>				
<b>Mainly she</b>				
(a) dressing children	0.77	0.40	0.19	0.35
(b) putting children to bed	0.48	0.03	0.05	0.14
(c) staying home with sick children	0.63	0.27	0.13	0.17
(d) playing/leisure activities	0.30	0.06	0.04	0.08
<b>Equal share</b>				
(a) dressing children	0.22	0.59	0.81	0.53
(b) putting children to bed	0.51	0.90	0.94	0.70
(c) staying home with sick children	0.35	0.70	0.86	0.59
(d) playing/leisure activities	0.66	0.85	0.93	0.72
<b>Mainly he</b>				
(a) dressing children	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.13
(b) putting children to bed	0.01	0.06	0.01	0.16
(c) staying home with sick children	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.24
(d) playing/leisure activities	0.04	0.09	0.03	0.19
<b>Maintenance work</b>				
(a) doing small repairs in and around the house				
<b>Mainly she</b>	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.07
<b>Equal share</b>	0.16	0.10	0.18	0.12
<b>Mainly he</b>	0.80	0.88	0.79	0.81
<b>Class membership probabilities (st. err)</b>	0.25 (0.01)	0.34 (0.01)	0.23 (0.01)	0.18 (0.01)

In the two remaining couple types both partners work full time and share housework and childcare fairly equally between them, but the unpaid tasks are shared in different ways in the two groups and the probabilities of the partners working long hours differ somewhat. We find what we call a *Generalized Gender-Equal* type (23%) and a *Specialized Gender-Equal* type (18%). Conditional on membership in the first type the probability that she works normal full time is 0.60, the probability that he works normal full time is 0.78 and the probability that he works long hours is 0.16. Further, the probabilities that they equally share the tasks of preparing daily meals and cleaning the house are, for instance, 0.81 and 0.60 respectively. The probabilities that they equally share the tasks of dressing the children and putting the children to bed are 0.81 and 0.94 respectively. This means that both partners most likely work full time, none of them works long hours, and most household and childcare tasks are shared equally between them. Hence, both partners seem to be generalists when it comes to family work, although maintenance work is mainly undertaken by the father.

Turning to the *Specialized Gender-Equal* type, we find that also in this group, the family work is fairly equally allocated between the partners, but there is more variation in which partner that performs which tasks. Conditional on membership in this group the probability that she works normal full time is 0.65, the probability that he works normal full time 0.58 and the probability that he works long hours is 0.32. The probability that they equally share the task of cleaning the house is 0.54, but the probability that she is mainly responsible for washing the clothes is 0.62, and the probability that he is mainly responsible for preparing the daily meals is 0.42. Thus, we observe a stronger tendency towards specialization in family work. This means that we do not find a clear pattern in the item membership probabilities. Household tasks such as preparing meals and shopping for food seem to be either equally shared or undertaken mainly by him, while tasks such as washing clothes and cleaning the house are either equally shared or performed mainly by the mother. Like in the other couple types, the maintenance work is primarily a male responsibility. Although fathers seldom do more childcare than mothers in Norway, men in this couple type do the majority of the childcare more often than men in the other couple types. The father is somewhat more likely to work long hours in the *Specialized Gender-Equal* type than in the *Generalized Gender-Equal* type. Even though mothers in Norway seldom work long hours, this is somewhat more common in the *Specialized Gender-Equal* type of couples, than in any of the other couple

types. This indicates that the *Specialized Gender-Equal* couples are the most busy ones in terms of time spent on paid work.

The analysis suggests that the single most common work-family arrangement among dual-earner couples in Norway is the so-called *Gender-Equal Light* type. About one third of all the couples fall in this category. About 40 per cent of the couples belong to one of the two gender-equal types, either the *Generalized Gender-Equal* one or the *Specialized Gender-Equal* one, whereas 60 per cent are more traditional in that the male partner performs most paid work and the female partner performs most family work, aside from the maintenance chores. It is also worth emphasizing that equal sharing of childcare tasks is more common than equal sharing of routine housework. This is in line with previous analyses of time-use surveys based on time diaries as well as stylized survey questions of couples' sharing of domestic tasks. However, irrespective of work-family arrangement, maintenance work seems to be primarily a male responsibility.

### **Comparing the couple types**

The third step in our model is to identify logistic regression coefficients for covariates, predicting class membership. For the multinomial logistic regression we chose the *Neo-Traditional* type as the reference. This means that each of the other three couple types is compared to this one. The results are shown in Table 4.

Somewhat surprisingly, we see that couples are more likely to belong to the *Gender-Equal Light* type compared to the *Neo-Traditional* type if they have at least two children relative to having one child, and that couples are less likely to belong to the *Specialized Gender-Equal* type if they have at least three children relative to one child. There are no significant effects of the number of children on the likelihood of belonging to the *Generalized Gender-Equal* type.

**Table 4** Multinomial odds ratios (95% confidence interval in parenthesis) predicting membership in classes *Gender-Equal Light*, *Generalized Gender-Equal* and *Specialized Gender-Equal* type compared to *Neo-Traditional* type ( $N = 2617$ )

Classes	<i>Gender-Equal Light</i>	<i>Generalized Gender-Equal</i>	<i>Specialized Gender-Equal</i>
<i>Intercept</i>	1.26 (0.77-2.05)	<b>2.09</b> (1.30-3.36)	<b>1.52</b> (0.91-2.57)
<i>Number of children (ref=1 child)</i>			
2 children	<b>1.62</b> (1.26-2.10)	1.09 (0.84-1.41)	0.94 (0.72-1.24)
3+ children	<b>1.32</b> (1.00-1.74)	0.92 (0.70-1.21)	<b>0.67</b> (0.50-0.91)
<i>Age of youngest child (ref=7-12 years)</i>			
1-2 years	<b>1.49</b> (1.15-1.92)	<b>1.71</b> (1.31-2.23)	1.21 (0.91-1.62)
3-6 years	<b>1.29</b> (1.03-1.60)	<b>1.46</b> (1.16-1.84)	1.11 (0.86-1.43)
<i>Educational attainment in couple (ref=Both low)</i>			
She low – he high	<b>1.46</b> (1.00-2.12)	1.23 (0.82-1.84)	1.33 (0.82-2.16)
She high – he low	1.15 (0.87-1.51)	1.17 (0.88-1.56)	<b>1.85</b> (1.34-2.57)
Both high	<b>1.63</b> (1.24-2.14)	<b>1.37</b> (1.03-1.83)	<b>2.53</b> (1.84-3.48)
<i>Health status (ref=None have health problems)</i>			
Only he has health problems	1.20 (0.87-1.65)	1.28 (0.92-1.77)	<b>1.91</b> (1.37-2.67)
Only she has health problems	<b>0.63</b> (0.49-0.81)	<b>0.56</b> (0.42-0.74)	<b>0.44</b> (0.31-0.62)
Both have health problems	0.45 (0.24-0.86)	0.56 (0.30-1.03)	0.84 (0.44-1.60)
<i>Marital status (ref=Cohabitation)</i>			
Married	1.22 (0.98-1.52)	1.12 (0.89-1.40)	1.13 (0.88-1.45)
<i>Work-place sector (ref=Both in public)</i>			
Both in private	0.85 (0.61-1.20)	<b>0.39</b> (0.28-0.54)	<b>0.57</b> (0.40-0.81)
Only he in private	0.72 (0.52-1.02)	<b>0.35</b> (0.26-0.49)	<b>0.30</b> (0.21-0.43)
Only she in private	0.80 (0.49-1.32)	0.85 (0.53-1.34)	0.93 (0.56-1.52)
<i>Working-hour organisation (ref=Both regular)</i>			
Both non-regular	<b>0.35</b> (0.25-0.47)	<b>0.43</b> (0.31-0.60)	<b>0.60</b> (0.43-0.84)
Only he non-regular	<b>0.45</b> (0.35-0.58)	<b>0.61</b> (0.47-0.79)	<b>0.53</b> (0.39-0.71)
Only she non-regular	<b>0.61</b> (0.47-0.79)	<b>0.45</b> (0.34-0.59)	<b>0.56</b> (0.42-0.76)
<i>Leading position (ref=Both hold leading positions)</i>			
None holds leading position	1.07 (0.81-1.40)	1.26 (0.96-1.66)	0.80 (0.59-1.08)
Only he holds leading position	0.99 (0.77-1.27)	0.80 (0.61-1.03)	<b>0.59</b> (0.44-0.79)
Only she holds leading position	0.75 (0.55-1.04)	0.95 (0.69-1.31)	0.96 (0.68-1.33)

Note: bold represents significant with 95% confidence interval

Having young children, 1-2 years of age, and having children 3-6 years of age increases the likelihood of belonging to both the *Gender-Equal Light* type and to the *Generalized Gender-Equal* type, compared to the *Neo-Traditional* one, relative to having children 7-12 years of age. We have not estimated the differences between the two groups, but they both represent couples who share childcare tasks equally between the partners. Young children are usually more demanding than older ones and may require much attention from both parents, which imply more sharing. There are no significant effects of the age of the youngest child on the likelihood of belonging to the *Specialized Gender-Equal* type of couples.

In line with our expectations, we find that couples where both partners have high education (university level) are more likely to belong to all other couple types than the *Neo-Traditional* one. In particular, they are more likely to belong to the *Specialized Gender-Equal* type. A similar effect could be anticipated when she has high and he has low education, but such couples have a higher probability of belonging to the *Specialized Gender-Equal* type compared to the *Neo-Traditional* one, but not to any of the two remaining couple types. As the mothers in the *Specialized Gender-Equal* type of couples more often than mothers in the other couple types work full or long hours, and the fathers more often than fathers in the other couples are main responsible for childcare tasks, the *Specialized Gender-Equal* type probably stands out as the most gender equal of the four couple types when it comes to the partners' involvement in paid and unpaid work. This may be the reason why couples where both partners, or only the mother, have high education, more often belong to this type than to the *Neo-Traditional* one.

There is also a positive association between only the father having high education and belonging to the *Gender-Equal Light* type of couples compared to the *Neo-Traditional* type. We find this somewhat surprising, but it may have to do with more modern gender attitudes among highly educated men. Hence, couples where none of the partners have education at the university level are more likely to have traditional work-family arrangements than couples where the male partner has more education.

When the partners' health is regarded, the analysis reveals some expected effects. Couples where the mother, but not the father, has health problems are less likely to belong to all other



couple types than the *Neo-Traditional* one. Probably, mothers with reduced health participate less in the labour market than other mothers, and thereby end up with a more traditional family type. The male partner may need to work extra hours to compensate for the mother's lower income and therefore has less time to participate in housework and childcare. Interestingly, health problems for the father, but not the mother, are positively associated with belonging to the *Specialized Gender-Equal* couple type. Mothers in such couples tend to spend somewhat more time in the labour market than other women (less part time and more long hours), and this may be in order to compensate for more modest earnings from the partner. Although fathers in this couple type do not spend significantly less time on paid work than fathers in other couple types, their health problems may imply lower earnings. Moreover, the fact that the partners in such couples tend to be more specialized in their housework and childcare tasks, may partly be a result of the father's health problems. It might be that some tasks are more difficult to carry out than others, but, unfortunately, we have no information that can tell whether this is the case. There is no significant relationship between both partners having health problems and belonging to any particular couple type, but as only 2 per cent of the couples fall into this category (see Table 2), strong associations are needed in order to reach statistical significance.

There is no significant association between the couple's marital status and belonging to a particular couple type. Considering that married couples have stronger obligations of mutual economic provision than cohabiting couples, are more likely to pool their economic resources (Lyngstad et al. 2010) and are more satisfied and serious in their relationship (Wiik et al. 2009), we find it a bit surprising that there is no notable difference between the couple types when it comes to the allocation of paid and unpaid work.

We included three covariates representing different aspects of the partners' workplace and work situation. Couples where either both partners or only the father work in the private sector are less likely to belong to one of the *Gender-Equal* couple types than to the *Neo-Traditional* type, compared to couples where both partners work in the public sector. There is no effect of only the mother working in the private sector, though. This indicates that there are more pronounced gender differences in both paid work and family work in couples where the father works in the private sector, than in couples where he works in the public sector. This

may reflect the long-hours culture in many private enterprises, and also suggests that long hours for the father may presuppose shorter hours and more family work for the mother. The finding is in line with Kitterød and Rønsen (2010) who demonstrates that men in the private sector are likely to have a partner who works less, irrespective of the sector of the partner's work.

If one or both partners in a couple have non-regular working hours, the couple is less likely to belong to all other couple types than the *Neo-Traditional* one. This may reflect, among other things, that women with non-regular hours often work in professions with high part-time rates (for instance nurses), and thus work less than their partner. Some couples may deliberately choose such arrangements so that one of the partners, often the mother, can spend more time on family work. For others, the *Neo-Traditional* arrangement may rather have come about more or less as a result of the partners' occupational choices. Shift, rota or other irregular working hours for one or both partners may be tiresome for the family and prevent joint family time. Hence, the mother may choose to work part time in order to ease the family's time schedule.

When it comes to one or both partners holding a leading position, there are, somewhat surprisingly, few significant associations with class membership. Some of the effects may be covered up by the variable capturing the partners' educational attainment, since highly educated people more often hold a leading position than those with less education. The only significant result is that belonging to the *Specialized Gender-Equal* type is negatively associated with only the male partner holding a leading position, compared to both holding a leading position. As we have mentioned above, the question used in the survey implied a rather broad definition of holding a leading position. A narrower definition of being a leader might have produced more significant effects.

## Summary and discussion

An important aim of Norwegian work-family policies is to facilitate the combination of paid work and family obligations for both women and men. The symmetrical family of two worker-carers is a political ambition, although parental choice is also important. In spite of policy measures to promote the dual-earner, equal-sharing family model, we do not really know how common this family type is today and in what ways it differs systematically from other family types. In this paper we try to develop a typology of dual-earner couples in Norway based on the way the partners divide paid work and family tasks between them. To our knowledge, this is the first analysis of this kind on Norwegian data. Utilising a representative survey from 2007 on both partners' weekly working hours and their share of the family's housework, childcare and maintenance work, we look at couples with children 1-12 years living at home.

By means of a multinomial latent-class model we estimate four types of couples, two of which are characterised by a fairly equal sharing of paid and unpaid work between the partners, and two of which have more traditional arrangements. In what we have called the *Neo-Traditional* couple type the mother most likely works part time, while the father works full time or long hours, and the mother carries out the majority of the family duties, except for the maintenance work which is mostly undertaken by the father. In the *Gender-Equal Light* type of couples there is more similarity between the partners' involvement in paid and unpaid work in that the mother spends more time in the labour market and the father is more involved in childcare than in the *Neo-Traditional* couples. Still, the mother spends considerably less time on employment and is far more involved in family work than the father. In the *Generalized Gender-Equal* type of couples both parents usually work full time, but seldom long hours, and tend to share most housework and childcare tasks equally between them. Maintenance work is mostly done by the father, though. In the *Specialized Gender-Equal* type of couples the father works full time and sometimes long hours and the mother usually works full time. Housework and childcare is shared fairly equally between the partners, but the parents seem to specialize more in specific tasks than the *Generalized Gender-Equal* type of couples. As in the other couple types the father is responsible for the maintenance work.

The single most common couple type is the *Gender-Equal Light* one, which comprises about one third of all dual-earner couples. About forty percent of the couples belong to one of the most gender-equal types, either the *Generalized* or the *Specialized* one. It is worth emphasizing, though, that even in these latter couples, women tend to spend somewhat less time in the labour market than men, and particularly in the *Generalized Gender-Equal* couples women bear somewhat more responsibility for housework and childcare than men. Even though mothers seem to spend more time on family work than fathers in most couples, our data suggest that they do not necessarily bear a “double burden” or undertake a “second shift” in the sense that they have longer total working hours than their partner. More family work is usually balanced by less paid work. This is at odds with analyses from some other countries. For instance, Ferree (1991) found that although double days were not particularly common among women in two-earner marriages in the US, a significant minority, about three out of ten, were what she called “drudge wives” in that they had full-time jobs and a disproportionate share of housework. Craig (2007) argue that if childcare time is measured correctly so that also more passive care is included, it is revealed that most employed women do perform a second shift.

We were not able to single out a so-called “Role-Reversal” couple type in Norway, meaning that the mother performs most paid work and the father conducts most family work. Given that mothers often work part time and seldom long hours, whereas the opposite is true for fathers, this is not an unexpected result. In the *Specialized Gender-Equal* type of couples, which is where we find the highest probability of mothers working long hours, there is a tendency for fathers to work long hours as well. Although previous analyses have demonstrated that in a small minority of couples the mother does actually spend more time on paid employment than the father (Kitterød and Rønsen 2010), these are probably too few to be singled out as a separate couple type in the latent class analysis.

The investigation of the characteristics of the four couple types produced expected as well as unexpected results. The partners’ resources as well as their labour market characteristics are important, and the same is true for the number and ages of children. In line with our assumptions, highly educated couples are more likely to belong to all other couple types than the *Neo-Traditional* one. In particular, they are more likely to belong to the *Specialized*

*Gender-Equal* type of couples, which is also true for couples where the mother, but not the father, is highly educated. This latter couple type seems to be the most gender-equal one, but also the one with most time pressure. Health problems for the mother seem to increase the likelihood of a *Neo-Traditional* arrangement, whereas health problems for the father increase the likelihood of belonging to the *Specialized Gender-Equal* couple type. This may partly be due to much paid work among the mothers in these couples, but further analysis with more detailed information of the partners' health problems are needed in order to better understand this result. The likelihood of belonging to one of the two most gender-equal couple types is reduced when the father works in the private sector. This suggests that typical private-sector jobs tend to presuppose a spouse who shoulders most of the domestic duties. Non-regular working hours for one or both partners lessen the likelihood of belonging to all other couple types than the *Neo-Traditional* one. The mother may reduce her working hours because full-time work with non-regular hours is stressful for the family, but non-regular hours, such as night service, may also be deliberately chosen in order to ease the family's time crunch.

Young children in the household entail increased probability of belonging to the *Gender-Equal Light* or the *Generalized Gender-Equal* couple type compared to the *Neo-Traditional* one, and having at least two children at home increases the probability of belonging to the *Gender-Equal Light* type. Assuming that young children and many children entail a more traditional division of labour in the couples, we find this a bit surprising. However, as there may be a greater need for both parents' involvement in childcare when there are young children and/or many children in the household, parents with pre-school children may turn out as more equal-sharing than those with older children.

We believe that our study is an important contribution in understanding the way Norwegian couples share both paid work and family obligations between them. The study has certain limitations, though. In particular, we would like to have more complete information on the partners' division of childcare and maintenance work than we have in our data. Questions covering additional childcare tasks as well as more passive childcare and on-the-call time might alter the results somewhat. With further questions on the upkeep of the house and garden we would also get a more correct picture of the partners' maintenance work. Moreover, the analysis would benefit from information on the partners' absolute time inputs

in family work, and not only their relative contributions, which is what we have in our data. This would allow us to compare the partners' total workloads and investigate more thoroughly whether one partner really bears a double burden / works a second shift. It would also make possible analyses of whether gender equality in family work actually implies that both partners participate very little in domestic responsibilities, or that reduced involvement from the mother is met by higher efforts from the father. The two types of gender equality actually involve rather dissimilar avenues towards equal sharing and may imply different experiences of stress and time pressure in the family's daily life. In future analyses one should also strive at an even better understanding of the characteristics of the different couple types by bringing in additional independent variables in the analysis, such as for instance the purchase of external services, the partners' field of education and more detailed information of their health problems.

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