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Paid Parental Leave and Gender-Just Degrowth

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Abstract: Degrowth is the purposeful reduction of energy and materials use in production and consumption, particularly in economic sectors that do not support social and ecological wellbeing. Feminist ecological economics positions distributive justice at the center of degrowth discourse. This research project argues that paid parental leave is a gender-just degrowth policy through the mechanisms of work reduction and care work valuation. Work reduction policies should reduce energy and material throughputs without negatively impacting quality of life and well-being, and while distributing work justly among genders. This study uses an ordinal logistic regression to explore the relationship between life satisfaction and paid parental leave policies among OECD countries. The analysis finds a small positive association between paid maternity leave and life satisfaction, a small negative association between paid paternity leave and life satisfaction, and no relationship between paid gender-neutral parental leave and life satisfaction.

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Introduction

In the face of human-made environmental crises, the energy needs of the ever-growing economy have exceeded what planet Earth can sustainably support. Shifting the dominant cultural mindset away from the growth imperative allows us to plan for a prosperous degrowth, rather than waiting until such a fall is forced upon us (Odum, 2001). No longer able to rely on the maxim that "a rising tide lifts all boats," a vital consideration of this degrowth transition is how to distribute the remaining goods, services, and energy equitably. It is necessary to reimagine systems of work and production to facilitate degrowth, and it is necessary to reimagine systems of work valuation to advance gender equity.

This project explores the gender-equity and degrowth potential of paid family leave policies by asking which family leave policies correlate with higher levels of life satisfaction among countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). An ordinal logistic regression tentatively suggests that paid maternity leave is slightly positively associated with well-being, whereas gender-neutral parental leave may have no relationship with well-being and paid paternity leave may even be negatively associated.

Many wealthy countries have the capacity to degrow our economies without a corresponding decrease in well-being by reducing production in industries that do not provide well-being benefits. One important mechanism for degrowth is a planned reduction in paid work (Hickel et al., 2022). Paid work reduction not only reduces energy and material inputs and outputs used in production, but also allows time to instead be used for caring labor, leisure, and rest which do have well-being benefits (Jackson, 2009b). In contrast to the growth-at-all-costs paradigm, paid work reduction can decrease pressures on the ecosystem while simultaneously supporting human well-being.

Dengler and Strunk (2018) describe how degrowth can be designed to support the care economy, and that valuation of care-work may even be a necessary component of achieving degrowth. Because of the gender hierarchy implied in the dualism of paid and unpaid labor, feminist economists argue that social valuation of caring labor is necessary to achieve equality in the gender distribution of work. True valuation of caring labor is a necessary part of a justly designed work-reduction policy, because people of all genders will feel it is acceptable and respected to step back from the production economy. However, most of the current thought on paid work reduction policies does not center or even consider just distribution, and thus are liable to reproduce existing gender inequalities. Feminist ecological economics situates just distribution at the heart of a sustainable economic reimagining (Spencer et al., 2018). This paper joins in the conversation by examining the degrowth potential of parental leave policies through a feminist economic framework of care work valuation.

This paper first describes the context of feminist ecological economics in Chapter One, then Chapter Two argues that paid parental leave is a policy lever for gender-just degrowth through reducing paid work and valuing caring labor. Chapter Three describes the state of paid parental leave policies in OECD countries, and Chapter Four further investigates the degrowth potential of this policy lever through an econometric analysis of the relationship between paid leave policies and well-being in OECD countries.

Chapter 1: Feminist Ecological Economics

Ecological economics (EE) and feminist economics (FE) are more holistic alternatives to mainstream neoclassical economics (Erickson, 2021). Mainstream economics tends to ignore that all inputs come from finite sources, and outputs have to go somewhere. In other words, human economic activity requires physical and energetic inputs, and produces waste (collectively referred to as throughputs). EE reintroduces this biophysical basis to the economy by modeling and considering the environmental and social systems in which the economy resides, and on which the economy relies. An ecological economy attains the three "pillars" of sustainable scale, just distribution, and efficient allocation (Erickson, 2021). Sustainable scale refers to the size of the economy, and suggests that rather than blindly pursuing growth, we must fit the economy to a size that our ecosystems and social systems can support. Just distribution describes the sharing of the products of the economy, such as wealth and well-being, justly across lines of gender, race, class, and geography, so there is enough for all. The final pillar, efficient allocation, describes a state of economic efficiency wherein no one can be made better off without someone being made worse-off (Erickson, 2021; Odum, 2001).

FE analyzes and promotes policies that improve living conditions by understanding and dismantling systems of gender inequity and patriarchy (Berik & Kongar, 2021). FE often focuses on systems of care work, which include paid and unpaid labor to raise children, feed families, nurture the sick, and provide emotional and logistical support. Although industrial activity cannot exist without a strong foundation of care and social reproduction, most economic theory ignores the essential role of care work (Perkins et al., 2005). In the formal economy, this work is often exploited. Paid caring jobs tend to be feminized and undervalued, as illustrated by the low salaries and status associated with essential and demanding jobs such as early childhood educators, home health aides, and social workers. The rest of this chapter will examine three important intersections of feminist and ecological economics: the measurement of well-being, distributive justice, and the reproductive economy.

i. Measuring Well-being

FE and EE both criticize the use of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a measure of welfare, and propose alternatives that better measure societal well-being (Dengler, 2021). These fields are not alone in their harsh criticism of GDP. Even Simon Kuznets, credited with the creation of GNP, cautioned in the 1960's that "the welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measure of the national income" (Raworth, 2017, 35). Its flaws include that GDP counts negative outcomes (such as spending for prisons, spending to clean up after oil spills or wildfires, and spending to wage war), and does not count positive contributions to well-being (such as unpaid caring labor, volunteer activities, and leisure) (Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, 2010; Raworth, 2017). GDP per capita also ignores distributive justice by taking a simple average, incorrectly suggesting that the gains from economic growth are shared equally among all citizens. In reality, these gains are unequally distributed, often along lines of race, gender, class, geography, and education (Nussbaum et al., 1993; Stiglitz, 2010).

In an ideological sense, EE critiques the growth imperative behind measuring an economy's success solely on the rate at which GDP has increased, suggesting that growth cannot and should not continue forever within the bounds of a finite planet, and that well-being can be achieved without growth (Raworth, 2017; Meadows, Randall, & Meadows, 2004). These critics suggest a new goal, which prioritizes meeting "the human rights of every person within the means of our life-giving planet," (Raworth, 2017, p.22). FE particularly criticizes the invisibility of care work in national accounting because it contributes to the devaluation of women's labor (Messac, 2018).

Because GDP is a reductionist account of a nation's market activity, and thus should not be equated with something as complex and individual as human flourishing, how then should we measure well-being? A rich literature debates the use of various objective and subjective measures of well-being (Nussbaum et al., 1993; Raworth, 2017; Ryff et al., 2021; VanderWeele et al., 2021). Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi (2010) suggest considering multiple objective well-being dimensions of material living standards, health, education, personal activities, political voice, social relationships, present and future environment, and insecurity. These objective indicators are measured using mortality rates, education, time-use data, unemployment, and premature deaths due to air pollution. (Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi, 2010). For subjective well-being, the authors include evaluative measures ("life satisfaction") and positive and negative affect, where people report their positive feelings (such as joy, contentment, pride) and their negative ones (such as stress, fear, sadness). The OECD's Better Life Index draws on this work, and includes many of these indicators in their dashboard. The World Values Survey and the European Values Study, from which this project draws its data on life satisfaction, also follow these conventions, presenting a more holistic subjective measure of well-being which is outside of the conventions of the growth economy.

ii. Degrowth and Just Distribution

A third vital concept shared by EE and FE is distributive justice. Neoclassical economics calls for growth at all costs. We are told this will ensure that the future has *more* than the present—for everyone. While economists have observed that GDP growth does not increase equality (Causa et al., 2014), this flawed idea maintains a strong hold on our psyche and our economic and political systems. EE calls for a transformation from a growth economy to one that fits within the physical and energetic limits of the Earth and its ecosystems (Dengler, 2021; Meadows et al., 2004; Odum, 2001). This economy has a maximum size, a sense of enough, and recognizes a limit where *more* no longer means *better*.

In order to transition to this economy, EE argues for a planned "degrowth." Degrowth scholarship claims that economic growth is not the only path to prosperity and well-being (Bauhardt, 2014; Kallis, 2011; Victor, 2010). In fact, economic growth has diminishing marginal returns to well-being, and the wealthiest countries have reached a point where growth is no longer increasing quality of life (Dietz & O'Neill, 2013; Hickel et al., 2022). Degrowth describes "right-sizing" the economy by decreasing production and consumption in certain countries and sectors. These wealthy countries can thus absorb degrowth without an enormous sacrifice of quality of life (Knight et al., 2013). This degrowth will make energy and material resources available for the countries that will still benefit greatly from economic growth (Hickel et al., 2022).

Degrowth in sectors which provide little benefit to well-being also leaves room for growth in "flourishing sectors" which increase well-being (Odum, 2001). For example, growth in education, affordable housing, and information sharing require energy and materials investment *and* are necessary for human well-being. Degrowth in carbon-intensive production, transportation, and consumption would allow for growth in these "flourishing sectors" without exceeding the biophysical limits to the economy.

Distribution must be at the heart of degrowth. Due to astounding levels of global wealth inequality, an evenly allocated decrease in energy and materials use would be barely noticeable for the rich, yet completely devastating for poor communities who already do not have enough.

Degrowth is instead distributed to those who consume more than our[1] fair share (Nirmal & Rocheleau, 2019). The rich (people, corporations, countries) must reduce our consumption, and thus the negative ecological and social impacts which stem from this consumption, so that the poor (people, communities, countries) can grow in well-being. Degrowth puts the onus of economic sacrifice for the system change on those who can absorb it, and on those who contribute the most to the social and ecological burdens borne so frequently by the most marginalized.

Degrowth discourse emerged primarily in Europe (Daly, 1973; Georgescu-Roegen, 1971; Ropke, 2004). Many critique the dominance of Northern voices in degrowth literature, and emphasize the necessity of bringing together scholarship and perspectives from the Global South and the North so as not to reproduce structures of coloniality and patriarchy in this economic reimagining (Dengler & Seebacher, 2019; Hanaček et al., 2020; McMahon, 1997; Nirmal & Rocheleau, 2019). One important critique is degrowth's assumption of scarcity. Neoclassical economics assumes a state of scarcity, where people experience unlimited wants in a world of scarce resources with which to fulfill these wants. Much degrowth scholarship accepts this assumption of scarcity, conceptualized as biophysical limits, and attempts to address the problem of unlimited wants, taking scarcity as given. Other perspectives criticize this assumption of scarcity. In these world views, scarcity is not inherent or natural, but is rather constructed through power relationships in the economic markets which create unequal access to and distribution of finite resources (Mehta & Harcourt, 2021). In this conceptualization, *finiteness* does not necessarily imply a natural state of *scarcity*.

It is important to recognize how people, particularly people with plural experiences of race, gender, wealth, and power perceive limits, scarcity, or abundance. Assuming comparable experiences with finiteness invites harm. This can include environmental solutions which prioritize global problems over local ones, backgrounding of cultures and non-universal values, and justifying unjust allocation of "resources" based on the workings of the market (Mehta & Harcourt, 2021). Ecological economics as a field aspires to be transdisciplinary, which necessitates the acceptance and creation of space for plural perspectives on the framing of

[1] Due to my personal positionality, I occasionally refer to the responsibility to degrow as "ours," or suggest that "we" must undertake degrowth. This is because I include myself in this definition of those to whom degrowth must apply. To instead refer to this group as "they" would feel both grammatically incorrect and ethically misleading. I do not intend that the reader is necessary implicated in this "we."

scarcity. Scholars today situate degrowth within the larger post-development transition discourse, which include Southern perspectives such as buen vivir and rights of nature (Escobar, 2015).

A right-sized economy that recognizes the finite nature of its throughputs must grapple with the question of how to fairly distribute output to avoid scarcity. Feminist ecological economists attest that EE falls short on its stated commitment to just distribution, and that incorporating FE perspectives and methods can center justice in EE discourse (Spencer et al., 2018). Feminist economists have long grappled with gender-justice (and more recently intersectional justice) in regards to the distribution of wealth, wages, time, power, education, and opportunity (Spencer et al., 2018). Feminist economists affirm that degrowth will not enhance gender equity unless it is intentionally designed to equitably distribute goods, services, and valuation of work (Littig, 2018). Environmental economic policies designed without a feminist lens can exacerbate gender inequity, such as investment in "green jobs" in male-dominated sectors like construction and energy (Bauhardt, 2014; Littig, 2018). Feminist economists emphasize equity as central to any economic reimagining, and thus bring vital knowledge, methods, and perspectives to degrowth. EE must integrate feminist perspectives on equity and justice to achieve just distribution and avoid replicating the extractive model in an economic transformation. Feminist ecological economics explores how to degrow the economy in a way that expands well-being and gender equity.

iii. The Reproductive Economy

EE and FE perspectives seek to re-situate the productive economy within the essential economies of social and ecological reproduction. In feminist ecological economics, these components are modeled together to suggest that ecological processes and caring activities, jointly referred to as the "maintenance" or "reproductive" economy, are inextricable from the productive, or industrial, economy (Jochimsen & Knobloch, 1997). The reproductive economy is composed of ecosystem services and caring labor. Ecosystem services describe Earth's processes that provide benefit to human life. For example, photosynthesis provides food and energy, wetlands provide flood mitigation and water quality, and forests stabilize the climate and provide building materials, energy, and recreation. Feminist ecological economics is also in conversation with disciplines and perspectives which critique this anthropocentric view, claiming that valuing ecosystems solely for what humans can gain from them perpetuates the extractive economic mindset which privileges human needs over those of non-human beings.

Caring labor describes work that helps people meet needs, such as raising and teaching children, caring for the sick and elderly, and providing emotional support. Caring labor is often feminized, and implicitly or explicitly considered to be women's responsibility. Caring activities are culturally constructed as natural, infinitely available, and free for the taking (Plumwood, 1993). Feminist ecological economics recognizes the links between the devaluation and exploitation of ecological activities and caring labor. Capitalism requires that these be exploitable, and by constructing a domination of man over woman and human over nature, this system of exploitation becomes culturally ingrained (Bauhardt, 2014; Plumwood, 1993). Plumwood (1993) suggests that hierarchal dualisms such as these can be overcome through an ethic of partnership, in which continuity is emphasized, and differences are recognized, but not devalued, dominated, or exploited.

There are no simple solutions to these historical structures of exploitation, but fair valuation of caring labor and "women's work" is a necessary start. Some believe care work and ecosystem services must be valued monetarily, and thus be accepted into existing economic systems and decision-making. Others argue that putting a price tag on these activities degrades their quality, and that reproductive activities are better provided outside of the formal market (Dengler & Lang, 2021; Messac, 2018). Most recognize the complex challenge of even attempting to put a dollar amount on these complex and necessary activities. While there is disagreement over how to integrate these essential components into economic modeling and decision-making, feminist ecological economics asserts that economic theory and national accounting are incomplete without considering the reproductive economy. Ignoring these economies and taking them for granted allows for the continued exploitation of women and the earth in service of the patriarchal and capitalist economy.

Bauhardt (2014) argues that degrowth, as conceived by EE, relies on the exploitative use of caring labor in similar ways as the current economic model. This further demonstrates the importance of including feminist perspectives, specifically concepts of care, into degrowth discourse. Care is relational, cooperative, and supports well-being, some of the values of degrowth. While degrowth emphasizes reduction, sacrifice, and simplicity, care provides the economic alternative of flourishing relationships and socio-ecological well-being: the ethics of a degrowth economy (Mehta & Harcourt, 2021). Valuing care disrupts the dualist structure which exploits women and the earth to support capitalism and growth. Reincorporating this vital component of the reproductive economy is necessary to achieve degrowth's goal of radical economic system change, rather than just shrinking the current model (Mehta & Harcourt, 2021).

The interconnections between FE and EE lead scholars in both fields to call for more research at their intersection (Nelson, 1997; Spencer et al., 2018). Alone, neither FE not EE adequately addresses the intersecting and interacting challenges of social, environmental, and economic justice. By combining the theoretical approaches, feminist ecological economics situates just distribution and care at the heart of a sustainable economic reimagining. This paper joins in the conversation by examining a degrowth concept through a feminist economic framework by evaluating the gender-justice and degrowth potential of parental leave policies.

Chapter 2: Paid Work Reduction

Growth of the wealthiest economies is no longer necessarily increasing human well-being, and it is damaging the climate and Earth's ecosystems (Dietz & O'Neill, 2013). In order to provide good living standards with less energy and material throughputs, our economic system and cultural approaches to production and consumption will have to change. While degrowth provides the theoretical framework for a planned, purposeful reduction in throughputs, operationalizing these ideas require specific policy, restructuring, and political will.

Hickel et al. (2022) present four broad policy suggestions that could realistically advance degrowth of wealthy economies. Their first suggestion is to reduce production and consumption that is "less necessary," such as increasing the life span of products, and decreasing fast fashion, advertising, and industrial agriculture. The next policy suggestion is to strengthen public services such as health care, education, and housing, which largely support well-being while not necessarily being as resource intensive as other sectors. In other words, economic growth in sectors that have a high well-being to throughput ratio should be encouraged. The authors also advocate a change in the institutions of sustainable development to increase equity in international trade and debt flow. Finally, and of significant importance to this paper, they advocate a reduction of work in the paid labor market.

As productivity increases due to technological innovation, these gains in productivity can either be used to increase production and growth, or to reduce labor inputs and achieve the same amount of production (Rosnick, 2013). Paid-work reduction suggests a gradual reduction in paid labor as productivity increases. Some paid-word reduction policies are a younger retirement age, a four-day work week, and part-time work with work-sharing.

Not only does paid-work reduction discourage further growth, it is also necessary to prevent unemployment in a degrowth economy with reduced production and consumption (Sekulova et al., 2013). Degrowth calls for reduction of "less necessary" production and more durable goods, so there will be less demand for new goods, and therefore less jobs in production. To prevent unemployment, the remaining work will need to be distributed across a workforce which hasn't diminished. This can be accomplished through reducing paid work hours and effectively sharing the remaining work so unemployment does not increase (Kallis et al., 2012; Kreinin & Aigner, 2022; Victor, 2010).

Paid-work reduction can be a degrowth policy lever if it increases well-being and decreases energy and material throughputs which harm Earth's ecosystems. This would be accomplished by redistributing time use away from work which increases production and consumption to activities that instead increase social and environmental well-being.

i. Paid Work Reduction and the Environment

Many degrowth scholars suggest paid-work reduction will reduce carbon emissions. Nässén and Holmberg (2009) find an 8% reduction in energy use resulting from a 10% reduction in paid work time in Sweden, and Norgard (2009) reports that energy used in leisure time was 10 times less than energy used during paid work time in Denmark. Knight et al. (2013) conduct a panel analysis of high-income OECD countries and conclude that shorter working hours are significantly associated with less environmental pressure. In the US, Fitzgerald et al. (2018) report a strong, positive relationship between average working hours and carbon emissions, and Rosnick and Weisbrot (2007) find that if Americans reduced work time to match the European level, individual energy consumption would be reduced by 20%.

While the relationship between paid work and energy consumption is complex, there are various mechanisms which can explain the observed relationship between less paid work time and reduced energy consumption. Firstly, less paid work may result in lower income, which reduces consumption (Norgard, 2013). Some work-reduction policies maintain income (such as a universal basic income or paid time off), so the income effect would not be observed in those cases.

A more systemic mechanism lies in the choice between increased production or decreased labor time as productivity increases: firms that choose to increase production can actually spur consumption to meet their production capabilities. Firms create markets for further profit by systematizing planned obsolescence and non-durable goods, and investing heavily in advertising to "create desires" (Jackson, 2009a; Norgard, 2013). Thus, throughputs can be increased or reduced from the production side, such as through work reduction, not just from the consumption side. Governments also encourage consumption, to keep unemployment low and GDP growing. These methods of stimulating demand date back to the Great Depression: in response to record unemployment, the senate passed a proposal for a 30 hour week with work sharing, but the US instead pursued a policy of job creation and stimulating demand by encouraging consumption and the commercialization of leisure (Norgard, 2013). If production were slowed by returning the gains from increased labor productivity to reducing labor time, rather than increasing production, there would be less need for producers and governments to stimulate demand and consumption to match increasing production capabilities (Rosnick, 2013).

In an equal society, gains from productivity are fairly distributed to workers, so decreasing work time in line with productivity increases would not reduce the standard of living for workers. In an unequal society such as the US currently, most of these gains from productivity are distributed unequally to the wealthy, so reducing work time would reduce the income of low-wage workers, even as profit overall stays the same. Reducing working time may disproportionately harm lower-paid workers and people with debt, particularly in unequal societies and if income remains tied completely to market labor (Hickel et al., 2022).

Another significant mechanism for the observed reduction of throughputs is the substitution, or compositional effect (Knight et al., 2013; Norgard, 2013). This effect suggests that a reduction of paid work time also reduces time poverty, thus decreasing use of energy-intensive time savers such as household appliances and fast transportation. This is because low-energy household production activities require more time, so can be undertaken if there is a corresponding decrease in the amount of time spent in paid work (D'Alisa & Cattaneo, 2013). Substituting paid work time for unpaid care work, volunteer work, or creative work produces low-energy outputs in place of high-energy outputs (Norgard, 2013). This work is often more care-intensive and time-intensive, but is less energy intensive, and directly creates durable goods (Sekulova et al., 2013). Substituting paid work time for leisure time may similarly reduce throughputs, but it depends on how the leisure time is used. It must therefore be determined if a reduction in paid-work could also spur growth, perhaps in the form of high-consumption leisure such as shopping or long-distance travel. (Hickel et al., 2022; Knight et al., 2013; Kreinin & Aigner, 2022; Norgard, 2013).

ii. Paid Work Reduction and Well-being

Acknowledging that paid work reduction can reduce energy use, the next criteria for degrowth is to examine its impact on human well-being. Reducing time spent in paid labor increases time available for partaking in activities known to increase well-being such as care, time with family and friends, and rest (Waldinger & Schulz, 2023).

In capitalist economies, participation in paid work is largely necessary for material well-being, and for many is instrumental to their identity, community, routine, and participation in a social contract (Jackson, 2009b; Kreinin & Aigner, 2022). Paid-work reduction must therefore avoid widespread unemployment. This is especially important because unemployment and underemployment are associated with poor material well-being and mental health outcomes (Case & Deaton, 2021). The process of reducing paid work must instead be carefully managed to keep unemployment low. This can be accomplished by work sharing and retraining for those who work in industries with large ecological footprints and small contributions to well-being (Jackson, 2009b; Knight et al., 2013). Furthermore, paid work reduction should target work which is less necessary, and work which has significant environmental impact, such as jobs related to production and fossil fuels. Work which supports healthy social and ecosystem functioning should not be reduced overall, but can be shared among those in the work force.

While unemployment can greatly harm quality of life, working too much can have a similar effect. Multiple studies have reported a negative relationship between working hours and happiness, and that, when controlling for income, more time spent outside of working is positively associated with well-being (De Moortel et al., 2017; Knight et al., 2013). Overemployment is correlated with health problems, isolation, stress, and separation from family and friends (Kreinin & Aigner, 2022). There is also a frequently observed mismatch between preferred working hours and actual hours: in wealthy countries, many workers wish to work fewer hours than they do (Knight et al., 2013). While work reduction has been considered politically unfeasible in the US due in part to the culturally ingrained puritan work-ethic, researchers have observed a growing demand for shorter, more meaningful work (Hickel et al., 2022).

Research on the impact of reduced working hours at the company and country levels have shown positive well-being effects, such as less stress and better sleep (Hickel et al., 2022). This is promising evidence that productivity does not always increase well-being, suggesting that it is possible to reduce work while maintaining or even increasing well-being.

iii. Unpaid Work, Energy use, and Well-being

It is not just working less that has the potential to reduce energy use and increase well-being, but what that time can be used for instead. A decrease in paid work allows for an increase in unpaid work, which is often focused on family and community participation and provisioning. Household work is shown to use energy less intensely than the service and government sectors, which deliver similar services as unpaid household labor at energy rates orders of magnitude higher (D'Alisa & Cattaneo, 2013). Furthermore, having less time available to spend in the home results in a higher "household metabolic rate," as use of higher-energy convenience substitutes such as appliances, take-out, and online shopping increases (D'Alisa & Cattaneo, 2013). Beyond the energy equation, a focus on unpaid work may also contribute to a shifting cultural mindset: because unpaid work is not profit-oriented, it allows for motivations such as subsistence, reciprocity, and cooperation rather than growth and competition (Nierling, 2012).

Substituting unpaid labor for paid labor supports degrowth by reducing energy use, and by supporting well-being (Norgard, 2013; Sekulova et al., 2013). Goods and services generated through unpaid caring labor are necessary for well-being, from good physical health to social bonds and relationships (Waldinger & Schulz, 2023). Caring labor increases the well-being of those who receive it: we are nourished by those who provide us emotional support, meals, care when we are sick, and clean and safe homes. Research also shows that those providing the unpaid labor can also experience improved well-being. Caring for others can lead to our own "personal fulfilment, well-being, community building, and the rise of values beyond growth" (Nierling, 2012). These values, such as cooperation rather than competition and recognition rather than profit are supported by a large-scale substitution of unpaid provisioning work for paid work (Jackson, 2009a). As a result, substituting some household production for market production would be expected to decrease energy use and increase well-being, fitting the criteria for degrowth.

iv. Gender Distribution of Work

While it is clear to many degrowth scholars that a reduction in paid-work hours is a necessary component to degrowing the economy, less attention has been paid to the distribution of paid and unpaid working time. Feminist Economists have long studied the gendered distribution of paid and unpaid work. If policies to reduce paid work lead to an increase in unpaid work, there is a risk of increasing gender inequality because unpaid work is unequally allocated along gender lines, with women doing significantly more household production than men (Bianchi et al., 2000; Hochschild, 1989; Hochschild & Machung, 2012). Unpaid work, often in the form of caring labor, subsidizes market work by raising, educating, feeding, housing, and provisioning workers and consumers. Even as women have increased their time in the paid labor force, they still spend more time taking care of the home, family, and community than men. Furthermore, uncritically celebrating women entering the paid labor force as progress towards equality perpetuates the devaluation of caring labor by suggesting that the masculinized sphere of paid work is superior (Plumwood, 1993). The parallel feminization and devaluation of caring labor has entrenched gendered inequalities of income and power (D'Alisa & Cattaneo, 2013). Instead, we must dismantle the gendered hierarchy of productive and reproductive labor by conferring value upon both (Dengler & Strunk, 2018).

GDP has grown in the past 60 years, in large part attributable to women who have entered the labor market. This is in part because of the additional productivity of women as laborers and in part due to the increased substitution of activities historically done by women in the home such as child care, elder care, cooking, and housekeeping to the paid market as women no longer have the time (Norgard, 2013). These caring activities are not included in GDP when provided in the unpaid economy, but the same activities are increasingly marketized. As we've seen, returning these activities to the unpaid economy would reduce GDP, but also increase well-being and reduce environmental pressures. Yet this marketization of caring labor is connected with the advancement of gender equity in the work force, so simply going back in time is not the answer.

Simply reducing paid-work time may disproportionately benefit men (by increasing their leisure) and would not necessarily lessen the household production responsibilities still borne primarily by women. It would certainly not change the dualist paradigm that positions paid labor and masculinity in role of dominance over reproductive labor and femininity. A paid-work reduction policy must therefore be designed to increase gender-just distribution of paid work, unpaid work, and the associated well-being benefits through fair valuation.

Central to reducing paid work in a gender-egalitarian way is restructuring the gendered division of labor to encourage men to participate more equally in caring labor. Care work must therefore be visible and valued. The importance of its contribution to economic and societal well-being must be recognized. When the goal of the economy is growth, production is of the utmost value. If we reframe the goal of the economy to be the promotion of well-being, then reproduction, care, and provisioning would be explicitly valued. The social norms linking women with caregiving and men with production are difficult to change, but some policies, such as paid parental leave, have shown success in encouraging men to share in the responsibilities of reproduction (Albelda, 2021).

v. Paid Parental Leave for Degrowth

Paid parental leave policies vary widely across countries, and while they all confer some monetary value to care work, some go further to specifically redress the unequal gender distribution of childcare. While gender equality in the labor force has increased greatly in the past decades, the birth of a first child often marks greater gendered-specialization and reinforces the male-breadwinner and female-carer model (Sponton, 2022). Recognizing this, some countries have targeted this period with paid parental leave policies designed to promote gender equality.

Because gender-neutral parental leave is overwhelmingly taken by mothers (Moreno-Mínguez et al., 2023), some countries provide paternity leave, or "use-it-or-lose-it" parental leave that is reserved for fathers (or non-birth-giving partners). The theoretical mechanism is that this time allows fathers to gain experience, parenting skills, and a sense of responsibility for the child and household activities which leads to true coparenting instead of just helping the mother (Rehel, 2014). This helps to reduce the "motherhood penalty" by helping women get back to their paid jobs and incentivizing men to share home labor more equally (Landwerlin et al., 2019). In many societies, gender norms of caring are so strong that men still don't take the leave that is designated for them, and in some cases they may take leave but not actually use it for child care (Antecol et al., 2018).

Studies have confirmed that taking paternity leave is associated with men's greater involvement in childcare, such as feeding the baby and taking care of the baby at night (Haas & Hwang, 2008; Tanaka & Waldfogel, 2007). However, this may represent selection bias as men who choose to take paternity leave likely already exhibit a more gender-egalitarian ideology (Huerta et al., 2014). Recent studies have employed natural experiments such as Quebec's 2006 adoption of reserved paternity leave and the COVID-19 lockdown in France to identify a causal relationship between father-specific paternity leave and father's caregiving activities and responsibility for the child, although the changes also depended on the fathers' existing gender ideology (Mayer & Le Bourdais, 2019; Sponton, 2022; Wray, 2020). The Quebec policy, when compared to the less extensive policy in the rest of Canada, increased fathers' "responsibility time," measured by solo parenting, by 2.2 hours per week, and the authors conclude that the policy had broader cultural implications for dismantling gender norms of childcare and increasing family well-being in Quebec that were not seen in the rest of Canada (Wray, 2020). Policies that specifically incentivize men to take parental leave promote a more gender-just distribution of paid market labor and unpaid caring labor, and promote family well-being.

Paid parental leave can be a paid-work reduction policy because it reduces time spent in the paid labor market. However, it does not target jobs directly related to production or those with high environmental costs, and any associated reduction in production may be minimal if the employee is replaced. Furthermore, well-paid leave will not reduce income, so consumption would not be constrained by the income effect. I suggest the main mechanism by which paid parental leave would function as a work reduction policy for degrowth is in its explicit valuation of caring labor being provided in the home, rather than in the market. Parents, given more time, can engage in the low-energy yet time-intensive caring labor necessary for well-being which they would otherwise outsource to high-energy convenience substitutes.

Paid parental leave prioritizes family health and well-being over time spent in paid labor, and as a result, production and consumption of energy and material goods (Albelda, 2021). I argue that paid parental leave is a degrowth policy that has the capacity to support a gender-just redistribution of labor. Paid parental leave confers value onto reproductive labor by providing income to parents who take time off from paid work to care for children, which has traditionally been considered women's labor and performed without compensation. It is a policy lever for degrowth because it encourages the substitution of time spent working in the market for time spent working in the home, specifically to care for a child. Finally, some formulations of paid parental leave support gender-just distribution of labor by encouraging men to assume a greater role in care work.

Chapter 3: Parental Leave Policies

i. OECD Leave Policies and Trends

Parental leave policies vary widely across countries, mainly along the four dimensions of length, flexibility, payment, and entitlement (Koslowski et al., 2022). Length of leave is determined by how many weeks a parent is entitled to. Flexibility includes whether parents can choose to take the leave as full or part time, whether they can split the leave into several blocks, whether two parents can take leave at the same time, whether leave can be transferred between parents, etc. More flexibility allows families to tailor the leave to their own needs, but can complicate logistics and add administrative burden for the government and employers. Payment is described by the rate of wage replacement. Highly paid leave reduces the opportunity cost of taking leave, and there is a trend across countries towards a higher payment rate and raising ceilings on wage replacement. Evidence suggests well paid leave (greater than 80% replacement) is necessary to make leave-taking a feasible option across the income spectrum, promoting equality in leave-taking (Raub et al., 2018). Leave can be an individual or a family entitlement. For example, maternity leave is an individual entitlement that only the birth-giving mother can access, whereas parental leave tends to be a family entitlement, allowing either parent to access. This is further complicated by the flexibility in some policies for parents to transfer part or all of their individual leave to their partner, and some restrictions on parental leave that may require uptake by one or the other parent.

The complexity of these policies makes statistical comparisons challenging. For this model, some of the variation in length and payment is captured by measuring leave in weeks of full-rate equivalent pay, following the OECD. For example, two weeks of leave offered at 50% wage replacement would equal one full-rate equivalent week. To capture variation in leave entitlement, each country was assigned values for father's leave, mother's leave, and parental leave. Father's leave includes paternity leave, other leave reserved for the father, and weeks of leave that must be taken by the father to receive the "bonus" weeks offered in some countries. Mother's leave includes maternity leave and other leave reserved for the mother. Parental leave refers to any leave which could be taken by either parent. There is no overlap between father's leave, mother's leave, and parental leave in these definitions.

All OECD countries except the United States guarantee paid leave to new parents, and over the past 40 years, OECD countries have trended towards longer, better-paid leave (Khan, 2020). Under the Family Medical Leave Act, the US offers 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to employees of companies with more than 50 employees who have worked for their employer for more than 1 year (Koslowski et al., 2022). A few states have implemented paid leave, and many employers offer their own paid leave benefits to employees. This patchwork system of leave is unequal, as only those who can afford to take time off work can take the unpaid leave, and only those whose jobs or states offer paid leave can access it.

Other OECD countries conceptualize their leave policies in a variety of ways. Most designate maternity leave, and some even require new mothers to take leave. Many countries allow mothers to transfer some or all of their leave to the father, and some countries provide specific paternity leave just for fathers. Recent shifts in some countries have included same-sex partners and other co-parents in father's leave, referred to as partner's leave (Raub et al., 2018). Other countries don't have maternity leave, but rather provide gender-neutral parental leave that is available to either parent (Koslowski et al., 2022). Broadly, these countries divide into those with leave policies less than 15 months and those with leave available up to three or more years (Koslowski et al., 2022). Most countries do not require the business to be a certain size or the employee to have a specific tenure at the employer to be eligible. Most OECD countries fund their comprehensive leave policies through a mix of government funds and employer and employee contributions (Raub et al., 2018).

ii. Paid Leave Policies for Gender Equity

Traditionally, maternity leave entitlements were conceived to support the health and safety of the birth-giving mother, which is still reflected in the existence of obligatory maternity leave and generally longer leave for mothers. The motivation for leave is now shifting in many countries to supporting a gender-equitable balance between paid work and family responsibilities (Koslowski et al., 2022). Research concludes generally that providing six months or more of paid parental leave to both parents strongly supports women's labor force participation and decreases the gender wage gap (Raub et al., 2018).

Even when gender neutral parental leave is available, however, mothers often take more than their male partners. This is due to gendered norms of caregiving, and the pay gap experienced by most families where the man is the main breadwinner, so forgoing a mother's wages takes less of a financial toll than forgoing the father's (Bertrand et al., 2015). Thus, simply making parental leave available to fathers doesn't mean they will take it (Haeck et al., 2019). Much of the recent expansion in leave policy has focused on incentivizing fathers to take leave (Khan, 2020). Fathers taking leave causes them to be more involved and flexible parents, improves maternal mental health, and supports gender equality in the workforce and in the home (Persson & Rossin-Slater, 2019; Raub et al., 2018).

While most OECD countries have some father's leave, they employ different schemes. There may be paternity leave that is only available to the father. There may be "use-it-or-lose-it" weeks of parental leave that can only be taken by the father (Koslowski et al., 2022). Eleven OECD countries offer "bonus" weeks of leave that are only available to the family if the father takes some of the parental leave. Paternity leave must be generously paid to result in uptake (Koslowski et al., 2022).

iii. Paid Leave Policies for Well-being

Paid parental leave has a documented impact on child health, and is shown to decrease child mortality rates, increase regular check-ups, and increase the time a parent spends with their child (Khan, 2020). These health improvements were largely seen for children in families who could not afford to take leave when it was unpaid (Lichtman-Sadot & Bell, 2017).

Generous paid maternity leave is shown to reduce depression in mothers and support maternal health, and these well-being impacts may last into old age (Avendano et al., 2015). Gender equity in leave-taking matters, however, because mothers whose spouse did not take parental leave had higher frequency of depressive symptoms (Chatterji & Markowitz, 2008; Dagher et al., 2014; Persson & Rossin-Slater, 2019). Mothers who received paid leave also had lower depression symptoms after returning to work, which for many is an emotionally challenging transition (Mandal, 2018).

Paid leave supports well-being through various mechanisms. Most simply, taking time away from work allows mothers to recover physically from childbirth (Dagher et al., 2014). Beyond recuperation, caring for a newborn is both time- and energy-intensive, and paid leave reduces the stress on parents to provide this demanding labor because they do not need to simultaneously participate in paid labor (Avendano et al., 2015). Paid leave also allows for increased bonding and interaction between the child and the parents, thus strengthening family ties which support well-being (Wray, 2020).

Parents hold multiple identities, and many identify strongly with their career as well as their role as parent. Maintaining these various identities contributes to short- and long-term mental health outcomes (Avendano et al., 2015). Paid parental leave supports mothers in holding these dual identities because they are more likely to return to the labor force if offered a long leave. Of course, well-being is an individual experience, and it may be inaccurate to generalize. For example, for mothers who ranked higher on work role involvement than family role involvement, longer leaves were actually associated with *higher* depression scores, presumably because they spent more time away from a job that was meaningful to them (Klein et al. 1998).

While researchers have explored the impacts of taking leave on child outcomes, labor force participation, and maternal physical and mental health outcomes, there is little research on the broader well-being impacts of paid leave policies, and specifically which types of policies best support well-being for all citizens. To assess the degrowth potential of paid leave policies, this paper needs evidence that paid leave supports human well-being, in addition to the criteria which is established in the literature that paid leave (as paid-work reduction) decreases throughputs.

Chapter 4: Effect of Paid Parental Leave Policies on Life Satisfaction in OECD Countries

i. Empirical Model

A good paid work reduction policy reduces time in paid labor and increases well-being in a gender-equitable way. This study analyzes the relationship between parental leave policies and well-being in OECD countries. In particular, it tests the hypothesis that longer, better-paid parental leave correlates with higher life satisfaction in OECD countries. The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between parental leave and life satisfaction.

Using an ordinal logistic regression, this analysis estimates the relationship between an individual's life satisfaction and the leave policy of the country in which they live. Ordinal logistic regression models assume an ordinal dependent variable, in this case life satisfaction, which is composed of ten ordered categories (1 is dissatisfied, 10 is most satisfied). The model also assumes no multicollinearity. As can be seen in Table 1, multicollinearity is absent in these variables. Lastly, ordinal logistic regression assumes proportional odds, which is tested using the Brant test of parallel regression. This last assumption is violated, so a generalized ordinal logistic regression is also estimated and included in the appendix.

	Life satisfaction	*Father's paid leave*	*Mother's paid leave*	*Parental paid leave*	*Unempl-oyment*	*Relative income*	*Gender*	*State of health*	*Married*	*Education*	*Social expenditure*	*Age*
Life satisfaction	1	0.0002	-0.01575	-0.0310	-0.1202	0.2129	0.0046	0.3819	0.1371	0.1027	0.1040	0.0128
Father's paid leave	0.0002	1	0.02547	0.4872	-0.0350	-0.0110	-0.0090	-0.0149	0.0315	0.0785	0.1983	0.0172
Mother's paid leave	-0.0157	0.0254	1	0.2572	0.0050	-0.0638	0.0342	-0.0582	-0.0311	-0.2032	-0.1474	0.0663
Parental paid leave	-0.0310	0.4872	0.257211	1	-0.0514	-0.0165	0.0262	-0.1004	-0.0230	0.0466	0.1122	0.0775
Unemployment	-0.1202	-0.0350	0.005032	-0.0514	1	-0.1656	-0.0185	-0.0434	-0.0880	-0.0740	-0.0220	-0.0971
Relative income	0.2129	-0.0110	-0.06382	-0.0165	-0.1656	1	-0.0901	0.2406	0.2847	0.3068	0.0513	-0.1046
Gender	0.0046	-0.0090	0.034257	0.0262	-0.0185	-0.0901	1	-0.0269	-0.0607	-0.0220	-0.0109	-0.0055
State of health	0.3819	-0.0149	-0.05824	-0.1004	-0.0434	0.2406	-0.0269	1	0.0536	0.1707	0.0590	-0.2576
Married	0.1371	0.0315	-0.0311	-0.0230	-0.0880	0.2847	-0.0607	0.0536	1	0.0499	-0.0361	0.1962
Education	0.1027	0.0785	-0.20323	0.0466	-0.0740	0.3068	-0.0220	0.1707	0.0499	1	0.1058	-0.1204
Social expenditure	0.1040	0.1983	-0.14746	0.1122	-0.0220	0.0513	-0.0109	0.0590	-0.0361	0.1058	1	0.1145
Age	0.0128	0.0172	0.066358	0.0775	-0.0971	-0.1046	-0.0055	-0.2576	0.1962	-0.1204	0.1145	1

Table 1. Correlation matrix

Three versions of paid leave are included as independent variables: mother's, father's, and parental leave, each measured as the length of the leave in work-weeks multiplied by the wage replacement rate, referred to as full-rate equivalent weeks. The segregation of father's leave, mother's leave, and parental leave tests whether the gender of the parent entitled to the leave changes the relationship with life satisfaction.

Additional control variables that are theorized to influence subjective well-being are included in the empirical model. These are unemployment, gender, age, income, state of health, education level, marriage status, and country's social expenditure. I estimate heteroskedastic robust standard errors because I do not assume that the residuals have constant variance.

The estimated ordinal logistic model is:

$$\begin{aligned} Life\ satisfaction_i &= f(\alpha + \beta_1 wks\ fathers\ paid\ leave + \ \beta_2 wks\ mothers\ paid\ leave \\ &+ \beta_3 wks\ parental\ paid\ leave + \beta_4 unemployment + \ \beta_5 relative\ income \\ &+ \ \beta_6 female + \ \beta_7 subjective\ health + \ \beta_8 married + \ \beta_8 education + \beta_9 age \\ &+ \ \beta_{10} social\ expenditure + f_{year} + \mu) \end{aligned}$$

Where:

$$f(X\beta) = \Pr(y = i) = \Pr\left(k_{i-1} < x_j\beta + u \ \leq k_i\right) = \frac{1}{1+\exp\left(-k_i+x_j\beta\right)} - \frac{1}{1+\exp\left(-k_{i-1}+x_j\beta\right)}$$

Given:

i = life satisfaction category 1-10, k = category, and j = observation

The ordinal logistic model reports the predicted probabilities of the various outcomes (in this case life satisfaction levels 1-10). The β coefficients therefore represent the log odds of being in a higher level of life satisfaction given a one-unit increase in x, holding constant the remainder of the independent variables. For mother's, father's, and parental paid leave, a one-unit increase is measured as the natural log of an additional week of full-rate equivalent paid leave in each category. These variables are expressed as logs because of an assumed diminishing marginal effect of leave length on well-being. For example, increasing paid leave from zero to six weeks may have a large impact on well-being, but increasing from 20 to 26 weeks is expected to have a smaller impact. For every 1 unit increase in subjective health, education, and social expenditure, β represents the log odds of being in a higher category of life satisfaction. β

on female, married, and unemployment represents the log odds of being in a higher category of life satisfaction given the individual is female, married, or unemployed, respectively.

The expected signs for the coefficients on all three types of leave are positive, which would indicate that longer, better-paid leave correlates with greater life satisfaction. I expect father's leave to have the greatest impact on life satisfaction because of its support for gender equity and father's involvement in caregiving. The expected sign for unemployment is negative, because being unemployed harms social and psychological well-being (Case & Deaton, 2021). Log of relative income is expected to correlate positively with well-being, as access to material wealth increases life satisfaction, subject to the law of diminishing returns (McBride, 2001). Gender and age have inconsistent effects on life satisfaction in the literature, but are expected to be slightly positive (Batz & Tay, 2018; Biermann et al., 2022). Marriage is expected to have a positive effect on life satisfaction (Cao et al., 2015). Social expenditure and education are both expected to correlate positively with life satisfaction, as they provide opportunities for upward mobility and protect against poverty (Wang & Sohail, 2022; Yang et al., 2022).

Father's leave is expected to affect men's life satisfaction more than women's, and mother's leave is expected to affect women's life satisfaction more than men's. All leave variables are expected to increase the life satisfaction of those with children and those who value leisure more than those without children and those who value work (Klein et al., 1998). The magnitude of the effect of all leave variables is expected to be small, reflecting that a country's parental leave policy likely plays a small role in someone's overall life satisfaction.

ii. Dependent variable: Measuring well-being

The data used in this analysis are drawn mainly from the World Values Survey (WVS) and the European Values Study (EVS). To measure well-being, I use self-reported life satisfaction as reported by the WVS and EVS. These surveys measure life satisfaction by asking participants to respond to the prompt "all things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?" using a 1-10 scale where 1 is completely dissatisfied and 10 is completely satisfied. Life satisfaction is an evaluative measure of well-being: rather than focusing on happiness or emotions, evaluative measures describe one's overall view of their life, how satisfied and fulfilled they are in general.

These subjective measures are important because they center the individual's experience of their own life, which may be hidden by purely objective measures of the quality of life they have access to. It should be noted, however, that subjective well-being measures are complex and debated. There are concerns that well-being is culturally defined, and thus hard to compare across cultures (VanderWeele et al., 2021). Furthermore, well-being surveys may emphasize the perspective of the surveyor, for example framing well-being within western norms such as freedom and choice, which may have less impact on well-being in other cultures (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993). Life satisfaction questions such as the one used in this study are broadly supported as general measures of well-being, as they can be compared and interpreted across a variety of cultural backgrounds. They also tend to produce similar results to more complex surveys, and are easy to include in existing large-scale surveys (Calvo et al., 2012; VanderWeele et al., 2021).

iii. Independent variable: Measuring parental leave

Measuring parental leave is complex because each country has a unique policy design that does not lend itself to statistical comparisons. This study attempts to retain some of the specifics of these policies, while simplifying them enough to analyze patterns among them. Following the OECD parental leave systems report, I transform policy variables into full-rate equivalent weeks to capture the variation in both leave length and payment of leave, both of which may be important determiners of the impact of the policy on well-being. Furthermore, the policies are identified by the parent(s) the leave is available to. Some countries offer leave exclusively for the mother, others offer a gender-neutral parental leave, which can be used by parents of any gender, and some offer fathers leave, which is restricted to use only by the father or non-birth-giving parent. This may be in the form of paternity leave, or use-it-or-lose-it parental leave reserved for the father.

Some countries have changed their policies throughout the years of the WVS/EVS survey wave. Therefore, I use the parental leave policy that was current during the year the survey was conducted in that country. For example, Spain passed its current leave policy in 2021, making Spain's one of the most progressive policies in the world by offering 16 weeks of fully paid paternity leave and 16 of maternity leave. However, Spain was surveyed by the EVS in 2017, so the policy used in this analysis is the 2-week paternity leave that was available in 2017.

iv. Survey and data

The WVS and EVS conduct representative sample surveys consisting of hour-long, face to face interviews with adult respondents from countries around the world regarding their values, opinions, and attitudes. They conduct interviews within a 5-7 year span, called a "wave". These organizations collaborate on survey design, so the most recent wave (2017-2022) can be analyzed jointly, as done in this project. While the pandemic interrupted this wave, most interviews had been completed prior to 2020. They conduct at least 1000 interviews for small countries, and 1200 interviews for countries with a population greater than 2 million. Life satisfaction and socio-demographic data come from both the WVS and EVS (EVS, 2022; Haerpfer et al., 2022).

This analysis also uses data from the OECD for parental leave policies and social expenditure (OECD, 2016, 2018, 2021, 2023). The OECD collects data on the parental and family leave policies in member countries dating back to 1970. Because this parental leave dataset is only available for OECD countries, the sample is restricted to 38 of the wealthiest economies in the world. This sample is consistent with the design of this study, however, because degrowth is designed to be undertaken primarily by the wealthy economies which can assimilate a decrease in throughputs without suffering a corresponding decrease in well-being. The OECD also reports data on countries' social expenditures, measured in percent of GDP, which is used as a control variable in this analysis.

The analysis is limited somewhat because several OECD countries are not represented in the WVS/EVS data: Belgium, Costa Rica, Ireland, Israel, and Luxembourg are excluded from the analysis. For the remaining countries, the survey designs use full probability sampling or stratified sampling, and minimize non-response by making repeated attempts to reach selected participants. While this design attempts to interview a random sample that is representative of the population, there may be some unavoidable sampling bias in the form of non-response bias. Surveys cover residents between the ages of 18 and 85, and are translated into all languages that 15% or more of the country speaks as a primary language (EVS, 2022; Haerpfer et al., 2022). Another limitation of the data is the variation in life satisfaction that may be present due to the interviews being conducted over the time span of 5-7 years. Life satisfaction could vary on this time scale due to impactful events such as public health, economic, or environmental crises. I include dummy variables for the year of the survey to capture the impact of variables which fluctuate depending on the year.

In coding the data, observations were dropped for countries not in the OECD, and for individuals with missing responses to the questions regarding the control variables. Due to this intervention, the resulting sample size for some countries is less than 1,000 observations. Portugal is excluded from the analysis because data on income was not reported, leading to all individuals from Portugal being dropped from the sample. I created dummy variables for unemployment status, marital status, sex, and year, and created log variables by taking the natural log of father's leave, mother's leave, parental leave, relative income, and age. These variables do not have a linear relationship with life satisfaction; thus, the logged variables explain the variation better. Any responses that resulted in the undefined ln(0), such as the USA which offers zero weeks of paid parental leave, were recoded as 0.

For the successive regressions, the sample was further restricted to women, men, those with children, those without children, those who value leisure, and those who value work. In the regressions regarding those who have or do not have children, Great Britain was excluded from the analysis because those data were not reported.

Table 2 reports summary statistics for the sample used in this study. Father's leave is much shorter than mothers leave on average, and parental leave is the longest. There is significant variation between countries' parental leave policies. These range from the USA, which has no paid parental leave, to the Slovak Republic which has a statutory entitlement of 89 total full-rate equivalent weeks.

Table 2: Summary Statistics

Variable name	**Mean**	**Median**	**SD**	**Units**	**Notes**
Life Satisfaction	7.44	8	1.89	scale 1-10	
Father's paid leave (log)	3.48	1.01	5.78	FRE weeks	Natural log variable
Mother's paid leave (log)	12.93	13.96	5.35	FRE weeks	Natural log variable
Parental paid leave (log)	15.5	15.68	15.92	FRE weeks	Natural log variable
Unemployment	0.046	0	0.21	dummy	
Relative income (log)	5.22	5	2.52	scale 1-10	Natural log variable
Gender	0.53	1	0.5	dummy	1 = female

State of health	3.82	4	0.88	scale 1-5	5 = most healthy
Married	0.57	1	0.49	dummy	1 = married
Education	2.17	2	0.75	level 1-3	1 = less then HS
Age (log)	49.62	50	17.38	age in years	Natural log variable
Social expenditure	22.18	22.884	5.69	percent of GDP	

Notes: N = 56,923. Lowest N country = New Zealand with 849 observations; highest N country = Canada with 3997 observations.

v. Results

Table 3 summarizes results of the ordinal logistic regression analysis, reporting the coefficients. Column 1 presents results for all respondents, while columns 2-5 present results for women, men, those with children, and those without children. Column 6 reports results for those who value leisure (3 or 4 on scale of 1 - 4), and Column 7 reports results for those who value work (3 or 4 on scale of 1- 4).

Table 3. Ordinal logistic regression results: Coefficients

VARIABLES	(1) All Life Satisfaction	(2) Women Life Satisfaction	(3) Men Life Satisfaction	(4) Has children Life Satisfaction	(5) No children Life Satisfaction	(6) Leisure Life Satisfaction	(7) Work Life Satisfaction
Weeks father's paid leave ln(fre)	-0.019**	-0.019*	-0.018	-0.008	-0.031*	-0.028***	-0.008
	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.010)	(0.017)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Weeks mother's paid leave ln(fre)	0.072***	0.053***	0.093***	0.014	0.197***	0.077***	0.071***
	(0.014)	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.017)	(0.024)	(0.014)	(0.015)
Weeks parental paid leave ln(fre)	-0.006	-0.003	-0.009	-0.010	0.014	0.006	-0.003
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Unemployment	-0.615***	-0.566***	-0.653***	-0.463***	-0.783***	-0.647***	-0.618***
	(0.042)	(0.059)	(0.061)	(0.059)	(0.064)	(0.045)	(0.046)
Income decile ln(income)	0.276***	0.253***	0.311***	0.282***	0.269***	0.267***	0.279***
	(0.016)	(0.021)	(0.024)	(0.020)	(0.026)	(0.016)	(0.017)
Female	0.113***			0.103***	0.139***	0.125***	0.130***
	(0.015)			(0.018)	(0.028)	(0.016)	(0.016)
State of health (subjective)	0.859***	0.851***	0.868***	0.825***	0.935***	0.863***	0.840***
	(0.011)	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.013)	(0.021)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Married	0.304***	0.245***	0.377***	0.285***	0.373***	0.299***	0.315***
	(0.017)	(0.023)	(0.025)	(0.022)	(0.035)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Education level	0.031***	0.035**	0.022	0.043***	0.054**	0.021*	0.032**
	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.014)	(0.022)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Social expenditure	0.021***	0.023***	0.020***	0.019***	0.023***	0.023***	0.015***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)

Age ln(year)	0.538***	0.503***	0.556***	0.689***	0.276***	0.582***	0.456***
	(0.021)	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.038)	(0.022)	(0.024)
Observations	56,923	30,276	26,647	38,887	15,846	51,827	48,226

Notes: Not reporting dummies for survey year. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Full rate equivalent (fre) for leave variables

The coefficients reported in table 3 provide insight into the positive or negative direction of the relationship between the independent variables and life satisfaction, as well as the statistical significance of the relationship.

Unexpectedly, father's leave has a slight negative correlation with life satisfaction, statistically significant to the 5% level for the entire sample, and significant to 1% level for leisure. The slight negative effect of father's leave was significant only to the 10% level for women and no children, and insignificant for the other sample populations. Mothers leave, as expected, had a positive relationship with all sample populations, which was significant to the 1% level for all, except insignificant for the population of those with children. Parental leave was very slightly negative and insignificant; thus this model found no relationship between gender-neutral parental leave and well-being.

The effects of the control variables are mostly as expected. Employment has a strong, significant negative impact on life satisfaction, while health has a very strong significant positive impact on life satisfaction. Income, marriage, education, and age also have strong significant positive impacts, while education level, social expenditure, and being female have smaller significant positive impacts.

Because the coefficients in an ordinal logistic regression are interpreted as the log odds of being in a higher life satisfaction category, the numbers themselves do not provide a coherent interpretation. Instead, we use the proportional odds ratio (found by exponentiating the coefficients e^{β}) reported in table 4 for comprehensible numerical comparisons.

The reported odds ratios are interpreted thus: for a one unit increase in the independent variable, the odds of an individual being in a category greater than the current category (for example going from a life satisfaction score of 6 to a score of 7) is the odds ratio, holding all other variables in the model constant. Odds are the ratio of the probability of success (increasing life satisfaction) to the probability of failure (decreasing or maintaining life satisfaction). Thus, an odds ratio greater than one represents a variable that is more likely than not to increase life satisfaction, whereas an odds ratio less than one represents a variable that is more likely that not to decrease or maintain life satisfaction.

Table 4. Ordinal logistic regression results: Proportional odds ratio

VARIABLES	(1) All Life Satisfaction	(2) Women Life Satisfaction	(3) Men Life Satisfaction	(4) Has children Life Satisfaction	(5) No children Life Satisfaction	(6) Leisure Life Satisfaction	(7) Work Life Satisfaction
Weeks father's paid leave ln(fre)	0.981**	0.981*	0.982	0.992	0.970*	0.973***	0.992
	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.010)	(0.016)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Weeks mother's paid leave ln(fre)	1.075***	1.054***	1.097***	1.014	1.218***	1.080***	1.074***
	(0.015)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.017)	(0.029)	(0.015)	(0.016)
Weeks parental paid leave ln(fre)	0.994	0.997	0.991	0.990	1.015	1.006	0.997
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.012)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Unemployment	0.540***	0.568***	0.520***	0.629***	0.457***	0.523***	0.539***
	(0.023)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.037)	(0.029)	(0.024)	(0.025)
Income decile ln(income)	1.318***	1.288***	1.365***	1.326***	1.309***	1.306***	1.321***
	(0.021)	(0.027)	(0.032)	(0.027)	(0.034)	(0.021)	(0.023)
Female	1.120***			1.108***	1.149***	1.133***	1.139***
	(0.017)			(0.020)	(0.032)	(0.018)	(0.018)
State of health (subjective)	2.361***	2.343***	2.382***	2.281***	2.547***	2.369***	2.316***
	(0.025)	(0.034)	(0.038)	(0.029)	(0.053)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Married	1.355***	1.278***	1.457***	1.330***	1.452***	1.348***	1.371***
	(0.023)	(0.029)	(0.037)	(0.030)	(0.050)	(0.024)	(0.025)
Education level	1.032***	1.036**	1.022	1.044***	1.055**	1.022*	1.032**
	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.014)	(0.023)	(0.012)	(0.013)
Social expenditure	1.022***	1.023***	1.020***	1.019***	1.024***	1.023***	1.016***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Age ln(year)	1.712***	1.654***	1.744***	1.991***	1.318***	1.790***	1.578***
	(0.037)	(0.048)	(0.057)	(0.067)	(0.050)	(0.040)	(0.038)
Observations	56,923	30,276	26,647	38,887	15,846	51,827	48,226

Note: Not reporting dummies for survey year. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, *p<0.1

An odds ratio of one suggests no effect, thus the magnitude of a given effect is seen in its distance from one (either greater than or less than one). All the leave variables have minimal economic significance in terms of the magnitude of their effect on life satisfaction. Especially when considering that the reported magnitude is for the *log* of paid leave, the magnitude of paid leave itself would be even smaller. This is as expected because leave policy is likely a very small part of what someone considers when making an overall evaluation of their well-being. Variables like health (2.361) and unemployment (0.540) play a much larger role.

For a one unit increase in ln(weeks of father's paid leave) the odds of increasing in life satisfaction level is 0.981, given that all of the other variables in the model are held constant. As discussed, this means that there is more likelihood of decreasing life satisfaction or staying the same, contrary to expectation. For a one unit increase in ln(weeks of mother's paid leave), the odds of increasing in life satisfaction level is 1.075 for the entire sample.

All but one of the sub-samples have highly significant results for mother's leave, so we can compare the effect across different populations. As expected, those who value leisure experience higher odds (1.080) of increasing life satisfaction than those who value work (1.074). Unexpectedly, the highest odds of improving life satisfaction given longer mother's leave is for those who don't have children (1.218). Some of this variation could be related to Great Britain being excluded from this sample due to not reporting data on whether or not the individual has children.

Also of note, men experienced higher odds (1.097) of increasing in life satisfaction level than women (1.054) given increased length of mother's leave. This could reflect that women take on more caring labor in the home when they take leave from work, lessening the father's care work burden. This could also represent a positive impact experienced by men when parental leave uptake upholds gender norms regarding care work and paid work.

Overall, these results suggest that longer and better paid leave policies for mothers have a very small positive correlation with life satisfaction, particularly for men and people who value leisure time. Paid leave policies for fathers, however, may have a small negative impact on life satisfaction, and gender-neutral parental leave has no statistically significant impact on life satisfaction in this model.

Theory suggests that paid leave would increase well-being. The results on mother's leave support the theory, but the results on father's and parental leave do not. Klein et al. (1998) suggest that longer paid leave can decrease well-being for mothers who strongly identify with their role as a worker. Perhaps these results then suggest that men in general identify more strongly with their role as a worker than as a parent, which could explain the negative effect of paternity leave on life satisfaction. Theory suggests, however, that father's leave would increase well-being for mothers by lessening the physical and emotional burden of being the main caregiver for newborn children (Persson & Rossin-Slater, 2019), which is not seen in these results. The positive effect of mother's leave is also stronger for men than women, which could suggest that policies which support the gendered norms that position women as the primary child-care provider could increase men's life satisfaction more than women's.

vi. Limitations

Taken together, the internal validity of these results is not entirely convincing. One large source of unexplained variation in this model is the country-level variation in life satisfaction. Hard-to-measure country-level variables such as social programs, culture, and history impact life satisfaction. Ideally, including fixed effects for the participant's country would address many of these omitted variables, however because leave policies also vary at the country-level, these fixed effects would introduce multicollinearity and could not be included. Furthermore, paid leave could influence life satisfaction indirectly, such as through supporting health. However since health is controlled for in the model, these indirect impacts are not included.

The conceptualization of types of paid leave policies may be inadequate. The specifics of the policy could matter more for well-being than just the number of full-rate equivalent weeks. Additionally, the dependent variable could be too broad: a person's general perspective of their satisfaction with life may not take into account specific government policies even if they benefit from them. Furthermore, the paid leave a person takes may not correspond with how much is available via national policy. For example, although the U.S. provides no paid parental leave, many workers receive paid leave from their employer. A similar situation is seen in Canada, where the province of Quebec offers much more progressive paid leave than the rest of the country. This analysis uses only the national-level policy, which would cause the model to underestimate the relationship of paid leave on life satisfaction for these workers. Furthermore, some parents choose not to use all or any of the leave that is available to them, which would then overestimate the relationship of paid leave on life satisfaction for these individuals. This is especially true for fathers, who are less likely to take leave that is provided via national policy Thus, this analysis captures only the intent-to-treat effect, rather than the true treatment effect.

This country-level treatment also severely restricts the sample size of this study. While the individual-level data on life satisfaction and the demographic variables have a large sample size of 56,923, the independent variables of interest, paid leave policy, vary instead at the country level, and there are only 32 countries included in this model. This effectively constrains the sample size to 32 for these variables. A survey which asked individuals how much parental leave they *actually* took could more effectively analyze the impact of parental leave on life satisfaction.

Another limitation is that this analysis models the independent variables and dependent variable simultaneously, whereas realistically most impacts of policies lag the introduction of the policy. It could be that it takes a few years for the effects of parental leave policies to affect life satisfaction. This is particularly true for policies which encourage men to take leave, because the intended effect is to change the distribution of care work in the family for years after the time of the leave. This is challenging to measure for parental leave policies because they are adjusted and expanded frequently, so very few countries have a clear “before and after” to analyze the pure effects of a policy change.

Lastly, the proportional odds assumption necessary to use the ordinal logistic regression does not hold for this data, so the model itself may not be reliable. This model assumes an equal relationship between each pair of outcome levels (life satisfaction levels 1-10), thus the coefficient reported is the same for any given level of life satisfaction. When the proportional odds assumption is not met, a generalized ordinal logistic regression can be run instead, which estimates a different odds ratio for each outcome level. Because there are 10 categories, the results are too large to analyze appropriately, so the results from the generalized model are included only in the appendix.

Overall, the results from this analysis show an inconsequential effect in terms of economic significance, and should be considered with caution in the context of the numerous limitations described. Most of the limitations come down to the fact that this analysis attempts to capture the impact of a society-level policy on individual well-being, not an individual’s actions on their own well-being. This question may be too broad and complex for the econometric tools used and the data available.

Conclusions

These results show very little direct connection between a country's parental leave policy and the overall life satisfaction of its citizens. But the econometric analysis doesn't tell the whole story. Paid parental leave should still be considered in the context of the research that reports benefits of paid work reduction on the environment and workers' well-being. Research also shows that paid parental leave policies confer value and visibility to the realm of care work, and can lead to a more equal distribution of caring responsibilities between men and women. Within this framework, we see the degrowth and gender-justice potential of paid parental leave, even though this econometric analysis didn't provide evidence to support a direct connection between a country's paid leave policy and an individual's overall well-being.

The results of the empirical analysis were inconclusive regarding this final criterion. While paid mother's leave was correlated with a slight increase in life satisfaction across all sample populations, father's and parental leave were not. Due to limitations in the model assumptions, the variable specifications, and un-controlled variation, I suggest that this is not the best method to study the relationship between paid leave and life satisfaction. In order to capture the societal-scale impact of paid leave policies, a better option could be a difference-in-differences model which compares life satisfaction in a country before and after a paid leave policy goes into effect with a similar country which does not adopt paid leave. Eleven US states offer paid parental leave, so a difference-in-differences study could compare the introduction of paid leave in one of these states in comparison to the rest of the country without paid leave. Synthesis of many such studies could suggest which formulations of leave best support well-being.

Furthermore, qualitative research such as case studies and interviews may provide more robust insight into the value of paid parental leave policies in the lives of both parents and people without children. Qualitative research can synthesize information which more accurately examines the personal impact of parental leave policies, how they have that impact, and which components of policies are most important to the well-being of those impacted by them. Once this information is established, econometric studies can still play a role in examining data to see if findings are consistent with the qualitative research.

While many previous studies explore the relationship between paid parental leave and gender equity, few explore the well-being impacts of paid leave. Those that do focus mainly on post-partum mothers, leaving unanswered questions regarding the society-wide well-being impact of paid parental leave policies, including fathers and other citizens. This research project looks at broader scale well-being, but leaves the question of which parental leave policies best support well-being unanswered.

The significance of this project lies mainly in its commitment to exploring a degrowth policy from feminist ecological economic perspectives. The literature highlights the importance of scholarship at this intersection to advocate a degrowth which expands well-being and gender-just distribution. Without integrating feminist perspectives of care work, distribution, and justice, the degrowth economic reimagining may fail to reject the linked patriarchal and capitalist structures of domination which threaten our social systems and ecosystems, and instead reproduce these harmful relationships of power and exploitation.

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Appendix

Table A.1 Ordinary Least Squares Regression:

VARIABLES	(1) All Life Satisfaction	(2) Women Life Satisfaction	(3) Men Life Satisfaction	(4) Has children Life Satisfaction	(5) No children Life Satisfaction	(6) Leisure Life Satisfaction	(7) Work Life Satisfaction
Weeks father's paid leave ln(full rate equivalent)	0.013*	0.015	0.013	0.029***	-0.009	0.004	0.020**
	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.016)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Weeks mother's paid leave ln(fre)	0.060***	0.052***	0.069***	0.004	0.174***	0.064***	0.055***
	(0.013)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.016)	(0.023)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Weeks parental paid leave ln(fre)	-0.014**	-0.012	-0.015*	-0.019***	0.008	-0.003	-0.008
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.011)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Unemployment	-0.630***	-0.574***	-0.672***	-0.496***	-0.751***	-0.646***	-0.626***
	(0.043)	(0.059)	(0.062)	(0.059)	(0.063)	(0.045)	(0.046)
Income decile ln(income)	0.303***	0.280***	0.335***	0.315***	0.285***	0.286***	0.299***
	(0.015)	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.019)	(0.025)	(0.015)	(0.016)
Female	0.104***			0.095***	0.130***	0.116***	0.121***
	(0.014)			(0.018)	(0.026)	(0.015)	(0.015)
State of health (subjective)	0.783***	0.783***	0.783***	0.757***	0.835***	0.769***	0.758***
	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.012)	(0.019)	(0.010)	(0.011)
Married	0.273***	0.218***	0.340***	0.272***	0.311***	0.261***	0.281***
	(0.016)	(0.022)	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.032)	(0.016)	(0.017)
Education level	0.047***	0.056***	0.032**	0.059***	0.060***	0.037***	0.050***
	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.013)	(0.020)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Social expenditure	0.015***	0.017***	0.014***	0.013***	0.018***	0.016***	0.010***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Age ln(year)	0.462***	0.434***	0.473***	0.609***	0.239***	0.492***	0.386***
	(0.020)	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.032)	(0.035)	(0.021)	(0.022)
Constant	1.604***	1.838***	1.532***	1.279***	1.823***	1.587***	2.102***
	(0.106)	(0.144)	(0.157)	(0.159)	(0.182)	(0.110)	(0.116)
Observations	56,923	30,276	26,647	38,887	15,846	51,827	48,226
R-squared	0.197	0.194	0.201	0.185	0.223	0.192	0.183

Note: Not reporting dummies for survey year. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A.1 reports the coefficients for the following ordinary least squares (OLS) regression:

$$
\begin{aligned}
&Life\ satisfaction_i \\
&\qquad = \alpha + \beta_1 wks\ fathers\ paid\ leave + \ \beta_2 wks\ mothers\ paid\ leave + \beta_3 wks\ parental\ paid\ leave \\
&\qquad + \beta_4 unemployment + \ \beta_5 relative\ income + \ \beta_6 female + \ \beta_7 subjective\ health + \ \beta_8 married + \ \beta_8 education \\
&\qquad + \beta_9 age + \ \beta_{10} social\ expenditure + f_{year} + \mu
\end{aligned}
$$

OLS assumes a continuous dependent variable, for example height which increases smoothly by units of inches. The dependent variable in this paper is life satisfaction, which is an ordinal categorical variable, meaning it increases in levels, however the distance between the levels may not be constant. This means that the difference between a 5 and a 6 might be different than the difference between a 9 and a 10, for example. Despite this violated assumption, some researchers persist with using OLS to estimate a 10- or 11- point life satisfaction scale.

The interpretation of these coefficients is more straight-forward than the ordinal logistic regression reported in the main body of this paper. The impact of a one unit change in the level variables (unemployment, female, health, married, education, social expenditure) results in an increase in life satisfaction by the amount of the reported coefficient. For the logged variables (father's leave, mother's leave, parental leave, income, and age), the impact of a 10% increase in the dependent variable is an increase of the coefficient multiplied by ln(1.10).

The coefficients on father's leave are mostly not statistically significant, the coefficients on mother's leave are mostly significant to the 1% level, and the coefficients on parental leave are significant to the 5% level for the entire sample, and vary for the subsamples. The results show a 10% increase in paternity leave is associated with a 0.0011 increase in life satisfaction, a 10% increase in maternity leave is associated with a 0.0059 increase in life satisfaction, and a 10% increase in parental leave is associated with a 0.0012 decrease in life satisfaction.

This differs in slight ways from the ordinal logistic coefficients reported in table 2. Father's leave was slightly negative and significant in the ordinal logistic regression, but positive and insignificant in the OLS. Parental leave was very slightly negative and insignificant in the ordinal logistic regression, and also negative but significant in the OLS. The signs of mother's leave and all the control variables are as expected and match the signs from the ordinal logistic regression.

Table A.2 reports a generalized ordinal logistic regression. The ordinal logistic regression assumes that the effect of the independent variable will be the same for the increase in each level of life satisfaction. The Brant test shows us it is highly likely that this data does not meet that assumption, so the generalized ordinal logistic regression calculates a different effect for each level of life satisfaction levels. 10 different levels is a lot to calculate and leads to an unwieldy amount of results and interpretation, so I turned the 10 levels into 3 levels: low life satisfaction (1-5), medium life satisfaction (6-8) and high life satisfaction (9-10). Two regressions are shown for each sub-sample, the first is the odds ratio of moving from low to medium, the second is the odds ratio of moving from medium to high given the associated independent variable.

Table A.2: Generalized Ordinal Logistic Regression

	(1) All	(2) All	(3) Women	(4) Women	(5) Men	(6) Men	(7) Has kids	(8) Has kids	(9) No kids	(10) No kids	(11) Leisure	(12) Leisure	(13) Work	(14) Work
VARIABLES	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Weeks father's paid leave ln(full rate equivalent)	1.103***	0.933***	1.113***	0.923***	1.096***	0.944***	1.172***	0.940***	1.021	0.932***	1.102***	0.927***	1.098***	0.948***
	(0.024)	(0.011)	(0.033)	(0.014)	(0.034)	(0.016)	(0.031)	(0.013)	(0.041)	(0.022)	(0.026)	(0.011)	(0.026)	(0.012)
Weeks mother's paid leave ln(fre)	1.069**	1.070***	1.121***	1.025	1.016	1.119***	0.979	1.018	1.217***	1.216***	1.080**	1.071***	1.040	1.073***
	(0.032)	(0.019)	(0.047)	(0.025)	(0.045)	(0.028)	(0.039)	(0.021)	(0.059)	(0.041)	(0.036)	(0.020)	(0.035)	(0.020)
Weeks parental paid leave ln(fre)	1.003	1.011	1.001	1.014	1.007	1.009	1.002	1.010	1.049*	1.017	1.012	1.023***	1.028*	1.009
	(0.014)	(0.008)	(0.019)	(0.011)	(0.020)	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.010)	(0.027)	(0.016)	(0.015)	(0.009)	(0.016)	(0.009)
Unemployment	0.493***	0.694***	0.490***	0.703***	0.498***	0.693***	0.504***	0.768***	0.485***	0.600***	0.476***	0.688***	0.484***	0.688***
	(0.028)	(0.037)	(0.041)	(0.052)	(0.040)	(0.055)	(0.040)	(0.053)	(0.044)	(0.054)	(0.030)	(0.039)	(0.031)	(0.039)
Income decile ln(income)	1.689***	1.131***	1.684***	1.111***	1.711***	1.163***	1.694***	1.139***	1.689***	1.109***	1.668***	1.133***	1.708***	1.132***
	(0.047)	(0.021)	(0.064)	(0.027)	(0.070)	(0.033)	(0.059)	(0.026)	(0.082)	(0.037)	(0.050)	(0.022)	(0.052)	(0.023)
Female	1.163***	1.118***					1.141***	1.111***	1.270***	1.113***	1.198***	1.130***	1.198***	1.126***
	(0.039)	(0.022)					(0.049)	(0.026)	(0.079)	(0.043)	(0.044)	(0.023)	(0.045)	(0.024)
State of health (subjective)	2.532***	2.288***	2.542***	2.256***	2.527***	2.329***	2.480***	2.224***	2.661***	2.450***	2.547***	2.289***	2.486***	2.267***
	(0.049)	(0.031)	(0.067)	(0.042)	(0.072)	(0.048)	(0.060)	(0.036)	(0.094)	(0.070)	(0.054)	(0.033)	(0.054)	(0.034)
Married	1.340***	1.350***	1.178***	1.311***	1.552***	1.400***	1.403***	1.306***	1.331***	1.492***	1.329***	1.347***	1.321***	1.353***
	(0.049)	(0.029)	(0.060)	(0.038)	(0.084)	(0.046)	(0.065)	(0.037)	(0.107)	(0.069)	(0.053)	(0.030)	(0.054)	(0.032)
Education level	1.171***	0.976*	1.195***	0.977	1.131***	0.973	1.199***	1.002	1.105**	0.973	1.160***	0.969**	1.193***	0.980
	(0.029)	(0.014)	(0.040)	(0.019)	(0.041)	(0.021)	(0.037)	(0.017)	(0.050)	(0.028)	(0.031)	(0.015)	(0.033)	(0.015)
Social expenditure	1.025***	1.011***	1.032***	1.014***	1.018***	1.008***	1.021***	1.010***	1.023***	1.009**	1.025***	1.012***	1.020***	1.006***
	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.002)
Age ln(year)	1.637***	1.744***	1.549***	1.691***	1.652***	1.800***	2.055***	1.964***	1.360***	1.296***	1.703***	1.799***	1.525***	1.635***
	(0.076)	(0.049)	(0.099)	(0.064)	(0.114)	(0.077)	(0.152)	(0.082)	(0.105)	(0.066)	(0.086)	(0.053)	(0.080)	(0.050)
Constant	0.011***	0.001***	0.012***	0.002***	0.014***	0.001***	0.006***	0.001***	0.015***	0.002***	0.010***	0.001***	0.017***	0.002***
	(0.003)	(0.000)	(0.004)	(0.000)	(0.005)	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.000)	(0.006)	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.000)	(0.004)	(0.000)
Observations	56,923	56,923	30,276	30,276	26,647	26,647	38,887	38,887	15,846	15,846	51,827	51,827	48,226	48,226

Note: Not reporting dummies for survey year. Eform standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

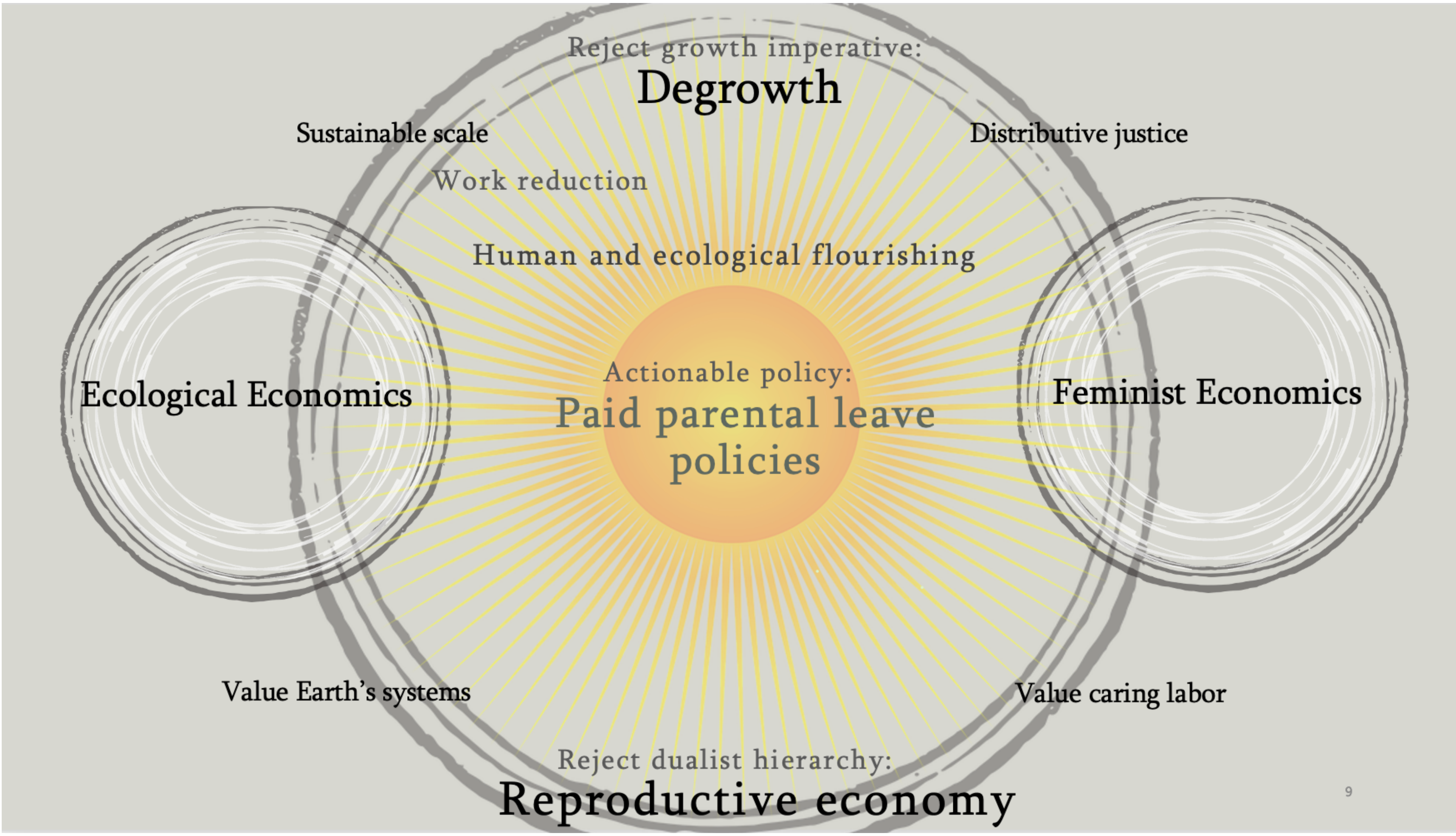

Figure A.1 diagrams how this project fits within the framework of feminist ecological economics. EE and FE converge at Degrowth, to which EE brings the concept of sustainable scale and FE brings the concept of distributive justice. They also converge at the valuation of the reproductive economy, to which EE brings the valuation of Earth's systems, and FE brings the valuation of care work. Inside the framework we see the goal of the feminist ecological economy, being human and ecological flourishing, and the policy of work reduction which comes from sustainable scale to work towards this goal. In the very center is the topic of this thesis, paid parental leave policies, which grow out of the nexus of these frameworks, scholarship, goals, and policies.