

## Gender and the Welfare State

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## **Abstract**

Gender relations, as embodied in the sexual division of labor, compulsory heterosexuality, discourses and ideologies of citizenship, motherhood, masculinity and femininity, and the like, profoundly shape the character of welfare states. Likewise, the institutions of social provision—the set of social assistance and social insurance programs, universal citizenship entitlements, and public services to which we refer as “the welfare state”—affect gender relations in various ways. Although many recent studies of the welfare state use a comparative analysis to study the factors shaping the welfare state, few of these studies have paid systematic attention to gender. Similarly, most feminist work has not been systematically comparative. This paper summarizes the current state of understanding of the varying effects of welfare states on gender relations, and vice versa.

## Gender and the Welfare State

### INTRODUCTION

Gender relations, as embodied in the sexual division of labor, compulsory heterosexuality, discourses and ideologies of citizenship, motherhood, masculinity and femininity, and the like, profoundly shape the character of welfare states. Likewise, the institutions of social provision—the set of social assistance and social insurance programs, universal citizenship entitlements, and public services to which we refer as “the welfare state”—affect gender relations in a variety of ways.

Studies of the welfare state have turned strongly comparative, using the diversity of national histories and institutional arrangements to ask questions about the factors shaping welfare state structures and their effects on economies and societies. Recently, researchers have been particularly concerned with understanding qualitative differences in the origins and trajectories of social policy in different countries, and, in consequence, also with developing typologies that identify the range of forms taken by welfare states—“regime types” or “worlds of welfare capitalism.” Though it is increasingly clear that women are central to labor market developments, that *social* politics are at least partly *gender* politics, and that much of the restructuring of the welfare state is and has been a response to changes in gender relations, comparative study has so far given little systematic attention to gender. At the same time, most feminist work, though centrally concerned with elaborating a gendered analysis of welfare states, has not been systematically comparative. In short, we see the persistence of sex segregation in studies of the welfare state.<sup>1</sup> This means that we lack a sense of the range of variation in how gender relations and welfare states mutually influence each other.

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<sup>1</sup>Greg Maney, one of my research assistants, surveyed the books on the welfare state reviewed by the *American Journal of Sociology* from 1991 to the present. His research revealed that “mainstream” scholarship, continues to ignore the relationship between gender and the welfare state; further information is available by writing to Ann Orloff.

Some exciting new work investigates precisely these issues, either by tracing the historical development of state social provision and its gendered effects or by exploring comparative variation in the linkages between specific characteristics of gender relations and particular features of welfare states. In this article, I will assess this new comparative and historical work. Thus, the focus will not be on contemporary single-country case studies of the welfare state and gender relations, nor on comparative studies of welfare states that neglect gender. The goal is to summarize the current state of understanding of the varying effects of welfare states on gender relations and vice versa.

Typically, the “welfare state” is conceptualized as a state committed to modifying the play of social or market forces in order to achieve greater equality (Ruggie 1984, p. 11). It is often defined as the assortment of social insurance and assistance programs that, over the past century, have been developed across the Western industrialized world to provide income protection to those “in need.” Recently, analysts—particularly feminists—have argued for a broader definition of the welfare state, one that includes provision of day care, education, housing, medical services, and other services dedicated to the care of dependent citizens. Moreover, using the term “welfare state” to describe modern systems of state social provision may be misleading because it assumes what ought to be proved: that states do in fact promote the welfare of their citizens. Yet, despite these difficulties, the use of the term “welfare state” to describe all Western welfare systems persists in both scholarly and popular debates. In keeping with those discussions, I define the welfare state, or state social provision, as interventions by the state in civil society to alter social forces, including male dominance, but I do not assume that all state social interventions are aimed at, or actually produce, greater equality among citizens.

By “feminist,” I refer to analyses that take gender relations into account as both causes and effects of various social, political, economic, and cultural processes and institutions. I do not assume, however, that categories of gender—women and men—are internally homogeneous. Class, racial, and

ethnic differences also shape politics and policy. By “gender relations” I mean the set of mutually constitutive structures and practices that produce gender differentiation, gender inequalities, and gender hierarchy in a given society. My work is informed by multidimensional theoretical frameworks of gender relations, such as Connell’s (1987) “gender order,” which is made up of three types of structures: labor, power, and cathexis, and Scott’s (1986) four interrelated elements of gender: symbolic representations, normative interpretations of these symbols, social institutions (including kinship, the labor market, education, and the polity), and subjective gender identity. This approach is distinct from other approaches that focus on women’s position or status in a particular social institution, like the family or kinship structures, or with respect to a single type of indicator, like the poverty rate for women. It leaves open the empirical question of which social structures and practices are most critical in a given society at a particular historical moment. And most important, it allows for investigation of variation across states and over time in the intensity, character, and mix of the structural sources of gender differentiation and inequality in, for example, the division of paid and unpaid labor, political power, and the character of sexual relationships.

## GENDER AND THE STATE

It is no more possible to understand the state and the polity without understanding gender than it is to make sense of the family or the economy without it. Certainly, as a practical matter, it is hard to miss the fact that the role of the state in affecting men’s and women’s material situations and relationships is often highly politicized. As a matter of theory, social analysts increasingly recognize that gender is a part of all social relations, including the state (Smith 1987; Connell 1987; Franzway, Court, and Connell 1989; Scott 1986).

Furthermore, gender relations cannot be understood apart from the state, politics, and policy. In the English-speaking countries, modern feminist analysts did not initially look to the state as the source

of gender oppression; rather, analysts looked to the family, sexuality, and labor to locate the sources of male power. However, a number of recent analytic trends have combined to make the state more central to feminist analysis. Feminists with a socialist or materialist orientation have worked to gender neo-Marxist theories of the state, arguing that states contributed to the reproduction of patriarchy as well as capitalism. These feminists recognized that patterns of women's labor force participation, the division of household labor, and family and household forms—and of state support for these patterns—cannot be understood apart from the larger political economy, but neither can they be reduced to epiphenomena: specifically gendered interests are at stake. Welfare has been a key area for their investigations of the state's role in reproducing the gender order (see, for example, Wilson 1977; McIntosh 1978; Abramovitz 1988). Since 1989, many of these analysts have been at the forefront of attempts to understand how gendered state social provision figured in the demise of the formerly socialist states and how it continues to shape social politics in the transition to market economies and democracy (Einhorn 1993; Dolling 1991; *Social Politics* 1995). Scholars interested in “bringing the state back in” to the analysis of politics and social policy have extended investigations of states' roles in shaping social relations to gender, showing the ways in which varying state and political institutions and organizations have helped to constitute gendered interests, shaped men's and women's political activities and influenced the character of social policies (Deacon 1989a, 1989b; Baker 1984; Sklar 1993; Skocpol 1992; Koven and Michel 1993; Orloff 1991). Another stream of feminist interest in the state has come from analysts of liberalism, democracy, and citizenship who have interrogated the political meaning of gendered citizenship and carried out empirical investigations of the political construction of gender in the course of regime changes, democratization, and routine state-building (Pateman 1988; Hunt 1984; Landes 1988; Vogel 1991; Lister 1990). Thus, analysts using a range of theoretical and analytic perspectives agree that the state is a crucial site for gender and sexual politics; indeed, most would argue that states are constitutive of gender relations (Connell 1987, pp. 125–32;

Franzway, Court, and Connell 1989). While this work focuses on the diverse ways in which states influence gender relations, and are in turn influenced by gender relations, no one has yet produced a general, gendered theory of the state (but see Dahlerup 1987; Yeatman 1990; MacKinnon 1989). Yet research on the systematic linkages between gender and social policy—the area of state activity that has received by far the most scholarly attention—allows one to begin to move “from institutional frameworks [alone] towards a larger-scale analysis of the state,” and to situate the institutions of welfare states within larger structures of power and rule (Shaver 1990, pp. 2–3).

#### GENDER AND THE WELFARE STATE: REPRODUCTION OF GENDER HIERARCHY OR AMELIORATION OF GENDER INEQUALITIES?

Over the past two decades, social scientists have amassed a large body of research showing that state policies of all kinds are shaped by gender relations and in turn affect gender relations. Generally speaking, one of two broad understandings of the relationship between the state and gender has predominated in analyses of social policy. According to the most prominent analysis, states contribute in one way or another to the *social reproduction* of gender hierarchies. In contrast, the second sees states as varying in terms of their *ameliorative* impact on social inequality, including gender inequality.

##### The Reproduction of Patriarchy?

One school of thought emphasizes the ways in which state social policies regulate gender relations and contribute to the social reproduction of gender inequality through a variety of mechanisms (McIntosh 1978 and Wilson 1977 provided early and influential accounts of women’s oppression within neo-Marxist theories of the state; see also the following edited collections: Sassoon 1987; Baldock and Cass 1983; Holter 1984; Diamond 1983; Ungerson 1985; Gordon 1990). Analysts saw in the emergence of modern welfare states a transition from “private” or “personal” to “public” or “structural” patriarchy

(Holter 1984)<sup>2</sup>; the notion is that the state substitutes for individual men in upholding male dominance. (Dahlerup [1987] notes that structural patriarchy existed in the past as well; many others have noted that women may prefer dependence on “the man” to dependence on “a” man). Thus, there may be change in the form, but not the substance, of gender relations. Key mechanisms for the maintenance of gender hierarchy include: (1) *gendered divisions of labor*, with women responsible for caregiving and domestic labor as well as for producing babies; (2) *the family wage system*, in which men’s relatively superior wages (and tax advantages) are justified partly in terms of their responsibility for the support of dependent wives and children, and women are excluded from the paid labor force (or from favored positions within it) and therefore are *economically dependent* on men; (3) *traditional marriage (which implies the gender division of labor) and a concomitant double standard of sexual morality*. Analysts in the United States and other English-speaking countries have tended to see all of these mechanisms operating together—Abramovitz (1988), for example, refers to a “family ethic” that functioned in ways analogous to the work ethic for enforcing paid labor on men, while Gordon (1988) refers to welfare reinforcing the family wage system. But these analysts have also seen these mechanisms acting as a back-up for that system, implying that welfare states often offer critical support to those suffering from market or family “failures” even as they contribute to the reproduction of the overall system of gender relations (see also Lewis 1993; Lister 1992; Cass 1983; Acker 1988; Pascall 1986).<sup>3</sup> Scandinavian, British, and other analysts have emphasized *women’s responsibility for care work*, the continuing dependence of society on women’s unpaid care work, and the ways in which welfare states reward care work less well than the paid labor that characterizes men’s lives (Land 1978, 1983; Land and Rose

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<sup>2</sup>These terms are reemerging in the debates around the transition from socialism to capitalism (Ferree 1995).

<sup>3</sup>In their focus on the reproduction of gender hierarchy, the reproduction analysts’ view of the role of the state is similar to that of radical feminists such as Catharine MacKinnon (1989); they differ in emphasizing labor rather than sex as the key to women’s oppression.



1985; Waerness 1984; Borchorst and Siim 1987; Ungerson 1987, 1990; Simonen 1991; Balbo 1982; Hernes 1987, 1988; Finch and Groves 1983; Sapiro 1986). This rescues a particular social contribution of many women from misleading gender-neutral references to “informal” or “community” care and draws attention to the specific services women provide to children, the elderly, and able-bodied husbands within families. Finally, many analysts have called attention to the ways in which these various mechanisms—even when not associated with women’s absolute material deprivation—are coupled with women’s exclusion from *political power* (Nelson 1984; Borchorst and Siim 1987).

The social reproduction analysts have tended to highlight the ways in which welfare states, through their regulatory or social-control practices, reinforced preexisting (traditional) gender roles and relations. More recently, these analysts have looked more closely at the ways in which state practices themselves constitute gender. Thus, some have focused on the construction of *gendered citizenship*, with its encodings of male “independence” based on wage-earning (rather than on the older basis in military service) and female “dependence,” and the associated gender-differentiated social provision (Gordon and Fraser 1994; Knijn 1994; Saraceno 1994; Cass 1994; Pateman 1988; Lister 1990). Other analysts highlight the state’s production of *gender differentiation* through the process of claiming benefits from the state: men tend to make claims on the welfare state as workers whereas women make claims as members of families (as wives or mothers), and through the very existence of “masculine” and “feminine” programs—the former protecting against labor market failures and targeting a male clientele, the latter providing help for family-related problems and targeting a female clientele (see Fraser 1989, pp. 144–60). Similarly, Bryson (1992) describes a “men’s welfare state” and a “women’s welfare state.” It seems to be assumed that this differentiation is inevitably coupled with inequality. In the United States especially, scholars speak of a *two-tier* or *two-track* welfare state in which programs targeted to men and labor market problems tend to be contributory social insurance, whereas those primarily for women and family-related are means-tested social assistance. These scholars emphasize

the disadvantages of relying on second-tier programs in terms of benefit generosity, the restrictiveness of eligibility regulations, and the extent of state supervision and intrusion (see Fraser 1989; Nelson 1990).<sup>4</sup>

Even if women's absolute material position is sometimes improved, the ultimate consequence of these various processes and mechanisms is a reproduction of hierarchical gender relations. This view of welfare states as reinforcing women's economic vulnerability and as failing to mitigate their economic deprivation is often buttressed by poverty researchers' findings of higher levels of poverty among single women and women-maintained families than among men—the “feminization of poverty” (Pearce 1978; Goldberg and Kremen 1990).

There is clearly some truth in this portrait. However, this picture is also incomplete—and, to some extent, inaccurate. It ignores crucial cross-national and historical variation that is significant for women and for gender relations generally. Almost all studies in this tradition have focused on a single country even those most concerned with generating theory or generalizations about the role of the state. Yet even when analysts do look at the experiences of a number of countries, it is largely to illustrate similarity, rather than variation, in the impacts of welfare states on gender relations (see Bryson 1992; Scott 1984). The social reproduction analysts have simply ignored the possibility that some state social provision—and, by extension, other forms of state intervention—has the potential to advance women's interests and/or gender equality.

### Ameliorating Gender Inequalities?

The second understanding of gender relations and the welfare state is based on the common idea that welfare states work to ameliorate social inequalities; feminist versions of this view focus on

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<sup>4</sup>Fraser (1989) does note the existence of spousal benefits and survivors' insurance (claimed overwhelmingly by women) within the “upper” tier of contributory social insurance, but she ignores the analytic significance of these women's treatment as rights bearers (Orloff 1993a).

gender and class inequalities, especially in vulnerability to poverty. In general, these analysts note that although poverty rates for the population as a whole fell in the post-WWII era, women made up an increasing proportion of poor adults, and households headed by women became an ever-larger proportion of all poor households (McLanahan, Sørensen, and Watson 1989; Hill 1985). They argue that these trends are due partly to the improving situation of other demographic groups, like the elderly, but also, at least in part, to women's deteriorating position in the labor market and the rising rates of solo mothers. They also argue that income-transfer programs offer important (albeit often far from generous) buffers from these sources of women's poverty (Garfinkel and McLanahan 1986; Piven 1985; Block et al. 1987; Eisenstein 1984). Although less sophisticated in their understanding of gender *relations* than the social reproduction analysts, those who focus on poverty and the (potentially) ameliorative effect of welfare states have sometimes noted cross-national variation in policy outcomes (see Kamerman 1986; Goldberg and Kremen 1990; and the many studies based on Luxembourg Income Study data—Mitchell 1991, 1993; Smeeding, Torrey, and Rein 1988, to name a few). For example, studies focusing on the poverty of women and/or women-maintained families consistently find the United States has the highest poverty levels, followed closely by Canada and Australia; Britain looks considerably better than its “daughter” countries, while Germany's poverty rates for solo mothers are quite a bit higher than in other European countries (Mitchell 1993). Analysts link these variations to a key characteristic of welfare states: the relative generosity of benefit levels and levels of overall social spending. For example, Norris (1984), in a comparison of the United States and the United Kingdom, found that the feminization of poverty had not yet developed in the United Kingdom, due in part to the lower proportion of single-parent families, a slightly lower wage gap, and a more comprehensive set of social welfare benefits for parents and children than in the United States. Thus, some welfare states are “laggards” or low spenders, others welfare leaders and high spenders. The implication of studies of

spending and/or poverty is that disadvantaged groups—including women—have an interest in higher spending.

Although the concern of poverty researchers with cross-national variation is important, this view of welfare states and gender is also inadequate: it examines only *linear* variation in the effects of state policies on women's status.<sup>5</sup> This is particularly problematic if one is concerned with states' impacts on gendered social institutions (like the gendered division of labor, especially women's responsibility for unpaid care work), and on gendered power (like that accruing to men from their status as breadwinners receiving a family wage or public benefits to replace it). For example, in their comparison of seven industrialized countries, Goldberg and Kremen (1990) found that several factors in addition to the level of public benefits—the proportion of families headed by single mothers, the extent of women's labor force participation, and the degree of gender equality in the labor market—affect the level of women's poverty. In Sweden, good labor market conditions and generous benefits minimize poverty among single women; in Japan, despite very unequal labor market conditions and low benefits, the feminization of poverty has not emerged as an area of concern because few mothers are single (though obviously women are *vulnerable* to poverty). But while Swedish social policy is recognized in most cross-national studies of poverty for its effectiveness in virtually eliminating poverty among women, analyses concentrating on poverty alone may miss other significant issues, such as the high concentration of women in part-time (albeit well-remunerated) employment and their continuing disproportionate responsibility for housework and care of children and the elderly (Ruggie 1988). A focus on poverty rates alone can be misleading; when marriage rates are high, one sees relatively low

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<sup>5</sup>Even if one is interested only in women's poverty, state policies other than income transfer programs are significant. In countries where women have a high rate of participation in the labor force, policies that promote gender equity in the labor market (affirmative action, pay equity or comparable worth) as well as policies that attempt to mitigate the effects of women's continuing responsibility for caring work (subsidized child care) can have important effects on women's poverty (Goldberg and Kremen 1990; Scheiwe 1994).

poverty rates for women and low gender poverty gaps, but the extent of women's *vulnerability* to poverty is occluded. Moreover, quantitative poverty studies typically overlook the ways in which regulation may accompany benefits, as in the case of many benefits for solo parents which are conditioned on cooperation in establishing paternity (Monson 1996).

Too often, these analysts ignore the ways in which the systemic characteristics of social provision affect gender interests. For example, in the United States, increased levels of income transfers would not address the political marginalization of the status of "client" in a context where citizenship is linked strongly to the status of "worker" (Nelson 1984); nor would this strategy counter stereotypes of dependency deeply embedded in relations of class, race/ethnicity, and gender (Roberts 1995; Fraser and Gordon 1994; Quadagno 1994; Collins 1990). Others have argued that the residual character of American social provision undermines popular support for social spending generally, and that, in such a context, calls for increased benefits in targeted programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) may actually *exacerbate* the political difficulties of welfare (Weir, Orloff, and Skocpol 1988).<sup>6</sup> In other words, access to cash benefits is not always an unmixed blessing.

### Toward an Understanding of Variation

These social reproduction and amelioration approaches to gender and social policy fail to capture the full complexity of policy variation: the first assumes uniformity, while the second attends only to one, linear dimension of variation (generosity of benefits or levels of social spending). Moreover, their analytic focus makes it difficult to identify women's activity in policymaking. More recently, two new strands of research have emerged from theoretically informed comparative and/or

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<sup>6</sup>In other words, the *type* of benefits offered makes a difference. For example, Kamerman (1986), after comparing the effect of several types of income transfers on the economic well-being of solo-mother families in eight industrialized countries, urged increased spending on non-means-tested programs such as universal child allowances, child support assurance, housing allowances, and paid maternity leave, because they are more effective in combating poverty than is means-tested social assistance.

historical analyses of gender and social policies, emphasizing the *variation* in the effects of social policies on gender: male dominance is not necessarily reproduced, indeed, it is often transformed; some amelioration is possible, although it is sometimes coupled with greater regulation by the state. These historical and comparative studies have been superior in discerning the mutual effects of state social policies and gender *relations* and of the interactions among class, gender, and other social relations. Historical analyses of the development of gendered social policy have challenged the assumptions that ungenerous and punitive policies have simply been imposed on women; they have uncovered the activities of women activists, often called “maternalists,” in shaping early programs targeted on women and their children. And rather than assuming that all Western countries’ systems operate similarly, they find that policy may promote qualitatively different types of gender relations. Of particular importance have been studies of countries (Sweden, France) and groups (U.S. African Americans) which do not display the family wage system that prevails in most other countries and among dominant racial groups but which instead feature higher levels of paid work among married women.

## MATERNALISM AND THE ORIGINS OF WELFARE STATES

Recent studies of the origins of modern social provision have challenged some key assumptions of both mainstream and feminist scholarship. First, these studies have uncovered the significant amount of state activity aimed at the welfare of mothers and children and the activities of women reformers, which have been ignored in the mainstream literature’s focus on labor market regulation and class actors. Despite the widespread acceptance of ideals of gender differentiation, women entered the political sphere largely on the basis of “difference,” claiming their work as mothers gave them unique capacities for developing state policies that would safeguard mothers and children. Second, these studies have challenged some of the assumptions of the social reproduction analysts by highlighting women’s participation (even as subordinate actors) in the shaping of policies directed at women and

families. Almost all early twentieth-century women reformers, like their male counterparts, supported the gendered division of labor and the development of gender-specific legislation. However, this agreement around gender differentiation did not in all cases extend to other aspects of gender relations, particularly the family wage for men and women's economic dependency. This orientation is an interesting contrast to the views of many second-wave feminists (including those who critiqued welfare programs for promoting the traditional gender division of labor!), who have tended—particularly in the United States and the other English-speaking countries—to make claims on the basis of equality rather than “difference.” Yet many of the maternalists shared a radical orientation with contemporary women activists—they did sometimes challenge the family wage as the basis of support for mothering and they called for state financial support of motherwork, the “endowment of motherhood.” Thus their claims on the state were for “equality in difference.”

Many women (and some male) reformers were motivated by the ideas and discourses of *maternalism*. Historians Koven and Michel (1993, p. 4), the editors of an influential collection on maternalist politics, define maternalism as “ideologies and discourses which exalted women's capacity to mother and applied to society as a whole the values they attached to that role: care, nurturance and morality.” They emphasize the ambiguous and competing meanings and uses of maternalist ideas. By this definition, maternalism encompasses pro-natalists who were more concerned with population increase than women's subordination; women who accepted the ideal of a family wage for men as the source of support for mothers; and feminists who called for an independent, state-supplied income for mothers (“the endowment of motherhood”; see Pedersen 1993 and Lake 1992 for discussions of these women's activities in Britain and Australia respectively). Other historians, like Ladd-Taylor (1994, p. 5) have preferred a more restricted definition that contrasts maternalism to feminism, particularly in terms of their positions on the desirability of the family wage and women's economic dependence, which maternalists supported and feminists opposed. Finally, historical sociologist Skocpol (1992)

distinguishes between “maternalist” and “paternalist” welfare states. Both are premised on gender differentiation and the family wage, she writes, but each institutionalizes different types of linkages between states and citizens. In Europe and the Antipodes, elite male political leaders established and administered programs “for the good of” working-class men, who were often organized in trade unions and labor parties, and who gained access to benefits based on their labor-force participation. Yet these men were also understood in terms of their family status—as heads of families and supporters of dependent wives and children. A maternalist welfare state would feature “female-dominated public agencies implementing regulations and benefits for the good of women and their children” (p. 2). Skocpol writes that such a welfare state never came to fruition in the United States, although most states passed an impressive range of legislation targeted on women in their role as mothers; such legislation was often backed by alliances of working-class women’s groups and (white) middle-class married women organized in voluntary organizations.

Two collections, one edited by Koven and Michel (1993) and one by Bock and Thane (1991), contain mostly single-country case studies of maternalist political activities and policies in the United States, Britain, France, Norway, Sweden, Australia, Italy, Germany, and Spain, along with comparatively oriented introductory essays by the editors. Bock and Thane’s collection covers the 1880s through about 1950; most of pieces in the Koven and Michel collection cover the period from the 1880s to the 1920s. While noting the impressive similarities in maternalist politics and policies across these countries, the editors of both volumes argue that there were important variations in women’s political involvement in policymaking and administration, in the overall political-institutional context, and in policy outcomes relevant for mothers and their children.

Koven and Michel distinguish between outcomes in “strong” and “weak” states; paradoxically, while women’s movements were stronger and their involvement was greater in the so-called weak states (Britain and the United States) than in the strong (Germany and France), policies aimed at



protecting women and children were better developed and more generous in the latter. Although the weak states provided greater opportunities for women's political activism, they had fewer capacities for enacting and financing generous social policies and women's movements were not then strong enough to press for better outcomes. Bock and Thane limit their focus to European states, but point out that there are significant differences between countries that maintained democratic governments in the 1930s and 1940s versus those that became fascist dictatorships. All the countries examined started with policies that could be called maternalist (by the broader definition), although organized women were not equivalently active in their initiation and administration. Fascist governments made significant changes: rather than focusing on the support of mothers, they shifted policy attention to bolstering *fatherhood*. For example, payment of allowances for children was made to fathers, often as part of the wage packet, rather than to mothers, as was the case in the democracies. (Interestingly, these patterns have continued even after the Central European countries and France returned to democratic rule—Wennemo [1994] finds that, rather than sending family allowances to mothers, these countries offer support to children through employment-based schemes, which tend to go disproportionately to men.) Indeed, Bock (1991), Saraceno (1991), and Nash (1991) argue that it was the attention to men, masculinity, and fatherhood, rather than a cult of motherhood, that distinguished the fascist countries—a pro-natalism shared by other European countries. Germany was internationally unique, Bock (1991) argues, in its *anti-natalist* policies carried out against the Jewish people and those considered “defective” by the National Socialist regime—policies that eventually culminated in genocide.

The few explicitly comparative studies of this period offer some clues as to which factors were most significant in shaping the character of social policies aimed at the support of motherhood, parenthood, and children—variations which in many cases continue to distinguish the systems of social provision in the contemporary West, such as Pedersen's work on the “breadwinner logic” of the British

welfare state versus France's "parental logic." Of particular significance are the balance of power among labor, employers, and the state; discourses and ideologies of motherhood, especially whether or not mothering was seen as compatible with paid work; and concerns about population quality and quantity, particularly in the context of international military competition.

Jenson's (1986) comparison of British and French policies for the support of reproduction (delightfully subtitled "Babies and the State") was influential in questioning the generalizations about women and the state which predominated in the early 1980s. Both French and British elites operated within an international context that raised concerns about population, particularly about declining birthrates and rates of infant mortality perceived to be too high. Yet she showed that differences in the capacities of organized workers and employers, different levels of demand for female labor, and different discourses about motherhood and paid work produced strikingly different policies. British policy worked to make the support of babies primarily dependent on fathers' wages, while France developed policies that allowed for mothers' paid work, offering both material support and health-related services to working mothers and their children. Klaus (1993) compares maternal and infant health policies in the United States and France, and finds that the relative level of international military competition was important in shaping outcomes: the fiercer competitiveness in France provided a greater incentive to political actors for conserving infant and maternal life and promoting population growth, which was reflected in the development of France's more generous and far-reaching policies. Concerns about population also feature in Hobson's (1993) comparison of how New Deal America and Sweden in the 1930s dealt with married women's right to engage in paid work. She finds that fears about population decline—though less motivated by explicitly military concerns than was the case in France—were utilized by Swedish women reformers to create new protections for women workers, while their American counterparts were marginalized and found no comparable national discourse that could justify such protections. Heitlinger's (1993) study of Britain, Canada, and Australia makes the

point that pro-natalist policies may, in the 1990s, have some beneficial consequences for women's ability to combine paid work and mothering.

Pedersen's (1993) study of Britain and France elaborates some of the themes initially put forward by Jenson. Pedersen argues that the balance of power among workers, employers, and the state was the most significant factor determining policies vis-à-vis dependent children and women's labor force participation in the ensuing years. But trade unionists, employers, and others had gender and familial as well as occupational or class interests, and they were also influenced by the discursive connotations of various policies. Among other things, male workers wanted women to be constructed as wives, male employers wanted them to be (subordinate and cheap) workers, women themselves often wanted recognition as mothers or as (equal and equally paid) workers. British and French trade unionists—mainly men—defended a “family wage,” and preferred that their wives be kept out of the labor market. Employers in both countries appreciated cheap female labor and saw some merit in using family allowances to restrain men's wages. British unions had the capacity to keep most married women out of paid work and to block such use of family allowances; French employers had the capacity to block measures keeping married women out of the labor market and they also acceded to state-mandated allowances that promoted wage restraint while funneling funds to families with children. Given strong capital and a strong state in France, strong labor and a slightly less powerful state in Britain, “the French state ceded authority over women workers to those who wanted to exploit them, the British state to those who wanted to exclude them” (Pedersen 1993, p. 106).

Pedersen also attends to the role of noneconomic actors—feminists and other women's groups, social scientists and intellectuals, political leaders, church officials, and pro-natalists—in constructing the discourse on family issues and policy. In France, family allowances, carried into the policy debates by conservative and religious forces, were associated with pro-natalism and national reconstruction and thus were attractive to employers looking to justify their economically motivated commitment to such

programs. In Britain, feminists, who were the initial promoters of a motherhood endowment (which would give non-earning mothers an independent income), and then family allowances, associated such programs with women's emancipation; moreover, they argued that ending family wages would undercut gender discrimination in pay. These gendered connotations stimulated unionists' opposition; they accepted family allowances only after they were scaled down. These discursive differences reflected differences in the strength of feminist and women's groups; the lack of input from French feminists reflected their weakness, while British women's superior organization enabled them to open up questions of family dependency, although they were not strong enough to enact their preferred policies. French women could work, and were supported as mothers, but, voteless and legally subjugated to their husbands, were hardly "emancipated." Still, these patterns have had unintended effects. France's "parental welfare state," though initiated under patriarchal auspices, is relatively indifferent to gender relations within families. French employers wanted to use married women's labor and so French public policy focused on supporting children, rather than on supporting a male breadwinner wage. France emerged from WWII with less institutionalized support for this particular prop of male dominance than Britain, where strong male-dominated unions succeeded in making the breadwinner wage central to social provision. In the time since women have achieved political and legal independence, the French system has offered more generous support for two-earner families and children's welfare than the British, where children depend upon the wages of their fathers in a stratified society in which women cannot always depend on access to male wages.

The U.S. system of social provision has long been characterized as unusual in cross-national perspective. Recent studies show that American social policy exceptionalism has a gender dimension. As noted above, pro-natalism was much less evident in American policy developments than elsewhere. Other elements also differed from European (and, to some extent, Antipodean) patterns. Koven and Michel (1993) group the United States and Britain as "weak" states featuring strong women's

movements but with relatively weaker public protections for women and children. But, to the extent that they address comparative issues, other scholars of early U.S. social policy find significant divergence between British and American policies and politics (see Lewis 1994 for a dissent from Koven and Michel's analysis from a British perspective). Sklar (1993) and Skocpol (1992; also Skocpol and Ritter 1991) describe some key institutional differences between Britain and the United States which made gender more salient as a political identity to Americans and offered opportunities for the development of autonomous women's organizations even before women had the vote; these included the relatively open structure of religion and higher education, as well as the existence of universal white manhood suffrage. Sklar (1993) provocatively argues that in the United States, gender substituted for class as the organizing principle in welfare politics as organized middle-class women played the role of welfare champions elsewhere undertaken by organized labor and working-class parties.

Skocpol's (1992) analysis is significant for drawing attention to the impact of political structures and processes on gendered identities, on women's and men's capacities for mobilization, and on the potential for successfully influencing policy. Her work differs from both mainstream and feminist analyses in simultaneously analyzing men's and women's political activities and the differing fates of maternalist and paternalist policies. She examines the ways in which the American polity was particularly receptive to women's organizing, even when women lacked the vote, while at the same time it was unreceptive to demands for paternalist, class-based policies. Her analysis of women's activism is distinctive in focusing on the activities of married women's voluntary organizations in the Midwest and West and for investigating elite reformers in the Northeast. These groups were essential to a cross-class alliance among women which gave administrators such as Julia Lathrop of the U.S. Children's Bureaus (identified as a core woman-dominated state agency [see also Muncy 1991])—at least for a time—the capacity to initiate and maintain innovative policies. In a related quantitative

analysis of state-level mothers' pensions (Skocpol et al. 1993), women's voluntary groups are shown to be the most important predictor of the timing of passage of these programs.

From many different angles, one can see that gendered outcomes in early U.S. social policy differed from those in nascent European welfare states. A lively interdisciplinary debate is going on about how to evaluate the character of maternalist political activism and policies in the United States.

Gordon (1994, pp. 7–8) begins from the paradox that today, “programs for women are inferior to programs for men. . . . Many feminists have understandably assumed that women were slotted into inferior programs because of ‘patriarchy’ and men’s monopoly on state power. But the fact is that ADC [which later became AFDC] was designed by . . . feminist women.” Gordon then traces the origins of these developments through, among other things, an examination of different approaches to welfare by networks of white male and female reformers and of African-American reformers and their involvement in the policymaking process from the late nineteenth century through passage of the Social Security Act in 1935. (See Skocpol 1993 and Gordon 1993 for a debate about their respective analyses of welfare programs.)

No one disagrees that today, AFDC represents a stigmatized and ungenerous program; however, analysts do disagree about the character of early programs, the forerunners of today’s “welfare”; about the interests and actions of the elite women who were responsible for their initiation and administration, and therefore about what factors and events are responsible for the degradation of social provision for single mothers. One group of analysts traces at least some of AFDC’s problems to problems inherent in the vision of those who initiated mothers’ pensions. A particularly important component of this vision was the maternalists’ preference for supervision of the programs that were to assist women. This was tied to the social work and casework background of women elites (in Gordon’s terms [1993, 1994], this reflected a class interest on their part); their acceptance of a family wage ideology and conventional notions of respectability, which made supervision a necessity (Goodwin

1992; Michel 1993); their views about the necessity of “Americanizing” the predominantly immigrant recipients of mothers’ pensions (Mink 1994). Thus, mothers’ pensions were flawed from the start, and these flaws were not corrected when the pensions were given federal funding and somewhat standardized as ADC under the Social Security Act; even the more recent reforms of the 1960s and 1970s only partially undermined these characteristics. Yet another group of scholars highlights the universalistic character of the maternalists’ claims and contrasts this with the ways in which policies came to be implemented and eventually undermined (Skocpol 1992; Orloff 1991, 1993b, ch.5). Ladd-Taylor (1994) locates these universalistic aspects of maternalism in women’s private lives—their common vulnerability to death in childbirth and to the loss of their children. Mothers’ pensions and other programs were seen to recognize the socially valuable work of mothering; even if women had no access to a male breadwinner’s wage, their service to the state was seen as parallel to men’s soldiering or industrial service. The universalist promise of maternalist policies was undermined by the lack of administrative capacities (which meant that on the local level, programs were often turned over to those who had initially opposed them), the inability of women’s groups to monitor programs after implementation, and inadequate financing. Scholarly disagreements also reflect different perspectives on social analysis: should one assume the significance of hierarchies of class, race, and gender for social policymaking (Gordon 1993), or assume their indeterminacy, investigating instead the institutionally shaped constitution of political identities and interests (Skocpol 1993).

Analyses of maternalism have provided some opening for consideration of the ways in which race, ethnicity, and nationalism have also shaped gendered policies. In the United States, a number of studies have shown that maternalist policies—mothers’ pensions, the Sheppard-Towner maternal health program, and others—were not equally aimed at or accessible to African-Americans and other women of color (Bellingham and Mathis 1994; Goodwin 1992; Gordon 1994; Mink 1994; Roberts 1993; Boris 1995). Thus, the motherhood, and infant life, to be supported was bounded in racial and ethnic terms

(although there is disagreement about the extent to which this reflects the interests of maternalist reformers or is simply a reflection of the power of racist forces in American society). Mink (1994) also makes the case that maternalist policies had an assimilationist purpose vis-à-vis European immigrants in the industrialized North, even as African-Americans were deliberately excluded from coverage. Similar considerations have been found in Australian policy, which simultaneously supported white motherhood (largely through the rubric of state-regulated male wages, but also with some maternalist measures), banned non-European immigration under the rubric of the “White Australia” policy, and systematically deprived Aboriginal mothers of custody of their children (Lake 1992; Shaver 1990; Burney 1994; Broome 1982). A debate among scholars in Germany about the character of social provision under National Socialism features disagreement about the interests of dominant-group women. Bock (1991) emphasizes that reproduction was supported only for some—pro-natalism for “Aryans” was accompanied by anti-natalism for Jews, Gypsies, and “defectives.” Yet Bock and Koonz (1987) have disagreed about the extent to which German Christian women benefited from Nazi policies: Bock has argued that because Nazi policies channeled benefits to men, German women were not implicated as beneficiaries of Nazism, whereas Koonz has argued that German Christian women *did* benefit from the pro-natalist aspects of the Nazi regime.

American social provision in the New Deal period has been studied less from a gendered perspective than have the Progressive Era and the 1920s. Still, few would dispute that the bifurcated welfare state we have today emerged from the institutionalization of national contributory social insurance. Initially, this insurance was intended to benefit wage earners (mostly male). Shortly after passage of the Social Security Act, dependent spouses (almost exclusively female), were also covered by the wage-based insurance, while support of single mothers remained a largely state-run assistance program (Weir, Orloff, and Skocpol; Skocpol 1988; Orloff 1988, 1993b; Gordon 1994, chs. 7–10). Quadagno’s (1994) study of the War on Poverty and the Nixon era (1965–1972) is one of the few to



bring the gendered history of American social policy development close to the present; she is able to show, for example, the ways in which the proposed Family Assistance plan depended on notions of the desirability of a traditional gender division of labor—although in the end, racial politics and federal institutional structures “trumped” those concerns and left AFDC unreformed.<sup>7</sup>

## COMPARING GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY WELFARE STATES

In comparative work, scholars from, or familiar with, the Scandinavian countries have been particularly prominent in pointing out that assumptions about the inevitability of the reproduction of patriarchy are too narrowly based on the experiences of the United States, Britain, and to a lesser extent, Canada and Australia, where the family wage was (and to some extent still is) the starting premise of social policy, and policies seem unlikely to promote women’s interests (e.g., Siim 1987, 1988; Hernes 1987, 1988; Borchorst and Siim 1987; Borchorst 1994b; Ruggie 1984; Haas 1992; Leira 1992; for a contrasting view of Sweden, see Hirdman 1991). The centrality of the family wage and women’s domesticity to gender-related social policies has been questioned also by analysts of the French case and of the situation of non-white women in the United States and elsewhere. In these cases, women’s paid work is far more accepted—indeed promoted—than has been the case for women of the

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<sup>7</sup>Piven and Cloward’s *Regulating the Poor* (1993), which deals with this period and which was first published in 1971, has been updated to take into account the new scholarship on welfare. However, race and gender remain subordinate to class analytically and historically. For example, there is no exploration of why white women were not seen as “employable mothers” (until recently) while African-American women were (and are). It should not be simply a “given” that black women are part of the reserve army of labor. For whites, AFDC seems to have been a backup to the family wage system, while for African-Americans it has functioned as an inadequate alternative to family wages and jobs, or, in the South and other low-wage areas, a system of unemployment relief. It is also crucial to think about which groups’ reproduction (different) elites were willing to subsidize—which had an undeniable racial dimension. And the gendered character of welfare casts doubts on their explanations for its expansion in the 1960s; young men were rioting, but it was women who got help; why not expanded public jobs or unemployment relief as in the 1930s (Gordon 1988)?

dominant racial group in the English-speaking countries and in Central Europe. A number of analysts have therefore tried to explain the difference between the Scandinavian and other cases; the strength and organization of working-class groups loom large as an explanatory factor, as mainstream authors have argued, but so does the political mobilization of women.

Ruggie's (1984) analysis of Swedish and British policies toward working women revealed that the overall relationship between state and society—determined by the character of governing coalitions—affected women workers' progress: “for the successful achievement of their employment pursuits, women must be incorporated into labor, and labor must be incorporated into the governing coalition” (p. 346). Similarly, Hill and Tigges (1995) compared women's public pension quality across twenty industrialized countries and found that working-class strength is associated with improved income security and adequacy for older women, while women's participation in working-class political and economic organizations increases older women's economic equality with men. In a comparison of policies supporting care work and caretakers in Britain and Denmark, Siim (1990) argued that the extent to which increased social welfare benefits also increased women's political power depended in part on the organization of social reproduction. In Denmark, women's dual roles as worker and mother are supported by social and family policy that gives the state a larger role in organizing and financing care for dependents, which facilitates women's integration into the workforce. In Britain, a “familist” social policy assigns primary responsibility for care work to “the family,” assuming this contains a breadwinner husband and a wife who has time to attend to (unpaid) caregiving work; this seriously undercuts women's capacities to enter the paid labor force on an equal footing with men.

Interest in comparatively based explanations has also been stimulated by the persistence of “traditional” gender relations, particularly relatively low rates of women's labor force participation. This has been analyzed in Ireland (Jackson 1993), the Netherlands (Knijn 1994; Bussemaker and van Kersbergen 1994), Spain (Cousins 1995), and Germany and other German-speaking countries (Schmidt

1993; Rhein-Kress 1993; Ostner 1993). European integration has also stimulated an interest in how gender relations and social policies will be changed by integration and by formal institutions such as the European court and the European Union equality directive (e.g., Schunter-Kleeman 1992; Lewis 1993).

### Gender and Regime Types

A particularly promising development in comparative scholarship has come with the elaboration of the concept of “social policy regimes,” which offers a way to analyze the qualitative variation across national systems. Shaver (1990) describes social policy regimes as institutionalized patterns in welfare state provision which establish systematic relations between the state and social structures of conflict, domination, and accommodation. Such patterns refer to the terms and conditions under which claims may be made on the resources of the state, and reciprocally, the terms and conditions of economic, social, and political obligation to the state. The elements constituting social policy regimes may be economic, legal, political, and/or discursive. These regimes are to be found both in individual institutions of the welfare state and in common patterns cutting across domains of social provision, such as health, education, income maintenance, or housing. Mainstream analysts of regime types have been concerned with the effects of welfare states on class relations and particularly with whether the state can “push back the frontiers of capitalism” (Esping-Andersen 1990). Feminist analysts using the regime-type concept are interested in the gender effects of state social policy, and sometimes also in the relation between gender and class effects; some are also struggling with the question of how to define and measure gender interests (for example, “woman-friendliness,” in the felicitous phrase coined by Helga Hernes [1988]).

Much recent feminist work on regime types builds on Esping-Andersen’s *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990). While Esping-Andersen’s work only incidentally takes account of gender differences among different types of welfare states, his ideal-typical scheme has inspired fruitful research on the variation among regimes as investigators have utilized or reworked his schema to

incorporate gender. Esping-Andersen proposes three dimensions that characterize welfare states, including the *relationship between the state and the market* in providing income and services and the effects of the welfare state on social *stratification*. Central to the understanding of how welfare states affect class relations are the concepts of *social rights* and the *decommodification of labor*, defined as the “degree to which the individual’s typical life situation is freed from dependence on the labor market” (Esping-Andersen and Korpi 1987, p. 40). These rights affect the class balance of power by insulating workers to some extent from market pressures and by contributing to working-class political capacities. Esping-Andersen has constructed a typology of regimes representing “three worlds of welfare capitalism”—liberal, conservative-corporatist, and social-democratic—based on where they fall out on the three dimensions. Liberal regimes promote market provision wherever possible, encourage social dualisms between the majority of citizens who rely mainly on the market and those who rely principally on public provision, and do little to offer citizens alternatives to participating in the market for services and income. The welfare state is well-developed in both social-democratic and conservative-corporatist regimes, bringing almost all citizens under the umbrella of state provision, but in other ways the two types differ. The former are universalistic and egalitarian, while the latter preserve status and class differentials. Only social-democratic regimes promote significant decommodification of labor, for conservative-corporatist regimes condition their relatively generous benefits on strong ties to the labor market. Significant for gender relations is the fact that conservative regimes promote subsidiarity (thereby strengthening women’s dependence on the family) while social-democratic regimes have promoted an individual model of entitlement and provide services allowing those responsible for care work—mostly married mothers—to enter the paid labor force. Liberal regimes, he argues, are indifferent to gender relations, leaving service provision to the market. Despite the fact that “there is no single pure case,” Esping-Andersen classified the United States, Canada, Australia, and (probably) Great Britain as liberal regimes; the Nordic countries are identified as social-

democratic regimes; and Austria, France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands are conservative-corporatist regimes.

Many feminist analysts have critiqued Esping-Andersen for the gender-blindness of his scheme: his citizens are implicitly male workers; his dimensions tap into states' impact on class relations and the relationship between states and markets without considering gender differences within classes or the relations between states and families; he ignores women's work on behalf of societal welfare (that is, unpaid caring/domestic labor); and his framework fails to consider states' effects on gender relations, inequalities, and power (see, for example, Langan and Ostner 1991; O'Connor 1993a; Orloff 1993a; Sainsbury 1994a, 1994b; Bussemaker and van Kersbergen 1994; Borchorst 1994a). Still, Esping-Andersen is not entirely uninterested in questions relevant for gender. The second half of his book considers the effects of welfare regimes on labor markets, with an in-depth analysis of the United States, Germany, and Sweden, and he here must confront patterns of gender within employment (albeit without any systematic understanding of how this is linked to gender relations overall). Swedish women depend on the state both for jobs and for the services that make employment for those with caregiving responsibilities a possibility. German women are largely marginalized by an employment regime that revolves around the needs of predominantly male industrial workers, by a relatively underdeveloped service sector, and by state policies that prize subsidiarity over the public provision of services. The increasing employment of U.S. women and their advances into the upper ranks of the labor force are largely market-driven phenomena, although state antidiscrimination activity has been important in opening opportunities in the realm of private employment. While some U.S. women have benefited from private employment opportunities and can afford to pay for caregiving services, others have suffered from the low wages and benefits of the lower rungs of the service sector. Analysts have tried to make sense of gendered relations and patterns using the regime-type framework, evaluating whether

or not liberal, conservative-corporatist, and social-democratic regime types have distinctive effects on gender relations.

Extending the analysis of regime types to consider the ways in which care work (broadly defined) is organized and supported has been a key area of concern for those interested in states and gender relations. Taylor-Gooby (1991) enriches Esping-Andersen's model by considering regime-type differences in the organization of the unpaid care work and the connected issue of how governments deal with gender equality (principally in access to paid work). Because paid work everywhere depends on a support system of unpaid work, regime-linked differences in the organization of paid work are expected to be linked to differences in the organization of unpaid care work; thus, common welfare-state vulnerabilities to struggles over the unpaid care work of dependent populations will vary according to these regime-type differences. Gustafsson (1994) finds that child care policies in Sweden, the United States, and the Netherlands reflect the regime-type differences specified by Esping-Andersen: that is, that public services are best developed in Sweden, that market provision of services is prominent in the United States, and that the Netherlands offers little public provision, in effect opting to support mothers' caregiving work rather than offering day care. Wennemo, in a study of family support in the OECD countries (1994), finds that countries form two clusters: the countries of continental Europe, which correspond to Esping-Andersen's conservative regimes and which channel benefits through the wage system and therefore largely to men, and the English-speaking and Scandinavian countries, which correspond to the liberal and social-democratic regimes and which offer public family allowances that are paid to mothers. (The United States, as is so often the case, is exceptional in having no family allowances, although partial analogues exist in means-tested AFDC and in the Earned Income Tax Credit.)

Sainsbury (1993) considers the effects on women of one aspect of social rights—the bases for making welfare claims—and the programmatic characteristics (social assistance, social insurance, or

universal entitlements) of four different welfare states: the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Sweden (which, although she is not explicit as to her selection criteria, do correspond to Esping-Andersen's three types [allowing for Britain's status as a mixed type]). She shows that, indeed, whether claims are based on labor market status, need, or citizenship is significant for gendered outcomes; women do best in Sweden, a system with strong universal characteristics, and fare worst in the United States and Britain, the countries with claims based principally on labor market participation.<sup>8</sup> Lewis and Astrom (1992), however, claim that Sweden's "woman-friendly" universalism is based on the fact that most Swedish women are in the paid labor force, thus successfully laying claim to the status of "worker citizens" as they also press demands based on "difference" (echoing Ruggie's [1984] argument). Ruggie (1988, p. 174) has recently argued that Swedish politics had important limitations for further progress to the extent that "women's interests go beyond or are different from the interests of 'workers as a whole'." This would imply that the claims bases delineated by Esping-Andersen, Korpi, and others as important for the character of social rights must also be considered in terms of their gender content and that some concerns of women cannot be satisfied even by the generous social-democratic policy approach.

Many analyses of Luxembourg Income Study data have assessed regime-type concepts. For example, Sara McLanahan and her colleagues have used LIS data to examine women's poverty levels, the association of different women's roles with poverty rates, and differences in men's and women's poverty in countries said by Esping-Andersen and others to represent different regime types (McLanahan, Casper, and Sørensen 1995; Casper, McLanahan, and Garfinkel 1994; Wong, Garfinkel, and McLanahan 1993). These studies find relatively high poverty rates for single mothers and relatively

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<sup>8</sup>Ginn and Arber (1992) also find that universalism works to women's benefit. The Danish pension system, under which women are enabled to have an independent retirement income, proves superior to the British and German systems, which discriminate against those with part-time and discontinuous employment while construing women largely as dependent on their husbands.

high gender gaps in poverty (that is, the difference between men's and women's rates) in Germany and Britain, but most notably in the United States, Canada, and Australia. Moreover, the policy strategies of countries with relatively low poverty rates for women and low gender gaps differ qualitatively and in ways that seem to be related to regime types as defined by Esping-Andersen—Sweden reduces women's poverty by promoting their employment, Italy by reinforcing marriage (so that women's access to men's wages is [McLanahan and colleagues assume] assured), the Netherlands by providing generous social transfers to all citizens. However, there are variations that cannot be explained strictly by reference to regime type; for example, inequality among women occupying different combinations of roles (marital status, employment status, and motherhood status) is least in Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, which each represent a different regime. It is worth noting further that gender roles appear to have a significant influence on outcomes apart from differences in regimes types: “marriage and work reduce the risk of poverty for women in all countries, whereas motherhood increases the chances of being poor. The only mothers who have a better than average chance of staying out of poverty are mothers who combine parenthood and work with marriage” (McLanahan, Casper, and Sørensen 1995, p.18). In other words, being linked to a man through marriage or being like a man in working for pay are the ways women can (most often) stay out of poverty; engaging in the unpaid caring work that is women's responsibility in the sexual division of labor without access to a male wage makes women vulnerable to poverty. This, too, suggests that Esping-Andersen's regime-type framework is inadequate to understanding some key gender effects of policy.

States clearly do differ to some extent in their effects on gender relations. However, conclusions based on analyses which contrast countries purporting to represent different regime types are very likely influenced by which country is chosen to “stand in” for any given regime cluster, when we have not carefully assessed their differences and similarities across dimensions relevant for gender. Thus, a “most-similar nations” comparative strategy can be very useful (Lijphart 1975; Ragin 1987).



For example, Leira (1992) and Borchorst (1994b) examine variation among the Scandinavian (that is, social-democratic) states. Both find that there is significant variation within this group in the level of public child care provision and the concomitant differences in women's labor force participation—Denmark and Sweden offer greater support for combining motherhood with paid work, particularly for mothers of very young children, than does Norway.<sup>9</sup> Leira argues that this results from differing models of motherhood, a dimension which seems to crosscut the regimes as classified by state-market and other mainstream dimensions. Similarly, investigations of the policies of countries often classified as “liberal” reveal some important gendered distinctions. Shaver (1993) finds a difference in the way access to control of reproduction is organized into policy. In the United Kingdom and Australia, women gain access to abortion through medical entitlement—universal health coverage gives them a social right to abortion, which is understood as a medical procedure. In Canada and the United States, women have legal entitlement to “body rights”—including abortion without any medical or social regulation—but have no social right to the financial support needed to purchase the service (see McDonagh 1994 on the implications of this situation in the United States). I find (forthcoming) that a different model of motherhood, as institutionalized in policies for the support of single mothers, holds sway in the United States as opposed to the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada; at present, the United States is moving to require paid work as the only route for the support of households, whether headed by couples or single mothers, whereas the other three countries still provide (poor) solo mothers a period of state support for the full-time care of their children. O'Connor (1993b) notes that Australia offers greater support for women's and mothers' paid work than other “liberal” regimes; she

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<sup>9</sup>Hobson (1990; 1994, p.173) shows that patterns of women's economic dependency (as revealed in the relative contributions of women and men to overall household incomes) are not homogeneous within this regime cluster (e.g., in 1979, Norwegian women's dependency level was closer to U.S. and British women's than to Swedish women's).

attributes this to greater involvement by the central state in setting the terms and conditions of paid work and the influence of state-oriented feminist movements.<sup>10</sup>

## GENDERING ASSESSMENTS OF WELFARE STATES

All of the approaches reviewed here have helped to show the importance of gender relations in the welfare state and the significance of welfare states for the situations of men and women and their relationships. Yet these studies share some analytic weaknesses: an inadequate theorization of the political interests of gender and a failure to specify the dimensions of social provision and other state interventions relevant for gender (and other) relations (Orloff 1993a; Borchorst 1994a; Dahlerup 1987). The two weaknesses are related—if one wants to argue that welfare states help to promote patriarchy, or that welfare-state benefits help women—one needs to specify the yardsticks for measuring these effects. We can ask the social reproduction analysts, what will constitute evidence that a given policy works for or against male dominance? We ask the poverty researchers, are women's interests *only* economic? Comparative analyses have generally had a more nuanced view of gender and state policies, but the understandings of gender interests and their measures often remain implicit and, to some extent, idiosyncratic. Finally, we ask those who have used Esping-Andersen's regime-type scheme whether gender interests are fully correlated with class interests, and whether women's interests are limited to entering paid work. We need an explicit framework for assessing the gendered effects of social policy which is informed by an understanding of gender interests.

### Gender Interests

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<sup>10</sup>A related—though not explicitly gendered—evaluation of social policies is being carried out under the rubric of “families of nations,” defined by common histories and cultural connections (Castles 1993); contributors to a collection on social policies in different families of nations have examined gendered labor force participation (Schmidt 1993; Rhein-Kress 1993), divorce (Castles and Flood 1993), and the family rights of children (Therborn 1993).

Defining gender interests is necessary to the task of assessing the gendered effects of welfare states, but not simple.<sup>11</sup> A prominent theme in recent feminist scholarship concerns conflicts of interests. For example, in addition to pointing out that men and women may have conflicting interests based on who has family-wage-paying jobs or who has access to domestic or sexual service, feminist analysts have noted ways in which women's interests cohere and/or compete with children's interests. Others argue that it is falsely homogenizing to speak of women's interests per se, since the "interests that women (or men) have" (the descriptive sense of the concept) vary by class, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, and so on (for example, Molyneux 1985; Collins 1990). Molyneux (1985) calls attention to gender interests—those based on one's position within structures of gender relations (e.g., the gender division of labor, heterosexuality, or access to political power). This would imply that neither men's nor women's gender interests can be limited to the economic realm (Connell 1987; Jonasdottir 1994; Fraser 1994). Thus conflicts of interests based both on gender relations and on other types of cleavages among women (and men) are quite likely in heterogeneous societies like our own. Molyneux further distinguished two types of gender interests: practical gender interests, those that if realized would improve women's (or men's) material situation but would not in themselves fundamentally challenge the gender order, and strategic gender interests, which for women are those that if realized would undermine some aspects of gender subordination. Post-structuralist theorists and those influenced by institutionalism argue further for shifting attention away from the question of "how women's interests can be most accurately represented to the processes whereby they are constituted" (Pringle and Watson 1992, p. 63). Here, we need to understand how the character of policies in

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<sup>11</sup>Early attempts to theorize gender interests were vulnerable to some of the same problems as theories of class interests; for example, by attempting to specify the content of men's and women's interests on the basis of particular feminist assumptions, theorists were often forced to explain why women don't act in accordance with their allegedly objective interests (false consciousness), and they falsely assumed that all women (and all men) had common interests. Moreover, efforts to address these problems were hampered by a focus on women's interests, that is, interests that are exclusively women's, rather than gender interests, that is, interests that have their basis in gender relations.

different welfare states both shapes and is shaped by the content of women's (and men's) practical and strategic gender interests, and how these change over time and vary within and across countries.

Political power and participation are also of concern in understanding interests. Jonasdottir (1988) contends that everyone has an interest in participating in the construction of choices in the policy areas that affect them. Thus, being the subject (that is, author) as well as the object of policy is a critical aspect of women's and men's interests (see also Lewis 1992; Orloff 1993a; Lister 1990; O'Connor 1993a; Nelson 1984; Sarvasy 1992; Siim 1994). Participation takes on a specifically gendered character because women have been so long formally and informally excluded from the policymaking that shapes the structures of their incentives to work for pay, bear children, and care for children, their husbands, or the disabled.

#### Gendered Dimensions for Assessing Welfare States

Feminist analysts note that Esping-Andersen's framework was developed to address issues of class rather than gender power. Therefore, they argue, one cannot fully tap into states' effects on gender relations simply by looking at how women and men fare in different regime types using his (or others') gender-blind dimensions. Rather, specifically *gendered dimensions* are needed to assess the impact of state policies on gender relations. Thus, these dimensions inherently incorporate assumptions about the character of gender interests. Lewis (1992) and Sainsbury (1994b) are two of the scholars who have developed such dimensions within frameworks that do not include the dimensions of mainstream schemes. Langan and Ostner (1991), O'Connor (1993a), Orloff (1993), and Shaver (1990) have pursued the strategy of building analytic frameworks that draw on both mainstream and feminist work (see also Lister 1990, 1994).

Lewis (1992) argues for considering policy regimes in terms of their different levels of *commitment to a male breadwinner-female housewife household form*, which in ideal-typical form would "find married women excluded from the labour market, firmly subordinated to their husbands

for the purposes of social security entitlements and tax, and expected to undertake the work of caring (for children and other dependants) at home without public support” (p. 162). Women’s interests, she thereby implies, are least well served by policies supporting this traditional set of arrangements (here echoing the social reproduction analysts), but fare somewhat better when policy supports dual-earner households. She contrasts France, Sweden, Britain, and Ireland, finding Britain and Ireland strongly committed to the breadwinner form, France less strongly so, and Sweden only weakly so, tending to a dual-breadwinner form. Although these cases are also in different regime clusters in Esping-Andersen’s scheme, there is considerable variation in the extent to which states approximate the ideal-type within his clusters (for example, Germany versus France within the conservative-corporatist type or Norway versus Sweden within the social-democratic cluster).

Lewis’s approach shows clearly that dimensions of variability based on the traditional family (implying a family wage and gendered division of labor) do not correlate neatly with class-related dimensions (similarly, in a study of OECD countries, Shaver and Bradshaw [1993] demonstrate that “support for wifely labor,” a critical component of Lewis’s model, does not correlate with Esping-Andersen’s clusters). However, Lewis’s model seems to conflate a number of potentially separable dimensions, most notably women’s exclusion from paid work and their subordination within a male-headed family. Moreover, the formulation may give too much significance to women’s paid work and not enough to other aspects of individual autonomy; for example, in discussing the French case, Lewis notes that women’s paid work was not considered problematic partly because men retained authority over their wives through the patriarchal legal framework in force until 1970 (1992, p. 165). Certainly, issues of legal autonomy and bodily integrity should be considered along with access to paid work and women’s freedom from dependence on male breadwinners.

Sainsbury (1994b) proposes examining states in terms of their similarity to one of two gendered ideal-types: the breadwinner model (similar to Lewis’s conception) and what she calls an individual

model, where both men and women are earners and carers, benefits are targeted on individuals, and much care work is paid and provided publicly. (One may also need to consider whether some elements of the individual model can be provided by non-state sources—as seems to have been the case in the United States, Australia, Britain, and Canada.) She draws out specific dimensions of variation that differentiate the two models: the character of familial ideology, entitlement (including its basis, recipient, benefit unit, contribution unit, and mode of taxation), employment and wage policies, and organization of care work.

Shaver's (1990) work on gendered policy regimes argues for applying to welfare states the framework developed by Connell (1987) to describe the structures of gender relations. Connell proposes three distinct structures: power, labor, and cathexis; Shaver shows how each of these structures is shaped by state policies and legal frameworks. This approach then calls for an investigation of the gender basis of legal personhood, particularly with reference to "body rights," such as access to control over reproduction (see, e.g., Shaver 1993); how the sexual division of labor is institutionalized in paid employment and how it is affected by related policies such as child care; and how family, reproduction, and sexuality are affected by the institutionalization of dependency or individualization and the privileging of heterosexuality.

Langan and Ostner (1991) develop a gendered extension of Leibfried's (1992) empirically based classificatory scheme, which differentiated among Scandinavian, Bismarckian, Anglo-Saxon, and Latin rim regimes on the basis of their relative emphasis on the market or citizenship, the extent to which traditional household forms remain, and the extent to which public social provision has been institutionalized and extended to the entire population. They examine each regime type in terms of occupational segregation and pay: is the basis for social policy the traditional family or individuals, and how are women treated as unpaid and paid workers. On this basis, they are critical of all the regimes; unlike many who have seen the Scandinavian model as a gender-egalitarian one, they point to the

highly segregated workforce and continuing gender inequalities in pay and opportunities, among other things. While the areas of family and unpaid and paid work are undoubtedly critical to a gendered analysis, their assessment criteria are not made sufficiently specific.

Orloff (1993a) and O'Connor (1993a) have worked to gender the conceptual apparatus of regime types as developed by Esping-Andersen, Korpi, and others. Both argue that the organization of state-market relations and of the power balance among labor, state, and capital are significant for gender, as they affect the character of women's labor force participation and the organization of family support systems (e.g., unpaid care work, services). They also argue for including a stratification dimension, to include both gender differentiation and gender inequality. Gender differentiation exists on the systemic level (e.g., through creating different programs for labor market and family "failures") and on the individual level (e.g., through processes of making claims on the state, where men have typically made claims as individuals and workers, women often as dependents and family members). Access to benefits of similar quality for men and women in a range of different statuses (e.g., solo parent, unemployed worker, married person, retiree) is a key element of women's interests in the welfare state. In contrast, Lewis's scheme seems to give inadequate attention to women's situation when they are not linked to men through marriage. As Hobson notes (1994, p.175), "to cluster Britain, the Netherlands and Germany into a strong breadwinner model is to ignore the differences in poverty among solo mothers, who are the residuum in the male breadwinner ideology."

O'Connor (1993a) and Orloff (1993a) argue for retaining and augmenting the decommodification dimension. Decommodification "protects individuals, irrespective of gender, from total dependence on the labor market for survival. . . . [a] protection from forced participation, irrespective of age, health conditions, family status, availability of suitable employment, [that] is obviously of major importance to both men and women" (O'Connor 1993a, p. 513). But not all social groups have equal access to the jobs that allow personal independence and access to decommodifying

benefits. Both argue that access to paid work and to the services that facilitate employment for caregivers are critical gender dimensions of welfare regime variability, and reflect core gendered interests of women. O'Connor (1993a, p. 511) conceptualizes these dimensions as aspects of the ways in which the state affects "personal autonomy and insulation from personal and/or public dependence," which centrally affects gender relations. Paid work is a principal avenue by which women have sought to enhance their independence from husbands and fathers in families—thereby undermining the breadwinner-housewife family form—and claim full status as "independent" citizens; it is also a prerequisite for gaining access to work-related benefits which decommodify labor.

I have also proposed (1993a) considering how benefits contribute to women's capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household, a dimension that indicates "the ability of those who do most of the domestic and caring work—almost all women—to form and maintain autonomous households, that is, to survive and support their children without having to marry to gain access to breadwinners' income." This should enhance women's power vis-à-vis men within marriages and families (see also Hobson 1990). Men typically gain this capacity through their market work, backed up by income maintenance programs. State policies have differed in how (if at all) this capacity is achieved for women; some regimes have promoted women's employment through varying combinations of child-care services, wage subsidies, or improved-access policies or by reducing levels of and eligibility for public support; this overlaps, then, with the dimension of access to paid work. Other regimes have offered support for solo mothers to stay at home to care for their children, which maintains core features of the gender division of labor—women remain responsible for caretaking—but undermines economic dependence on husbands.

I argue (forthcoming) that the capacity to form and maintain a household embodies what some have called "the right to a family," and also reflects the character of laws regulating sexuality, marriage, and household formation (for example, laws on divorce, custody, homosexuality). The



dimension of capacity to form an autonomous household implies more than individual independence—it also indicates whether women can support families, thus including some of the legal issues around women’s heading households. Furthermore, this dimension seems amenable to being used to get at some of the ways in which states structure “racial” or ethnic inequalities. Many women of color (for example, hooks 1984) have criticized some white feminists’ focus on the family (and especially economic dependency within the family) as a source of oppression, pointing out that families can also be sites of resistance, particularly when racist policies are aimed at reducing the capacities of minority populations to reproduce (Roberts 1993). Many of these policies in effect deny women and men of color the “right to a family.” For example, the legal frameworks referred to above as determining who shall have the right to a family often incorporate “race” or ethnicity-specific standards, as when Australian and American officials deemed the culturally specific family and household practices of indigenous peoples as *prima facie* evidence of “unfitness” and grounds for the removal of children from their parents (see, for example, Burney 1994; Broome 1982).

Political philosopher Fraser (1994) has proposed a set of evaluative standards for social policy based on an analysis of gender equity that recognizes that it is “a complex notion comprising a plurality of distinct normative principles” (p. 595). The principles include prevention of poverty; prevention of exploitable dependency; gender equality in income, leisure, and respect; promotion of women’s participation on a par with men in all areas of social life; and the reconstruction of “androcentric institutions so as to welcome human beings who can give birth and who often care for relatives and friends, treating them not as exceptions, but as ideal-typical participants” (pp. 599–600). She goes on to sketch two alternative utopian, feminist visions of possible post-industrial welfare states that draw on existing feminist practices. The “universal breadwinner” model is implicit in the politics of most U.S. feminists and liberals; the breadwinner role is universalized through establishing employment-enabling services (so that most care work is provided outside the family) and removing discriminatory barriers in

the workforce. The “caregiver parity” model is implicit in the politics of most European feminists and social democrats; women with significant domestic responsibilities would be enabled to support themselves and their families either through state payments alone or in combination with part-time employment; the “aim is not to make women’s lives the same as men’s, but to ‘make difference costless’” (p. 606, quoting Littleton). Both would enhance women’s situation, but neither fully satisfies Fraser’s desiderata; for example, “universal breadwinner” marginalizes those who do not do paid work and continues to elevate an androcentric model of citizenship; “caregiver parity” consolidates the gender division of labor and is unlikely to bring about gender equality of income, given that employment would be differentiated into career and “mommy” tracks. Her solution is to deconstruct gender by “inducing men to become more like what most women are now—that is, people who do primary care work” (p. 611); this would dismantle “the gendered opposition between breadwinning and caregiving,” and “integrate activities that are currently separated from one another, eliminate their gender coding,” and encourage men to perform caregiving, too. In this vision then, women’s gender interests are expressed in overcoming the gender division of labor and concomitant economic dependency and marginalization as well as in equality in access to valued resources (income, respect, time).

These various frameworks offer researchers a range of ways to take gender into account in evaluating welfare states. Yet the analysts involved in these efforts stress that outcomes cannot be fully assessed without considering the participation of women and other subordinate groups in the making of policies which affect them (for example, Lewis 1992; Lewis and Astrom 1992; Orloff 1993a; O’Connor 1993a; Shaver 1990; on gendered participation, social policy, and citizenship see also Sarvasy 1992, 1994; Naples 1991; Siim 1994; Tyyska 1994). This emphasis points to the need to more fully integrate studies of political participation and of policy outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

On the basis of this review, I recommend that future research include a comparative dimension; at the least, case studies should be situated in the context of the range of cross-national variation in relations between welfare states and gender relations. Moreover, I encourage the use of gendered dimensions of variation to give greater specificity to findings and to allow the further development of a body of comparable findings on the mutual effects of gender relations and welfare states. These findings may also speak to the question of the extent to which different gendered interests are reflected in state social provision, including the “woman-friendliness” of the state (Hernes 1988).

Out of this juxtaposition of studies coming from several different disciplines, modes of analysis, and theoretical emphases, I am struck by the potential to comparatively evaluate explanations for the variation in states’ gendered effects documented over time and across state boundaries. Research has established the causal significance of several factors: the balance of power between organized labor and employers; state capacities; the character of production and labor markets; the character of organized women’s groups (and men’s groups, usually manifest in organized labor); the character of discourses and ideologies of motherhood, population, femininity, and masculinity; demographic characteristics; the extent of international military and economic competition (and the kind of wars for which countries need to prepare). Gender relations differ across races, ethnicities, and nationalities within national contexts and are thus differently affected by social provision and contribute differently to social politics. Hence, several theorists have also argued for the importance of race, ethnicity, and nationality (for example, different population compositions and histories of immigration and settlement) to policy outcomes (see Williams 1995 for a proposed framework for comparison; also see Yuval-Davis 1991; Williams 1989). The relative causal importance of these factors can now be assessed more explicitly, and the specific conjunctures of factors associated with particular outcomes identified. It seems likely as well that the political and programmatic legacies of different

manifestations of “maternalist” policy will help in developing explanations for contemporary regime differences.

A focus on states as constitutive of gender relations—without the functionalist baggage of early research—has already been useful, and further refinements promise to be fruitful. For example, one might look at whether state capacities function in the same ways when the state is organized along formally gender-neutral principles as when it is characterized by gender differentiation and explicit masculine authority. Research on the maternalist policies and politics of the first part of the century suggest that when state administrative capacities are extensive, women’s autonomous organizations are less likely to emerge, but these capacities are also associated with relatively well-developed programs targeting women as mothers (and their children). However, in the contemporary era, state capacities in particular political contexts (for example, when social-democratic or labor parties are in power) are associated with the development of “state feminism” and the promotion of various kinds of equality policies (for example, Franzway, Court, and Connell 1989; Stetson and Mazur 1995). Analysts are also highlighting the effects of discourse on gendered political participation (e.g., social movements, institutional participation) and on policymaking more generally; here, too, specification of how these effects are shaped within particular economic, political, and institutional contexts would be welcome.

Research on gender relations and welfare states is engaged with many of the same issues as those that occupy “mainstream” research (that is, research not concerned with gender)—but it also offers new perspectives on some vexing issues (for example, American social policy exceptionalism). Moreover, it is increasingly clear that women are central to labor market developments, that social politics are at least partly gender politics, and that much welfare state restructuring is and has been a response to changes in gender relations. I close with the suggestion that we fully integrate gender into all studies of the welfare state.



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