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Gender and Welfare Regimes: Further Thoughts

Abstract

This article reviews the feminist critique of Gøsta Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare regimes and revisits my earlier (1992) analysis of gender and welfare regimes together with criticisms of that work. I briefly discuss some methodological issues and attempt to justify my own choice of variables and of an explanatory model derived from empirical historical work. I pay particular attention to critiques that insist on the use of caring regimes as a basis for gender-centered typologies, not least because the two main questions for feminists concerning the provision of unpaid work remain (i) how to value it, and (ii) how to share it more equally between men and women. I argue that women's relationship to paid work, unpaid work and to welfare makes the search for gender-centered measures complicated.

Postwar writing on welfare states made very little mention of women. Richard Titmuss's (1963) classic essay on the division of social welfare stressed the importance of occupational and fiscal welfare in addition to that provided by the state, but omitted analysis of provision by the voluntary sector and the family, both vital providers of welfare and both historically dominated by women providers. Similarly, Titmuss's typology of welfare states focused on the relationship between welfare policies and capitalism, with social class as the chosen variable for analysis. Neither gender nor race played any explicit part

in the analysis. Titmuss's preoccupations were in fact quite similar to those of Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990) some thirty years later. Indeed, Esping-Andersen acknowledges Titmuss's contribution and the way in which he moved away from a simple measure of public expenditure, looking instead at the content of welfare states, including conditions of eligibility, the quality of benefits, whether benefits were targeted or universal, and employment. Titmuss's typology of residual, industrial achievement performance and institutional, redistributive welfare state bears a strong resemblance to Esping-Andersen's liberal corporatist and social democratic regimes.

Esping-Andersen's construction of his "three worlds welfare capitalism" is stimulating and thought provoking but like earlier analyses largely ignores women. This paper first reviews the way in which feminists have both criticized and sought to develop Esping-Andersen's typology. It then goes on to raise some methodological issues arising from comparative work on welfare regimes and suggests that in regard to gender, we may need to do more work on how to approach the gendering of welfare regimes before we can successfully merge this work with more mainstream analyses. I revisit my earlier (1992) analysis of gender and welfare regimes together with criticisms of that work. I discuss the way in which the approach I adopted was not gender-centered in the sense of deciding which measures best captured the position of women in welfare states and then subjecting these to investigation. Rather, my aims centered on uncovering the gendered debates and assumptions within particular welfare regimes, using a small selection of variables to capture the latter. I finish by discussing some of the possibilities for an analysis of more gender-centered variables.

The Feminist Critique of Esping-Andersen's Typology

Feminist analysis of social policy has stressed the extent to which gender is important both as a variable in the analysis of policies, particularly in respect to their outcomes, and as an explanatory tool in understanding social policies and welfare regimes. Historically, access to income and resources of all kinds—for example, education—has been gendered as have been the concepts that are crucial to the study of social policy: need, inequality, dependence, and citizenship. Furthermore, since the 1970s feminist analysis has revealed the gendered assumptions regarding the roles and behavior of men and women in society upon which social policies have been based. For example, Elizabeth Wilson's (1977) pioneering account showed how the British postwar settlement was premised on the idea that adult men would be fully employed, that women would be primarily home-

makers and caregivers, and that marriages would be stable. The most significant postwar social trends have been the vast increases in married women's labor market participation, in the divorce rate, and in the extramarital birthrate. These trends signal the importance of gender in the analysis of welfare.

Esping-Andersen set out to consider the relationship between work and welfare, where work is defined as paid work and welfare as policies that permit, encourage, or discourage the decommodification of labor. This construct missed the importance of unpaid work and the fact that primarily women in families have played a huge part in doing this unpaid work. Indeed, as both Ann Oakley (1986) and Jon Eivind Kolberg (1991) have noted, the family has historically been the largest provider of welfare and its importance in this regard shows no sign of decline (*pace* the analysis of functional sociologists in the 1950s). The crucial relationship, therefore, becomes that between paid work, unpaid work, and welfare (Taylor-Gooby 1991). This set of relationships is gendered, because while it is possible to argue that the gender divisions in paid work have substantially diminished because greater numbers of women have entered the labor market (although not necessarily in respect of pay, status, and hours worked), all the evidence suggests that the division of unpaid work has changed little (Morris 1990; Anderson, Bechofer, and Gershuny 1994).

Thus a concept such as decommodification has a gendered meaning. As Langan and Ostner (1991) pointed out in the first thorough feminist critique of Esping-Andersen's work, although decommodification in *The Three Worlds* is seen as a necessary prerequisite for workers' political mobilization, the worker Esping-Andersen has in mind is male and his mobilization may actually depend as much on unpaid female household labor as on social welfare policies. Decommodification for women is likely to result in their carrying out unpaid caregiving work; in other words, to use the term of the New Right in Britain and the United States, "welfare dependency" on the part of adult women is actually likely to result in the greater independence of another person, young or old. It can also be that policies intended to promote decommodification are gendered, with, for example, women taking a disproportionate amount of parental leave and men a disproportionate amount of educational leave, as in the case of Denmark. Such patterns will likely exacerbate gender inequalities.

Similarly, as Barbara Hobson (1994) has pointed out, commodification may have a different set of meanings for women than for men. It can be argued that paid work has served to weaken the dependence of women on men, has strengthened their bargaining power within the family, and has played a crucial role in allowing them to exit from marriage. However, it is possible to overstate the emancipatory effects

of the increase in female labor market participation (e.g., Kolberg 1991). Inge Persson and Christina Jonung (1993) in Sweden and Catherine Hakim (1993) in Britain have shown that there has been very little change in terms of the number of women working full-time, indeed, in Britain the percentage of full-time women workers is less in the 1990s than it was in the 1950s. Certainly Esping-Andersen's typology does not predict women's employment rates in the different countries. For example, lone mothers' participation rates are high in the "liberal" welfare regime of the United States as well as in social democratic Sweden, albeit that some of the reasons for participation in the two countries are entirely different: In Sweden, state provision for the care of children in terms of child care and parental leave makes paid employment much easier to contemplate; in the United States, lack of adequate support in the form of cash or child care effectively pushes lone mothers into the workforce (see especially Hobson 1994). As Irene Bruegel (1983) demonstrated over a decade ago, the unequal, gendered division of unpaid work constitutes a set of constraints that play a major part (alongside workplace-based discrimination) in determining women's labor force participation. Notwithstanding the dearly held beliefs of neoclassicist economists, women do not freely choose whether and how much to work (Folbre 1994).

Decommodification was central to Esping-Andersen's analysis, but feminists (especially Orloff 1993) have also taken issue with his other two main dimensions: state/market relations and stratification. The first of these ignores the family, which in addition to being a major provider of welfare also warrants consideration as an independent variable. The effect of family change (which in itself has been disproportionately due to women's initiatives, for example in seeking divorce) on the core areas of social policy is all too often ignored. However, inclusion of "the family" will not in and of itself assure a gender-based analysis. Feminist research on the division of resources within households and on the nature of female poverty has insisted on the importance of the tensions between individual, family, and household in terms of both the assumptions on which policies are based and their policy outcomes (Glendinning and Millar 1987; Brannen and Wilson 1987).

Similarly, stratification has a gender as well as a class (and a race) dimension. Whereas men receive state benefits largely as a result of their labor market position, women may qualify in their own right as workers, but the rules of eligibility may be considerably tighter for women than for men, as is the case in the United Kingdom; or they may be entitled as wives and widows to derived benefits; or in some instances they may claim as mothers. And whereas men (together with their wives and widows) usually qualify in the first instance

for insurance-based benefits, women as mothers almost always draw assistance-based benefits. American feminist analysis has suggested that insurance-based benefits are first-class benefits, whereas assistance-based benefits are second class (Nelson 1990), and has thus posited the existence of a two-tiered, gendered, income maintenance system. This fits the situation in the United States, but matters are more complicated in a country such as Australia where assistance-based benefits are the predominant form, or in the United Kingdom, where they are nationally determined, noncategorical and where more men than women end up claiming them. Thus, lone mothers who draw benefits do rather better in Britain than they do under the social assistance regimes of either the United States or Germany (Kremer 1995; Millar 1994). In Italy, additional complications arise from the fact that disability pensions became *de facto* social assistance benefits in the 1950s and 1960s and guaranteed a minimum pension to women as well as men. In other words, the boundary between social insurance and social assistance was substantially blurred (Trifiletti 1995). Esping-Andersen's work did not consider social assistance benefits, but these are of disproportionate importance to women and may be more or less generous and more or less punitive (Paugan, Prellis, and Evans 1995).

One of the explicit aims of Esping-Andersen's (and others') typologies has been the drawing up of performance "league tables", but this is much more problematic with respect to women's position in welfare states. As we have seen, the effects of decommodification and of commodification are not unequivocal in the case of women. Early feminist analysis stressed the patriarchal and oppressive nature of the modern welfare state. Scandinavian feminists in particular stressed the way in which women had become the employees of the welfare state on a huge scale, but found themselves for the most part doing the same kinds of jobs that they had traditionally done at home: for example, child care. These jobs remained low paid and low status in the public sector, hence the charge that state patriarchy had replaced private patriarchy (e.g., Siim 1987). In Britain, it was also stressed that many of the assumptions of the social security system were traditional.¹ Thus, if a woman drawing benefits cohabited with a man, it was assumed that he would be supporting her, and her benefit was withdrawn. This early feminist analysis attacked the family as the main site of female oppression and also attacked the welfare state for upholding traditional ideas about the roles of men and women within the family (e.g., Wilson 1977). In reaction to these interpretations, others have insisted on the emancipatory effect of modern welfare regimes, particularly with respect to the opportunities they present for paid employment (e.g., Kolberg 1991).

However, it is not easy to reach any simple conclusions as to the effects of social welfare policies on women. This is in large part because women stand in a more complicated relation to the welfare state—as paid and unpaid providers of welfare and as clients—than do men. The effects of social welfare policies have in fact often been Januslike. Thus social security programs have permitted the transformation of the traditional family form and the formation of autonomous households by lone mothers, while also enforcing traditional assumptions about men's obligation to maintain in the form of a cohabitation or "man-in-the-house" rule.

Methodological Issues

There are in fact many ways of constructing typologies of welfare states, or as Esping-Andersen prefers, welfare regimes, and all are open to criticism. The feminist critique of Esping-Andersen's typology has been only one strand of criticism, although a particularly powerful one. Stephan Leibfried (1991) has argued for the addition of a fourth "world" in the form of the "Latin Rim"; Ramesh Mishra (1993) has objected to the lumping together of the "market liberal" United States with "welfare liberal" Canada and Britain, pointing out that the latter differ especially in terms of the social services that they provide (see also Sainsbury 1991). Deborah Mitchell (1991) has undertaken an analysis of redistributive outcomes and has questioned the validity of Esping-Andersen's classification based on inputs. But as Bradshaw et al. (1993, 257) have argued, "It is difficult to discern from the results of such micro social data [as Mitchell's] what it is about the primary distribution of income or the tax and benefit system that produces the outcomes observed." Bradshaw et al. have proposed a further typology that is differently based again. They looked at the ways in which a "child benefit package" helped model families in fifteen countries. The package consisted of all social security benefits, child support (maintenance) arrangements where they were guaranteed, benefits for lone parents and equivalent help in kind (such as food stamps), fiscal arrangements and benefits that mitigate the impact of housing costs or reduce the costs of health care, and schooling and preschool child care. Such a typology may capture more in relation to gender than that of Esping-Andersen. Analyses of the position of lone mothers have shown that they tend to do better in countries where provisions for children generally are more generous (Kahn and Kamerman 1983; Millar 1994). On the basis of Bradshaw et al.'s analysis, the country groupings established by Esping-Andersen changed dramatically: for example, the United Kingdom moved up

to become a “middling” country, whereas the Netherlands moved down from the most generous to the least generous group.

From this it seems that in any case it might not be possible to capture all aspects of differentiation in a single typology for the obvious methodological reasons and for the possibly less obvious reason that the measures will inevitably reflect what is considered to be the most important issue at stake. For Esping-Andersen the most important issue was the relationship between employment and welfare: how far people were permitted to decommodify their labor. As we have seen, feminist analysis has showed that this question could only effectively be asked of men and that the measures used captured mainly men’s behavior. It may be that we have to start from somewhere else in order to get at women’s position in welfare regimes.

In addition to her proposals for revising and extending Esping-Andersen’s existing dimensions of qualitative variation, Orloff (1993) has proposed to add two new dimensions that she feels will serve to capture the effects of state social provision on gender relations: access to paid work and capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household. Julia O’Connor (1993) has also proposed personal autonomy as a key measure of insulation from personal and/or public dependence. However, it is not clear that such additions are fully sufficient to gender welfare regimes, even though they may be very valuable in making Esping-Andersen’s analysis more gender sensitive. As both O’Connor and Orloff recognize, it will be necessary to consider the right to personhood and control over reproduction. But the emphasis of both authors is on access to an income. Orloff (1993) wrote of welding “the concepts of decommodification and access to an independent income (outside of marriage) into a unitary concept of individual independence, or better yet, a concept of self-determination within webs of interdependence . . . ” (320). Although this is woman-centered, the focus on paid work is problematic. It is in fact something that is already there in Esping Andersen’s work and which has been taken further by Walter Korpi (1994, 9), when he comments that “the main basis for power differentiation within the family has come to be related to differences in labor market participation.” However, given the gendered division of unpaid work, paid work is unlikely to prove an adequate means of achieving financial autonomy for women. It may therefore be that in the first instance it is necessary to elaborate a gender-centered analysis of welfare regimes before we attempt the extremely difficult, but extremely necessary, task of merging mainstream and feminist analyses.

This was certainly my thinking when I developed my own typology of welfare regimes published in 1992. This was, as I said at the time, an “exploratory charting exercise.” I set out to examine women’s

position in the labor market, in the social security and tax systems, and with respect to child care in three countries: Sweden, France, and the United Kingdom. (Subsequently, in cooperation with Ilona Ostner, Germany was added.) The aim, however crude, was to obtain some measures of paid work, unpaid work, and welfare. The first major fault of such a scheme must be its failure to take on board the many other aspects of “welfare” that are crucial to women in regard to freedom from violence, control over reproduction, access to transport, etc. Nevertheless, I would still suggest that the relationship between paid work, unpaid work, and welfare is sufficiently central to warrant closer examination and further elaboration.

My focus was also on inputs, but the explanatory model that I used was derived from empirical historical work. My choice of variables in the form of labor market position, social security and tax position, and provision of child care was determined by historical research on the position of women in welfare states, which showed the extent to which it was assumed by policy makers that women would be dependent on male breadwinners. Although the perfect male breadwinner model never existed, which is to say that women (particularly working-class women) have always engaged in paid labor, when the foundations of modern social provision were laid in Western countries the boundary between the public world of paid work and political participation and the private domain of the family was strongly drawn.

The importance of contextualizing comparative research on welfare states has been widely acknowledged but is very difficult. Esping-Andersen has commented:

It is analytically difficult to confront detailed historiography with a table of regression coefficients. The former paints a dense portrait of how myriads of events impinged upon social policy formation; the latter seeks economy of explanation, and reduces reality to a minimum of variables. From the former, it is difficult to generalize beyond any particular case, in the latter, we have no history. (1990, 106)

Esping-Andersen’s way out represents something of a compromise. While he is concerned historically with locating the developments he talks about, he hypothesizes rather than empirically establishes the motors of modern welfare regimes. Thus he says that three factors—class mobilization, class political coalition, and the historical legacy of regime institutionalization—are important in the development of welfare regimes. The exposition is then deductive. Frank Castles has acknowledged similar difficulties:

The suspicion that we may frequently be asking the wrong question derives from a number of sources. At a gut level, it stems

from the natural tendency of even the most committed practitioner of the comparative method to reaggregate and make judgements concerning what he or she has so carefully disaggregated for the sake of scientific analysis. . . . History reveals the one sense in which it is meaningful to say that the sum is more than its parts: the sense in which human action is embedded in its particular context. (1989, 7, 12)

The truth of this is illustrated by Bradshaw et al.'s study of child benefit packages. This study compares outcomes for children, but as soon as the authors seek explanations for differences, they reach for inputs in the sense of how the policies have been structured in the different countries. To do this properly would involve an extraordinary amount of empirical historical work (in the manner of Baldwin 1990) and thus Bradshaw's team also hypothesized the importance of particular variables to an explanation of differences. The results are not altogether satisfactory. The demographic variable did not turn out to prove significant, and yet we know that pronatalism has driven French family policy and that the provision of particular family benefits has been absolutely central to the French welfare regime in a way that it has not been in Britain, for example. Historically, French social security has secured more by way of horizontal redistribution—between families with and without children—than vertical redistribution between the social classes (Dawson 1979). Probably only historical material would serve to illuminate the importance of the demographic variable. There is yet another important point to be made here about the larger comparative project. If family benefits have been the centerpiece of French social provision and yet were not included in the construction of Esping-Andersen's typology, what price France's position in his typology? A similar point can be made about gender. If it can be established that gender was a significant motor in the establishment of modern welfare regimes, then this too raises a question mark over the typology.

Gender-Centered Measures in the Analysis of Welfare Regimes

In terms of the gendered welfare regimes that I constructed, the interesting question becomes when, how, and to what extent countries moved away from the male breadwinner model. I have suggested that in France a modified male breadwinner model emerged whereby women's claims as wives and mothers on the one hand, and as paid workers on the other, were recognized in parallel. Sweden and Den-

mark, but not Norway (Leira 1992), moved furthest away from the male breadwinner model, pulling women into paid employment by the introduction of separate taxation and parental leaves, and by increasing child care provision, to the point where the dual-breadwinner family is the norm. In countries such as Britain, Germany, and Ireland, the policy logic of the male breadwinner model has remained strong, and a firm dividing line between public and private responsibility for caring work is drawn. Women may make claims to derived benefits as wives and widows, and as workers or as mothers (in the absence of a male breadwinner), but not as both. However, the model requires further elaboration to determine, for example, at what point, how, and where male breadwinner countries chose first to bolster the male obligation to maintain female dependency, and second to penalize women as workers or to encourage them to undertake full-time motherhood.

One strand of criticism of this work has focused on the small number of countries studied. Further differences occur among countries that may be categorized as operating strong male breadwinner models if more examples are taken. These are particularly striking in terms of *outcome*, even if the policy logic is comparable. For example, the Netherlands has historically undertaken to replace all male income with the result that the position of women and children is significantly better than in Britain (Bussemaker and Kersbergen 1994). More important still in respect to outcomes is the way in which differences between women in two and one-parent families open up. Thus the United Kingdom is closer to France and Sweden in its treatment of two-parent families and much more generous than the United States in its treatment of lone-mother families. It should also be noted that, although modern welfare policies have been developed at the national level and it is reasonable to take the nation-state as the unit of comparison, as Duncan (1995) has recently argued, regional differences within countries are nevertheless acute. Certainly this is true of developments in social assistance, which in many Western countries remains a matter of local discretion.

Another criticism of my work has focused on its omissions and in particular on its lack of adequate attention to what may be called “caring regimes”; in other words, policies that have constituted women’s unpaid work (especially Sainsbury 1994, but also Knijn 1995). The extent to which, and how, different countries have moved away from the male breadwinner model represents the “is” of welfare policies in historical terms in that it is empirically based. But it is also important to think more in terms of what constitutes welfare for women and about ways of examining this. Such an approach would

result in a more genuinely gender-centered analysis in terms of the measures used and in a sense would more closely parallel Esping-Andersen's strategy. He clearly believes that decommodification is a "good thing" for male workers and therefore seeks to measure it. In regard to women, the issue of caregiving and unpaid work looms particularly large, which may justify putting it center stage. However, it would probably be a mistake to elevate social provision for caring and for caregivers into a measure of "woman-friendliness." The whole history of feminism shows that it is problematic to advocate policies that seek to recognize female "difference" with respect to the disproportionate amount of caregiving work they do as opposed to policies that seek rather to achieve equality with men, usually in respect of paid employment (Scott 1988; Bacchi 1990; Lister 1995). Indeed, it was possible for Sir William Beveridge to argue sincerely that his proposals to insure women via their husbands constituted an appropriate recognition of their valuable caregiving work (Lewis 1983). The problem is that, however well meaning, such policies also entrenched women's economic dependence on men. Nor is this debate dead: Contributions to the first issue of *Social Politics*, for example, showed Trudie Knijn (1994) arguing for the right to claim income from caregiving, whereas Bettina Cass (1994) warned that this would enshrine caregiving as women's work.

Gender-centered measures of welfare regimes (as opposed to what the gendered assumptions underpinning those regimes have been) run the risk of also becoming measures of what is good or bad for women—the "league table" problem again. This must be avoided because the whole thrust of feminist analysis has been to demonstrate the complex position of women in relation to welfare, and this is unlikely to be captured in any single measure. Indeed, as the complexity of capturing the dimensions of welfare regimes is realized and the many exceptions to any model are revealed, so diversity rather than pattern becomes more apparent. Nevertheless, I think it is important to address the issue of developing gender-centered measures, particularly around caregiving.

There are two main questions for feminists concerning the provision of unpaid work: how to value it and how to share it more equally between men and women. Any comparative study of welfare regimes that took these questions as an organizing framework would likely be short, because no country has succeeded in valuing unpaid work and in no country has the gendered division of unpaid work shifted substantially. However, all welfare regimes have a "caring regime" even if, as in strong male breadwinner countries, it has historically been implicit. It is certainly possible to ask how caring for dependents has been undertaken. Indeed, caring regimes have become much more

explicit over the last two decades and it is important to elaborate these.

Feminists insisted first on the importance of analyzing the unpaid work of housework (Oakley 1974) and then starting in the mid-1980s caregiving for children and dependent adults (see especially Finch and Groves 1983; Ungerson 1987 and 1990, Lewis and Meredith 1987). In Britain, surveys by the Equal Opportunities Council indicated how widespread caring for adults was, and by the end of the 1980s the General Household Survey included questions on caregiving. In terms of the nature of the work, Hilary Graham (1983) pointed out that women usually both cared for people (tended them) and cared about them (emotional work). Building on Carol Gilligan's work published in 1982, feminist theorists have framed an ethic of care, in which the preservation of relationships and the avoidance of harm takes precedence over the rights and rules associated with an ethic of justice, and in which the focus of concern is to find an equilibrium between connectedness and empathy on the one hand, and the autonomous self on the other (Tronto 1989 and 1993). Gilligan suggested that women were more likely to adhere to an ethic of care and men to an ethic of justice, but most feminist theorists would wish to argue for a synthesis of both (e.g., Lister, forthcoming). For our purposes in studying welfare regimes, the important point is that caregiving work has been theorized, its extent has been measured, and its nature explored. Indeed, as Hilary Land (1995) has argued, given the demographic trends and the difficulties of unpaid work in a climate of uncertainty about paid jobs and about the future of state provision, caregiving poses the most acute social policy challenges for the future.

Many of the current dimensions of caring regimes have only emerged relatively recently and research has shown the disadvantages and well as the advantages attaching to them. As McLaughlin and Glendinning (1994) have pointed out, two ways of valuing caring have emerged in the last two decades: payment by the state for care and individual rights under the social security system to caregiving benefits. Pay rates in the case of the former tend to be extremely low and employment conditions poor or nonexistent (Evers, Pijl, and Ungerson 1994; Glendinning and McLaughlin 1993). The latter are potentially radical, involving as they do the recognition of claims based on caring. However, the basis of such benefits may not in fact be so clear cut. For example, the British invalid care allowance was introduced in recognition of the impact of caregiving on paid work, whereby it was therefore as a compensation for income foregone rather than as a wage for caring. The eligibility criteria for the benefit are also linked to the receipt or nonreceipt of other benefits by the person being cared for, which, as Lister (1995) has pointed out, also

means that it is not an independent citizenship benefit. This might be expected in a country in which the male breadwinner logic is still influential.

In the case of children, the individual right to parental leave is well established in a number of European countries, particularly in Scandinavia. But Heather Joshi's work has measured the costs of taking breaks from the labor market in income foregone due to reduced income during the break, missed or delayed promotion and possible downgrading on return, and possible return to part-time rather than full-time work (Joshi and Davies 1992). In addition, women have paid a price because of the high degree of sexual segregation in Scandinavian labor markets (Lewis and Astrom 1992).

In terms of the provision of care, there are four main possibilities: the state, the market, men, and women. State provision for adults and for children is much more developed in some countries than others (Phillips and Moss 1989; Jamieson 1990); for children the European "league tables" are especially well known. As some countries (primarily the United Kingdom, but similar developments are beginning in Finland) move toward the introduction of "quasi-markets"—in which the state continues to provide finance but expects the private and the voluntary sector to provide—more fees for service may be exacted from users (see Lewis and Glennerster 1996 on British developments with respect to care for elderly people). Recent research has revealed that a significant number of men care for adults, probably more than contribute significant amounts of care for children. In Britain one in four women aged 45–64 is a caregiver and one in six men, usually for a spouse, but women tend to devote more time to caring and to provide more intensive care.

The evidence we have on caregiving suggests that it is not possible to divorce the study of unpaid work and caring regimes from the position of women in relation to paid work. This becomes especially clear in the case of lone mothers, whose difficulties revolve around the necessity of providing cash and care. The possible sources of care available to lone mothers are reduced by the absence of the father, and therefore the possible sources of income in Northern European countries are threefold: the state, the labor market, and the father (in Southern Europe, charity continues to play an important role). Lone mothers have historically posed a difficult question for the male breadwinner model: In the absence of a breadwinner, is the mother to be treated primarily as a mother or as a breadwinner (Lewis 1986)? The answer earlier in the century was as a mother, in part due to the effect of maternalist campaigns.² But in the United States and to some extent in Britain and the Netherlands (where social assistance payments have

been relatively generous), the pendulum has begun to swing toward treating them as breadwinners.

To study further the relationship between paid work, unpaid work, and welfare in the rapidly changing configurations of welfare regimes, we perhaps need a new map based on the possible sources of cash and care and how and why they are combined for different groups of the population. (While we are interested primarily in differences between men and women, it is important to examine the differences between women: for example, between married and lone mothers and between black and white women.) It may be that we want to think more about measures that are clear statements of the “ought” with respect to women, in the manner of decommodification with respect to men. For example, in the case of single mothers it could be argued that their position as sole caregivers requires the right to package income (from the state, wages, and fathers), rather than the alternative of either paid work or welfare that many states have offered.

Thus, McLaughlin and Glendinning (1994) have suggested that we might think about defamilialization rather than decommodification, not in the sense of simple individualization, which has often been harnessed to the aim of getting women into the labor market (Luckhaus 1994), but rather in the sense of the terms and conditions on which people engage in their families. This would clearly encompass how far men and women were to be helped to reconcile paid and unpaid employment, and it leaves room for the idea that the right not to care (Land and Rose 1985) might be as important as the right to care. (It is, after all, part of the ethic of care that it should be voluntary.) It is also a formulation that encourages the study of the workings of private as well as public law. This is very important when custody arrangements for children on divorce are undergoing rapid change and the role of fathers in providing care as well as cash is becoming an active policy issue for both the political Left and Right in many countries. The concept of defamilialization promises to bring the focus back to the constituent concerns of a gender-centered approach. Furthermore, it is possible to construe the concept such that the vexed question of what is “good” for women is avoided; it is not assumed (as is the case with decommodification) that defamilialization is necessarily desirable. The aim of social policy must be to promote choice. This is recognized in the concept of decommodification as applied to men: the extent to which they are permitted not to engage in paid work. The problem is that women’s complicated relationship to paid work, unpaid work, and welfare means that we have to consider their right not to engage in paid work (decommodification) and by extension their right to do unpaid work, and also their right

to do paid work and by extension their right to not to engage in unpaid work. This makes the search for gender-centered measures a much more complicated business.

NOTES

1. I use the term social security in the European rather than the American sense.
2. On maternalism, see Bock and Thane (1991); Koven and Michel (1993); and Skocpol (1992).

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