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From Public to Private Maternalism? Gender and Welfare in Poland and Hungary after 1989

Abstract

This paper compares the political processes and gendered outcomes of welfare state formation in Hungary and Poland. We find both differences and similarities in the extent to which family and maternity policies in the two countries encourage women's paid work, support women's care giving work in the home, guard women and their families against poverty, and differentiate among women based on ethnic/racial classifications and class status. We argue that while welfare states in Western Europe may be increasingly characterized by a retreat from maternalist policies, Hungarian and Polish welfare policies support distinct forms of maternalism. While maternalism is privatized in Poland, it is publicly supported and subsidized in Hungary. We attempt to explain the divergence between the two countries by pointing to differences in class-based and gender-based political mobilization around family benefits as well as the timing of welfare reforms. Despite differences in the substance of the policies, however, we find that both regimes limit women's labor market opportunities.

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Introduction

What types of welfare regimes are emerging in former state-socialist countries? This analysis compares the processes of welfare state formation in Hungary and Poland. A great deal of scholarship has demonstrated the ways welfare policies differentially advantage or disadvantage social groups according to employment or family status, race, ethnicity, and gender, among other social markers (Bane and Ellwood 1994; Esping-Anderson 1990, 1999; Korpi 2001; Mink 1994; Yuval-Davis 1997). Recent comparative welfare state scholarship has addressed the ways in which gender differences in particular are constructed and reproduced by welfare institutions (Casper, McLanahan, and Garfinkel 1994; Lewis 1993; O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999; Orloff 1996; 1999, Sainsbury 1994; Sorensen 1999). Researchers have also examined the historical origins of gendered welfare state regimes, tracing policies back to their inception (Abramovitz 1996; Gordon 1994; Koven and Michel 1993; Ladd-Taylor 1994; Orloff 1993; Pederson 1993; Ruggie 1984; Sainsbury 1996; Skocpol 1992).

Most comparative research on gender and welfare to date has focused on advanced capitalist democracies (Lewis 2003). When scholarship does address post-socialist welfare provisions, most studies treat Central and Eastern European and post-Soviet countries as a homogeneous bloc, assuming that transitional processes have occurred or are occurring similarly and simultaneously in all countries in the region (Blossfeld and Mills 2003; Esping-Anderson 1996; Offe 1993).

This analysis contributes to a growing literature contrasting gendered welfare state formation during the transition from state socialism to capitalism in this region (Deacon 1992a and 1992b; Deacon and Szalai 1990; Einhorn 1993; Gal and Kligman 2000a and 2000b; Haney 2002; Jaquette and Wolchik 1998; Neményi 2003). We agree with Esping-Anderson assessment that post-socialist societies in Central and Eastern European comprise a "laboratory of experimentation" (1996, p. 267) in which new models of welfare provision may emerge. Work in this region promises to challenge existing theoretical assumptions by uncovering empirical realities that may or may not follow the historical trajectories of welfare states in developed capitalist societies.

We compare family policy formation in Hungary and Poland. In particular, we examine the ways in which emergent family, maternity and childcare policies are restructuring gender relations during the post-socialist period. Since 1989, policymakers in both countries have faced significant pressures to implement drastic reductions in state spending and to meet growing demands from citizens to strengthen the social safety net. Despite similar pressures and constraints, however, the emerging welfare provisions in Hungary and Poland vary a great deal in terms of generosity, eligibility criteria, and the targeting of benefits. While Hungary has pursued a form of "public maternalism" where benefits are provided to families through the state, Poland has pursued a form of "private maternalism" in which the market and the family have become the primary institutions of welfare provision. In spite of these differences, both types of maternalism have had similar negative consequences for women's labor force participation.

We begin our analysis by explaining the historical divergence between these two policy regimes, and describing the resultant family policy arrangements. Family policies refer to those policies directed at families to assist with and subsidize the costs of caring for children, including family benefits, maternity leave, maternity benefits, parental leave, state provided or subsidized childcare, and tax credits for children. We then analyze the impacts of these policies on women's economic citizenship.

Theoretical Determinants of Policy Formation

According to the "power resource model" of welfare state formation, working class mobilization played a key role in shaping welfare policies in Western capitalist democracies (Korpi 1989; Esping-Anderson 1990). A strong, centralized working class is often correlated with egalitarian and universal welfare policies, such as those found in Scandinavia. In contrast, countries with weak and decentralized unions often developed residual welfare policies, such as those found in the United States.

Countries with centralized yet *conservative* labor unions represent an exception to this pattern. In such countries, working class mobilization often leads to conservative policy arrangements that privilege a male breadwinner and offer few supports for women's paid labor. For instance, Esping-Anderson argues that Catholicism often reinforces highly *familialistic* welfare regimes in which state sponsored family benefits are underdeveloped and where the majority of welfare responsibilities are privatized within the family (1999, p. 45). In such cases, benefits neither replace nor supplement unpaid work by (mostly female) family members. The state provides little if any support for maternity leave, childcare, or other types of family provision. Thus, in addition to looking at the overall political strength of the working class and/or working class representatives, scholars of welfare policy formation must also analyze the gendered content of trade unions' political goals as well as the gendered consequences of trade unions' political alliances.

Feminist scholars of the welfare state have critiqued the power resources model for its lack of focus on gender relations. Through comparative analyses of welfare policy regimes, these scholars have analyzed the links between policies and gender inequalities by examining men's and women's relationships to paid and unpaid work (O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver 1999; Orloff 1993; Sainsbury 1994). This literature suggests that policy arrangements strongly influence a wide range of gender-specific outcomes, including the gender poverty gap (Casper, McLanahan, and Garfinkel 1994; Christopher et al. 2000; Christopher 2002; Kenworthy 1999), labor force participation rates (Browne 1997; Charles 1992; Quadagno 1990), and family structure (Orloff 1993).

Historical scholarship in this field has uncovered the ways in which women's agency has shaped both the substance and the form of welfare policies (Bock and Thane 1991; Koven and Michel 1993; Misra 1998; Skocpol 1992). This literature suggests that women's political mobilization—in the form of protests, political campaigns, and/or electoral behavior—has not necessarily promoted policies that encourage women's paid work (Lewis 1993; Misra 1998; Pedersen 1993). Further historical evidence suggests that policies resulting from women's political mobilization have not necessarily benefited all women or all women equally. Resulting policies often reflect the class and ethnic/racial biases of women reformers (Gordon 1994; Mink 1995; Skocpol 1992). Thus, to understand the gendered consequences of welfare arrangements, scholars must look at the ways in which women activists frame policy debates, as well as the ethnic/racial and class characteristics of the activists themselves.

More recent scholarship has uncovered the mechanisms by which political mobilization around family policies has shaped the ways in which gender roles are conceptualized and institutionalized through state provisions (Morgan and Zippel 2003). For instance, comparing the emergence of family policies in Britain and France, Misra (1998) argues that prevailing gender ideologies played a major role in policy formulation. The degree to which policies addressed women primarily as workers or as mothers was strongly influenced by political agents, including women's organizations and working class representatives.

Building on comparative analyses of welfare state formation, our analysis suggests another component critical for policy formation: namely, the timing of reforms. Time as a variable is important for policy outcomes for at least three reasons. First, political actors often time reforms strategically to achieve political, economic, or social goals. Those with formal power may try to impose changes early in the reform period to avoid political opposition in the short-run or they may delay changes in order to evade political fallout in the long run. Both of these tactics have been used at various points during the transition process in Central and Eastern Europe.

The timing of reform may also determine the consequences of policy changes. Draconian reforms implemented early in the reform process may lead to rapid increases in poverty and inequality, while delayed reforms may protect more vulnerable social groups over time by giving them a window of opportunity to adjust to changing economic and social conditions. Finally, the timing of reform may affect the ability of social actors to mobilize from below, and may determine the degree to which such mobilization influences policy. Early reforms may serve as an obstacle to mobilization simply because social actors lack critical resources with which to mobilize rapidly. Because political opposition was outlawed under socialism, for instance, it took social groups time to acquire political resources and to develop social networks necessary for organized political action. Policy changes that were implemented early in the reform process were unlikely to face the same degree of opposition as those that occurred later. Thus, we argue that the timing of policy changes must be added to the analysis of welfare state formation during periods of social change.

Political Mobilization in Hungary & Poland

Comparative scholarship suggests that the form and content of political mobilization affects policy formulation. How might these factors have influenced the direction of policy reform in Hungary and Poland during the post-state socialist period? The political power of working class representatives has been significantly stronger in Poland than in any other country in the region. The history of working class resistance to communist rule dates (at least) as far back as the mid-1950s, when Polish workers protested chronic shortages. In 1980, Solidarity, a nation-wide trade union, was established illegally and sponsored massive collective actions by Polish workers that nearly crippled the communist-led government. The state responded by violently suppressing the strikes and declaring martial law. However, Solidarity remained a source of mass, collective identity and protest, and by the end of the 1980s, the Communist Party was forced to negotiate with the leaders of what was at the time an officially illegal organization. Finally, in 1989, Poland's socialist regime was forced to cede power to the popularly elected, post-Solidarity coalition government (table 1).

Table 1. Timeline of Working Class Mobilization in Poland Under Communism

1956	Protest over shortages
1970s	Strikes and growing unrest over unmet demands for better social protection
1980	Emergence of Solidarity and worker strikes
1981	Martial Law declared
1988	New wave of strikes force Communist Party to negotiate with Solidarity
1989	Elections lead to Solidarity-led coalition government, headed by Mazowiecki
1990	Solidarity leader Lech Walesa elected President

Since the fall of communism and despite the ascension of Solidarity to formal political power, Poland has undergone a steady demobilization of the working class. In fact, trade unions such as Solidarity and the other major Polish trade union, *OPZZ*, have maintained power largely through formal political means. Having lost much of its mass oppositional support with the fall of communism, trade unions now influence policy through political parties and elected positions in legislative bodies. Post-Solidarity parties controlled Parliament immediately after the fall of communism in 1989 through 1993, and returned again to power in 1997. Despite gradual demobilization of the working class, the dominance of trade union representatives in formal political bodies has arguably increased the role of working class representatives in formulating welfare policy. Importantly, the politicization of trade unions has occurred alongside the massive displacement of women from positions in government.[1]

Closely linked to Solidarity's political influence is the social and political role of the Catholic Church in Polish society. Pope John Paul II and the church played a major political role before and after 1989, and there is little debate about the close relationship between Solidarity and the Church (Deacon 1992b). Prior to 1989 both organizations represented mass opposition to communism, and since 1989 both have cooperated in promoting a return to the traditional family of Poland's (re-imagined) pre-socialist era (Zielinska 2001). The post-1989 Solidarity government was openly pro-Catholic (Hauser 1995), and immediately introduced targeted welfare measures that aimed to return men to their position as family breadwinner and women to their rightful roles as wives and mothers.

One example of the tight linkage between Solidarity and the Church is the nearly constant presence of anti-abortion legislation on Parliament's agenda since 1989 (Zielinska 2000). Dating back to the 1980s, Solidarity has supported a strong anti-abortion platform, which is strongly endorsed by the Church. Indeed, soon after Lech Walesa was elected President he disbanded the women's section of Solidarity because of their continued efforts to oppose the criminalization of abortion. This move was hailed by Catholic leaders and signaled the close political relationship between Walesa's Solidarity Government and the Catholic Church.

Far from being an advocate of universal, egalitarian welfare policies, therefore, Solidarity has consistently sponsored conservative, familial welfare policies. As joblessness, economic uncertainty, and poverty have risen dramatically since 1989, Solidarity's primary goal has been to protect the employment of male workers, often at the expense of women's employment. Thus, while unemployed women comprise a mere 5 percent of those eligible for the government's public works program, they comprise a majority of the unemployed (Tarkowska 2001).

In contrast to Poland, Hungary is characterized by relatively decentralized and politically weak trade unions, which were discredited among workers under state socialism and have been politically marginalized in the post-socialist era. As a result, working class interests were not articulated during the policy debates before and immediately following Hungary's move towards means tested family policies in the mid 1990s. Instead, groups of middle class women mobilized against means tests by voicing their opposition to the changes in the voting booth, through the courts, and on the streets. Together with politicians from right wing oppositional parties, many women turned to the Constitutional Court to challenge the government's redefinition of the state's responsibilities toward the needs of families.

When the government proposed restructuring the socialist-era system of maternity and family benefits, women organized and marched on welfare agencies in Budapest. Haney (1997) argues that while shouting slogans such as "We Are Still Mothers!" these women identified themselves as deserving of benefits based on their status as mothers. The mobilization of middle class women in 1995 and 1996 was legitimated by their perceived entitlement to "motherhood" benefits, growing out of the maternalist nature of socialist era welfare policies.[2] Unlike maternalist movements in the formative years of Western welfare states (Gordon 1994; Skocpol 1992), however, these women did not call for policies that would support their permanent exit from the labor force. Rather, they called for a return to universal eligibility for the range of family and maternity policies, including paid maternity and long parental leaves, that they enjoyed under socialism. The long tradition of women's labor force participation went unchallenged; what was challenged were means tests, which made upper and upper middle-class women ineligible for benefits supportive of their need to combine paid work and caring labor.

Despite such opposition, Parliamentary debates over family policy reform led to a temporary elimination of some parental benefits and the introduction of means tests to restrict eligibility for other family benefits beginning in 1996. At stake in this political struggle was the previously universal guarantee of three years of state-supported maternity leave for Hungarian women. By mobilizing to protect such benefits, middle class Hungarian women were demanding that their roles as workers not diminish their "right" to long maternity leaves.

In the first elections following the introduction of means tests, Hungary's centrist-conservative party, *FIDESZ*, appropriated middle class women's agenda against liberal reforms. This was a smart and timely political move: since 1990, women were nearly as likely to vote in parliamentary elections as men, yet their interests were largely unarticulated until the late 1990s. *FIDESZ* successfully appealed to the female electorate; women were traditionally more likely to vote for this party than men (Fodor 1994). In 1998, running on a quasi-maternalist platform aimed at restoring maternity and family benefits for all women, *FIDESZ* was able to successfully garner political support from a broad spectrum of constituents, including many middle class, urban, and professional women. After handily defeating the Socialists, the newly elected government restored universal eligibility for family welfare policies and these policies have remained universally available ever since.

The timing of welfare reform also influenced the form and degree of class-based political responses in each country. In Poland, the post-Solidarity government that came to power in 1989 immediately replaced universal and work-based welfare policies with limited and targeted measures. Poland led the region in terms of the speed with which it pursued a neoliberal reform agenda (Hauser 1995), and this rapid reform strategy—combined with the overwhelming strength of the Solidarity governments' political capital in the earliest years of transition—limited the potential for popular protest against these changes. This limitation was in part by design. The reforms introduced by the first democratically elected government in Poland represented a deliberate, strategic attempt to use the post-89 euphoria to maximum political and economic advantage (Leven

1994). According to the rhetoric of the Polish shock therapy agenda, if some had to sacrifice in the short-run, all would be well in the long-run.

Women's groups remained numerically small and politically isolated during the earliest years of transition, and those few groups that were active in the early 1990s were preoccupied by the anti-abortion law that was passed in 1993.[3] As a result, many policy changes occurred in the near absence of women's political voice (Leven 1994). This period also witnessed massive removal of women from formal political office: in 1989 women comprised 20 percent of Parliamentary deputies but by 1990 this number had fallen to 12 percent (Leven 1994). This decline paralleled the removal of women from other positions of local and national political power—including but not limited to the purging of the women's section of Solidarity described above—which further facilitated the passing of reforms that would limit women's economic independence.

Unlike in Poland, the first democratically elected Hungarian government delayed reforms until the mid 1990s. The first conservative-nationalist Hungarian government (*HDF*) was resistant to cutting state spending on social welfare despite increasing pressures from the IMF and World Bank to do so. Instead this administration sought to increase social spending in order to avoid political unrest (Cook, Orenstein, and Rueschemeyer 1999). This conciliatory orientation changed by the mid-1990s with the ascension of the Socialist Party (the Communist Party successor) to power. Between 1995 and 1996, the Socialist-dominated government introduced means tests for family and maternity policies in accordance with the IMF's heavy-handed structural adjustment policy recommendations (aka the "Bokros plan"). These policies were instituted half a decade later in Hungary than in Poland, which increased the political vulnerability of the reform.

Following Misra (1998), we also attempt to discern the content of the rhetoric articulated by political actors, including working class representatives and women activists, regarding women's roles as workers and mothers. Polish working class representatives, committed to a male-breadwinner model of social policy consistent with the Church's conservative agenda, controlled government during the period in which family policies were reformulated. Thus family, child-care, and maternity benefits were heavily shaped by—and indeed reflected—the ideology of these class-based actors. Conservative attitudes about women's roles in the home and family led to the formation of policies that encouraged mothers' exit from the labor force and reinforced their reliance on their families for support.

Table 2. Mechanisms of Policy Formation

	Political power of trade union reps.	Influence of catholic church	Women's mobilization	Timing of reforms
Hungary	Low	Low	Medium	1994 1998
Poland	High	High	Low	1990/91

Hungarian middle-class women who mobilized to protect universal family benefits influenced prevailing ideology in a different manner. Class and ethnic/racial hierarchies within Hungarian society shaped this maternalist ideology, as did middle-class women's reliance on socialist-era tropes regarding the value of motherhood in Hungarian society. In contrast to Poland, the state rather than the traditional family was held responsible for supporting mothers and children, and the value of women's labor force attachment, if not direct participation, was better preserved.

Contrary to predictions of homogeneity or convergence, policy outcomes in post-socialist countries are contingent on national level political and social constraints that affect the timing and character of policy changes (see table 2 for a summary of these factors). Policy responses reflect external pressures as well as internal dilemmas and therefore are likely to vary widely across space and time. We now briefly review the content of family policies during socialism and analyze how policies have evolved since 1989.

Divergence in Policy Outcomes

Family Policies Pre-89

Socialist regimes enjoyed a near monopoly over the definition of needs, the implementation of welfare policies, and the distribution of state resources. This level of centralized control meant that the state could define social needs in a way that served its evolving political and labor supply requirements. Family policies were central components of the state's overall social engineering project, and despite some cross-country variation, there were a number of similarities in the ways in which family policies were formulated in this region prior to 1989. For instance, family policies tended to support national pro-natalist goals. While specifically pro-natalist policies varied by country and over time—in some instances dramatically (see Kligman 1998)—generous maternity leave benefits and state subsidies for child rearing enabled the state to achieve high female labor force participation with equally high fertility rates.

Communist rhetoric identified gender equality and a strong nuclear family as the central building blocks of socialist society. Although both men and women were expected to work outside the home—a radical break with gender roles in pre-war Europe—policy makers failed to transform the sex-based division of labor within the family. Family policies were targeted specifically at enabling women to balance paid and unpaid labor. For instance, following the birth of a child, women were expected to withdraw from the labor force for a specified period and to return full time thereafter. Other family-based provisions, such as subsidized childcare, further supported this goal. In this way, family policies enforced a gender-based division of labor within the family, which enabled women's participation in paid work while simultaneously limiting the quality of that participation (Fodor 2003).

State subjects were unable to directly influence social policy due to the lack of formal civil, political, or economic rights under socialism.[4] Absent citizenship rights and in the face of a centralized state apparatus that effectively suppressed social protest, state subjects played a minimal role in articulating needs from below and influencing social policy in a direct way.[5] At the end of the socialist period, these societies lacked a tradition of collective mobilization aimed at formulating and articulating political interests. However, the introduction of a democratic electoral process created a mechanism through which citizens could begin to make claims on the state. The introduction of democratic institutions also created a context in which political mobilization could occur from below. However, it took a period of time before the necessary resources and social networks could be developed in these societies through which citizens could articulate their political, economic, and social interests.

Family Policies Post-89

Our comparison of Polish and Hungarian family policies reveals substantial differences in terms of eligibility, support for women's paid labor, and the degree of differentiation among women by class status and racial/ethnic classification. However, despite significant cross-country differences in the design of family policies, both serve to constrain women's economic citizenship. By "class status" we refer to systematic differences in access to and control over resources (Acker 2006). To the extent that policies distinguish among women based on their class position in terms of eligibility or generosity of benefits, we argue that such policies risk reinforcing class-based hierarchies. By "ethnicity" we refer to cultural distinctions among populations based on social differences. In the post- socialist context, the primary ethnic group is the Roma minority. However, we include the term “racial classifications” to refer to the process of racialization of the Roma that is currently taking place throughout the region. Racialization occurs when distinctions based on social differences (i.e., ethnicity) are increasingly constructed by the ethnic majority as biologically-based (Emigh, Fodor, and Szelenyi 2001; Smedley 1993; Williams 1989). To the extent that racial/ethnic classifications become institutionalized in terms of distribution of and eligibility for social benefits, we argue that such policies risk reproducing racialized ideas about the ethnic minority (Abramovitz 1996; Amott 1990; Quadagno 1994), in this case the Hungarian Roma.[6]

Eligibility

Even before 1989 there existed differences in terms of the bases of entitlement to parental and family benefits in Hungary and Poland, although these differences were mostly technical in nature. In Poland women could claim maternity benefits on the basis of employment. Since practically all women were employed, however, this criterion was no different from the situation in Hungary after 1985, when maternity benefits became universally available. As noted above, the term “entitlement” is somewhat ill fitted to describe the paternalist welfare provisions under socialism. However, by the mid 1990s, people came to understand their rights (or lack thereof) as citizens of an increasingly economizing state apparatus. During this period, important differences in the basis of eligibility for family benefits emerged in the two countries.

Following a brief period of means-testing, Hungary reinstated universal entitlements for parental leaves and family allowances.[7] Universal benefits tend to be advantageous for recipients because they are less stigmatized and politically vulnerable and allow individuals to claim benefits independent of family relations or employment. Thus, coverage for both family leave and allowances is significantly higher in Hungary than in Poland. However, despite universal eligibility, the value of these benefits has declined significantly since 1989. The value of family allowances declined over the course of the 1990s from 40 percent to approximately 20 percent of the net average income. In 2000, parental leave benefits were about 80 percent of the minimum wage or about 30 percent of net average earnings (Lukacs and Frey 2003). Thus, while all women are entitled to long parental leaves, the financial costs of doing so are steep and rising.

In Poland, neither benefit may be claimed on the basis of universal rights, both are means tested, and parental leaves/allowances can only be claimed by women who have spent at least a year in the labor force. Because means tested benefits have a greater potential for stigmatizing recipients and because parental leave is used nearly exclusively by women, eligibility restrictions threaten the social and political status of mothers. Indeed, women are increasingly dependent on families (and/or on the labor market) for income maintenance in Poland; the state intervenes only in cases of family and market failure (see table 3 for a breakdown of eligibility differences in Hungary and Poland).

Recent survey data provide some evidence of the consequences of the divergence between Hungary and Poland in terms of eligibility criteria. While the percent of Hungarians and Poles who report eligibility for poverty assistance, old age and disability benefits, and unemployment benefits is comparable, only 6 percent of Polish respondents report they are eligible for childcare and maternity leave benefits, compared to 30 percent of Hungarian respondents (see table 4). This disparity is striking given that 20 percent of households in both countries include a child under age six. In Hungary, the percentage of households receiving maternity and childcare benefits is actually greater than the percentage of households with young children due to the availability of (1) a third type of maternity leave, *GYET*, available to women with three or more children and (2) extended leaves for single mothers and parents with sick or disabled children. Thus while the majority of Polish families with young children receive no benefits whatsoever, a certain proportion of Hungarian families with older children as well as a larger proportion of families with young children receive benefits (see table 5).

Table 3. Basis of Entitlement

	Hungary	Poland
Family benefits	Universal	Means tested
Parent benefits	Universal	Means tested
Coverage	High	Low
Parental leave	Universal	Means-tested and insurance-based
Expected consequences	Inclusive and thus minimally stigmatizing to recipients. Level of benefits limits effective balance between paid and unpaid labor.	Highly restrictive and potentially stigmatizing eligibility requirements. Encourages dependence on unpaid family members.

Table 4. Eligibility and Receipt of State Transfers in 2000[a]

	Hungary		Poland	
	% Eligible	% Received	% Eligible	% Received
Childcare/Mat'y Leave	30	30	6	5
Poverty Assistance	4	3	3	3
Old Age/Disability	32	30	35	34
Unemployment	10	9	10	10
N	474	451	404	384
% of population	76	72	53	52

Source: Poverty, Ethnicity, and Gender during Market Transition Surveys, 2000. Authors' calculations.

[a] Eligibility is the percent of respondents who report they are eligible to receive each benefit. Received is the percent of respondents who report that they actually received each benefit for which they are eligible.

Support for Paid Work

State policies, particularly those that directly address child rearing, strongly influence women's ability to combine work and family obligations. Parental leave policies therefore regulate women's relationship to the labor market, sometimes encouraging mothers to withdraw from the labor force, and sometimes allowing a balance between work and family obligations.

Hungary, unlike Poland, allows women on maternity leave to work part time after their child's first birthday. At least in theory, this permits women to retain some of their ties with the labor force and facilitate a potential return. Both countries allow time spent on maternity leave to count as paid work toward pensions. However, while this benefit is available to all mothers in Hungary, only a fraction of Polish women can take advantage of the same regulation because this benefit is both means tested and insurance-based.

Table 5. Percent of Households with Children in 2000

	Any child	At least one child age six or younger
Hungary	42	20
Poland	48	20

Source: Poverty, Ethnicity and Gender during Market Transition Surveys, 2000. Authors' calculations.

Middle-class Polish women who are ineligible for paid maternity leave must rely financially on their husbands or other family members while out of the labor force to rear children.

Affordable childcare represents another benefit critical for women's labor force participation. While precise numbers on state spending on childcare facilities are unavailable, cross-country differences in the number of children in nursery school (for 0–3 year olds) and kindergarten (3–6 year olds) are instructive. Neither state provides public care for children under age three: only 2 percent of Polish children and 10 percent of Hungarian children under age three are enrolled in nursery school. However, wide variation appears when we consider state-funded day care for children aged 3–6 years. In Hungary, the vast majority of such children—over 85 percent—are in public kindergartens (a slight percentage increase from 1990). While some private day care centers exist, fewer than 10 percent of Hungarian children are enrolled in private facilities. The majority is enrolled in state-run, state-subsidized kindergartens.

In Poland, only 33 percent of children are cared for in public kindergartens. Polish women must make their own arrangements within the family or on the market; however, the costs of private childcare are prohibitive for most Polish women. Following the reforms of 1989–90, which drastically reduced state subsidies for childcare, the average monthly costs of private childcare quadrupled, equaling over 80 percent of women's average monthly wages (Leven 1994). Thus, while the state provides only minimal childcare for Polish women, the market remains an impractical alternative.

In sum, state policies in Hungary and Poland encourage and enable women's labor force participation to different degrees. Neither country provides support for those who care for children under the age of three. In Hungary, women are allowed up to three years of parental leave following the birth of a child, while in Poland working women must drop out of the labor force to care for their children or depend on non-working or retired relatives. Thus, few women in either country are able to return to work a few months after childbirth, should they need or want to. In Hungary, state supports are provided to all mothers who wish to stay at home and rear their children. However, given the declining value of the benefits, women who accept this option potentially assume significant economic risk.

In theory, Hungarian women are also permitted a slow reintegration into paid work towards the end of their leave, although in practice this option is unrealistic for most women (Fodor and Glass 2007). While women are guaranteed job security during maternity leave, interviews with Hungarian employers suggests that few women are rehired by their former employers.[8] Thus, while long paid leaves enable women to care for children in the short run, these benefits hurt women's employment chances in the long run.

In Poland, sixteen weeks of birthing leave is obligatory; Article 180 of the Polish Labor Code stipulates that employers may face sanctions if female employees continue to work during this period.[9] However, following this period, most women must return to work or quit their jobs, depending on their ability to pay for private childcare or to rely on non-working relatives. The proportion of children in state daycare is extremely low, as is the proportion of women eligible for maternity leave. Overall, therefore, maternity and childcare policies in Poland encourage women to drop out of the labor force following childbirth and to remain out until their children reach school age. These policies place women in highly dependent positions; they must rely on their spouses or other family members for their well being while rearing children (see table 6).

Class and Ethnic/Racial Hierarchies

State policies often create distinctions not only between men and women, but also among women based on class, ethnic and/or

Table 6. Support for Paid Work

	Hungary	Poland
Eligibility for parental leave	All workers	Poor workers
Leave allows part-time work?	Yes[a]	No
Leave counts as paid work toward pensions?	Yes[b]	Yes
% Children in kindergarten[c]	85%	33%
Consequences	In theory enables balance between paid/unpaid work	Minimal support for balance between paid/unpaid work

[a] After child's first birthday.

[b] All women are eligible in Hungary, whereas only a small fraction is eligible in Poland.

[c] Children under age three in both countries are cared for at home. While all Hungarian working women can rely on guaranteed maternity leave, non-insured, non-poor Polish women must drop out or rely on family members to care for children until age three.

racial distinctions (Mink 1994, 1995; Quadagno 1990, 1994). The emerging social policy regime in Hungary, while more inclusive and generous than Poland, is more extreme in its efforts to track women into different tiers of eligibility and to distribute benefits accordingly.

Family benefits are given as a lump sum to all families in both countries, although in some instances distinctions are made according to family size. For instance, family benefits in both countries increase up to the third child and remain constant thereafter. Such distinctions exacerbate class differences in both countries and bear distinctly racialized undertones in Hungary where the Roma minority is disproportionately likely to fall in the large family category. In her recent work on Hungarian welfare practices, Szalai found that policies are inscribed with "covertly racialized rules" that distinguish among "deserving" and "undeserving" recipients in the eligibility screening process, often disqualifying large Roma families. Not only are large Roma families less likely to pass the pre-screening process but Roma families that do receive benefits receive smaller amounts of aid (Szalai 2005).

As the real value of family benefits has declined, they have been gradually replaced with another type of child rearing benefit in Hungary: child tax credits. However, tax credits are available only for those who earn enough to claim them—particularly middle class families with sufficiently high taxable incomes. Thus, only 42 percent of Hungarian families are unable to take full advantage of what is essentially a middle class (and non-Roma) form of family support (Mózer 2001).

In addition to child and family benefits, distinctions are also made in the availability of maternity leave benefits. Both countries provide a more generous insurance-based payment immediately following the birth of a child (100 percent of pay in Poland and 70 percent of pay in Hungary). After birth maternity benefits become single-tracked in Poland and multi-tracked in Hungary. In Poland the primary distinctions are made between women eligible for maternity leave and those who are not; those who are ineligible are left out of the system altogether. In 1999, however, Hungary instituted a three-tier system of maternity benefits. The first is a two-year insurance based benefit for employed women. The second tracks are both universal tracks: one is a three-year leave available to all women and the second is a special track for career housewives, defined as mothers with three or more children with at least one under the age of eight.

The first insurance-based track is linked to past income and provides wage replacement at a rate of 70 percent. This benefit replaces

Table 7. Are Class and Ethnic/Racial Differentiation Inscribed in Policy?

	Hungary	Poland
Tax credits for children?	Yes	No
Multiple tiers of leave	Three-tier system[a]	Single-tier system
Multiple tiers of benefits	Three-tier system	Single-tier system
Distinctions among recipients	Class and ethnicity	Class and employment status

[a] First tier is a two-year, insurance-based benefit tied to previous earnings. Thus this benefit serves a wage-replacing function for workingwomen. Unlike the first tier, the second and third tiers are universal. There is a three-year benefit guaranteed for all women and third tier benefit for "career housewives"—those women with three or more children under the age of eight. Both universal tiers provide benefits equal to the sum of the minimum pension.

wages more generously than the other two benefits, both of which equal the sum of the minimum pension. Middle-class, non-Roma women are better able to take advantage of this benefit, while poor women and minority women receive a less generous—albeit universally available—provision. In Hungary, as compared to Poland, family policies reinforce class and ethnic/racial distinctions among women regarding the types and generosity of benefits women may receive (see table 7).

Empirical Consequences of Policy Formations

At the end of the state socialist period, female employment rates in Hungary and Poland were among the highest in the world. Following the birth of a child, women would drop out of the labor force for up to three years and return to their previous jobs. How have policy changes affected women's employment opportunities?

In Poland, policy changes have increased women's dependence within the family; women must depend either on wage-earning husbands or non-working (usually female) family members to care for children. The decline of public childcare in 1989 contributed to a new private, familial system of care, what Siemienska calls "an intergenerational resource flow," in which non-working parents and grandparents care for children (2002, p. 193). Simienska (2002) found that over the course of the decade from 1985 to 1995, the proportion of women who rely on family help (particularly grandmothers) has increased from 10 percent to nearly 60 percent. Furthermore, the proportion of women who leave work without benefits has tripled, from 5 percent to 15 percent. Most new mothers have two choices: return to work immediately following their sixteen-week maternity leave and rely on family members to care for young children or, if no family members are available, drop out of the labor force to care for their children themselves. Given already low wages and high job insecurity, even low-wage workers who are eligible for childcare leaves often cannot risk taking long leaves for fear of losing their jobs.

In Hungary, the major consequence of policy reform has been a reinforcement of women's dependence on the state. All working women in Hungary are eligible for three years of paid maternity leave and most women continue to take long leaves. There is almost no day care provision for children under three, thus women who desire shorter leaves have limited options for childcare. In theory, the state guarantees job security for mothers. However in practice, the state does little to enforce this law and women are often terminated upon their return from leave. While both men and women are eligible for leave, in practice men rarely leave work to care for children. Thus, by granting women long leaves, family policies reinforce women's roles as caretakers and mothers and potentially undermine their opportunities in the labor market. These policies also increase the likelihood that women will be limited in their employment choices. They may be pushed into "feminized" jobs or sectors where turnover is less costly for employers (e.g., low paid service jobs) or they may be slotted into "mommy tracks" within more lucrative, professional jobs, thus limiting their wage earning capacity and promotion potential. Finally, by not enforcing women's right to return to their jobs, state policies support women's employment in theory only. In practice, long, underpaid, universal childcare leaves undermine women's ability to sustain paid employment and to achieve full economic independence.

How are these differences reflected in female employment rates in Poland and Hungary? Between 1989 and 1993, women's employment rates dropped much more sharply in Poland than in Hungary. Job loss was particularly severe for Polish women with children age six or younger; only 64 percent of women with young children continued to work, compared to about 83 percent of women with young children in Hungary. Furthermore, while only about 12 percent of Hungarian women were either unemployed or keeping house in 1993, nearly 30 percent of Polish women were out of a job. The sharp differences that emerged between Hungary and Poland by 1993 are indicative of the speed and timing of reform in Poland. Whereas Poland instituted major cutbacks in supports for women and families in 1989 and 1990, Hungary delayed such reforms until the mid to late 1990s. By 2000, employment rates in Hungary and Poland once again converged and the employment rates of women with young children continued to drop significantly in both countries. The difference remains, however: in Hungary 41 percent of women with young children are in paid employment while in Poland the figure is 34 percent. The fact that women with young children were hardest hit by changes in welfare policies suggests that while the structure of welfare benefits varies a great deal in the two countries, both nascent regimes hurt women's ability to sustain paid work and achieve financial independence.

Discussion and Conclusion

How do emerging gender welfare regimes in Hungary and Poland compare with trends in welfare policy formation in Western Europe? Several scholars have observed trends in the European Union, which increasingly support women and men's full employment outside the home. Orloff (2006) argues that welfare regimes in Western Europe and North America are increasingly moving away from social supports for women's full-time care giving toward requiring paid employment for all—a trend she describes as "a farewell to maternalism" throughout the advanced capitalist world. Indeed, public supports for women's full-time childcare responsibilities have all but disappeared in Scandinavian countries and all European Union countries are facing growing pressure to support women's entrance into paid employment (Orloff 2006).

In sharp contrast, our analysis suggests that emerging policy regimes in Hungary and Poland show marked continuity with socialist era maternalism, which supported women's extended retreat from paid work following childbirth. However, the content and form of maternalist policy formation vary between these countries. Hungary developed a form of "public maternalism" where the state in principle continues to provide support for children in the form of parental paid leaves and public childcare for children over age three. In contrast, Poland has pursued a distinctly "private maternalism," characterized by declining public supports and increasing privatization of care work in the family. Hungarian mothers as well as grandmothers are paid by the state to care for children full-time in the home, whereas the privatization of welfare in Poland—including the disappearance of public childcare since the early 1990s—has forced most mothers to either depend on wage-earning husbands, to purchase child care on the market (although the prices are prohibitively high for many), or to depend on unpaid, retired grandmothers to provide care (table 8).

According to Morgan and Zippel (2003), long maternity leaves in Western Europe were shaped by a combination of conservative social

Table 8. Family policy regimes in Hungary and Poland

Hungary	Poland
Public maternalism	Private maternalism
Universal public support for women to care for young children at home.	Non-generous benefits and highly-restricted eligibility.
Leave encourages/requires long parental leaves for all women.	Little or no public support for balancing work and family.
Long leaves create obstacles for women's labor market participation, despite job protection.	Family provides welfare rather than the state or market.
Women as mothers claim benefits as universal entitlements.	Dependence on nuclear family encouraged for mothers of young children; paid work discouraged.

policies promoted by reforming governments, high unemployment rates that supported women's retreat from paid work, and resulting political and social tensions around family policies and women's roles. Similarly, both public and private forms of maternalism described above were shaped by the social conservatism of the political elites in power at the time policy changes were implemented. In Hungary, the strength of political support for maternalism among middle class women reinforced the trend towards protecting public supports for mothers. In Poland, very little political mobilization among women took place around these issues. Instead, the leaders of the Solidarity government with the strong support of the Catholic Church pursued social policies that both reinforced pre-socialist gender norms and protected men's employment during periods of rapid job loss. This government also instituted rapid reductions in state spending, which further justified cutbacks in social supports for women's work and caretaking.

Our characterization of Hungary as a public and Poland as a private maternalist regime aligns somewhat with Mahon's characterization of new familialism in European countries such as France and Finland (Mahon 2002). According to Mahon (2002), these childcare regimes were shaped by conservative ideologies regarding gender roles that support long parental leaves for women and subsidies for stay-at-home mothers. Whereas Mahon's description of the new familialism corresponds to the pattern of welfare provision in Hungary, it does not describe the private maternalism we discovered in Poland. Instead, this form of private maternalism is more similar to the male breadwinner model of social welfare found in Germany or Austria through the 1980s. However, what distinguishes Poland from these earlier models is that male incomes are largely insufficient to support families. Thus, the lack of state supports for caregiving responsibilities, declining public and political support for women's paid employment, and men's relatively low wages create a far greater degree of vulnerability for Polish as compared to German or Austrian families.

Despite wide variations, both types of maternalist regimes impede women's participation in paid work and limit their occupational and professional mobility. Both the lack of paid leave and public childcare in Poland and the extended leaves in Hungary reduce mothers' overall labor force participation rate, create barriers for women's reentry into the highly competitive labor market, and push women into lower-paying sectors of the economy. As long parental leaves have done in Western Europe (Morgan and Zippel 2003), both private and public maternalist policies reinforce the gender division of labor in the family and increase women's dependence on wage-earning husbands. During a period of high job insecurity, declining real wages, and cutbacks in social spending, women's paid employment remains vulnerable and tenuous. As women's incomes have become increasingly vital to the economic stability of families, social policies have moved away from securing and protecting women's paid employment.

NOTES

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1. Following the first free elections in 1989, women's representation in Parliament dropped from 20 to 13 percent, declining even further to 10 percent in 1993 (Fuszara 2000).

2. Hungarian family benefits became universal rather than employment based in 1985. This change was motivated by the state's dual desires to reduce the overall labor force during a period of economic recession and to increase birthrates (especially among middle class, educated women). By reducing female labor force participation through generous and universal benefits, the state avoided unemployment and, by extension, any threat to the legitimacy of the socialist regime (Haney 2002).

3. The authors thank Silke Steinhilbert for emphasizing this point.

4. T.H. Marshall considered three types of citizenship: civil, political, and social. By civil rights, Marshall referred to "rights necessary for individual freedom" including freedom of speech, freedom of religion, property rights, contractual rights, etc. Political rights included "the right to participate in the exercise of political power as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body." Finally, by social rights, Marshall referred to rights to economic well-being, economic security, and material equality with others (Marshall (1950) 2000, p. 32)

5. This is not quite precise. State policy makers did indirectly respond to perceived pressures from below and occasionally solicited opinions from experts and political advisors. However, the absence of democratic elections and the state's demonstrated willingness to suppress political organization outside the party—sometimes violently—meant that demands from below could not be articulated in a way that would have achieved serious influence on policy outcomes.

6. The Roma represent a relatively sizeable minority in Hungary but not in Poland. Our analysis of class-based distinctions encoded in policy will consider both regimes, whereas our analysis of ethnic/racial distinctions will focus exclusively on Hungarian social policy.

7. Paragraphs 2 and 19 of LXXXIV/1998 "Law on Family Support" declare that all Hungarian citizens and legal refugees can claim parental leaves, parental allowances, and family allowances.

8. In 2004, the authors interviewed over thirty employers in the Hungarian finance sector who argued that by guaranteeing women long maternity leaves, state policies provided employers with incentives to fire female employees upon their return. To circumnavigate legal job

guarantees, employers rely on authorized stipulations that allow employers to dismiss workers if their job has been eliminated during the period of leave. Administrative renaming of positions enables employers to fire women with impunity. The employers in our sample estimated that 70–100% of workers are not rehired following maternity leave.

9. Several women's groups, including the Women's Rights Center, have fought the labor code's obligatory clause on the grounds that it creates inflexibility for female workers who must negotiate the terms of their leaves with employers (Nowakowska and Swedrowska 2000).

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