Farewell to Maternalism?: State Policies, Feminist Politics and Mothers’ Employment

Ann Shola Orloff
Professor of Sociology, Gender Studies and Political Science
Director of Gender Studies
Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, USA
a-orloff@northwestern.edu
Can We Support Care and Gender Equality?

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1. Introduction: Gender, Equality, and Care in the Rich Democracies

- “Farewell to maternalism” in the US and other rich capitalist democracies?
- Changing gender policy logics: from supporting women as full-time caregivers (in households headed by breadwinning men or as single mothers) to requiring and supporting employment for all, with different conditions for care and for gender equality (dual earner/dual carer; dual-earner; one and one-half earners)
- A change in the feminist project -- from maternalism to employment and care as the basis of political claims?
- Gender, care, employment, taxes, pensions, perceived “racial”/ethnic composition of population, fertility and immigration -- complicated connections
From documenting gendering to understanding possibilities of degendering (while staying aware of possibilities for reinscribing gender differences, recreating gender inequalities that may mix in new ways with racial and class inequalities)

The book will answer three questions:

- Is there a farewell to maternalism? (what is maternalism and how does it differ from the “male breadwinner” model? how does it inform citizenship-based provision?)
- Why have these changes occurred? What is the place of gender in theorizing political change?
- What are the political opportunities and dangers for advocates of gender equality in these shifts? Should we bid farewell to maternalism? Should we embrace the dual-earner/dual carer model? What are the policy and political options available? How do these differ across countries and regions?
Maternalism as a form of claiming “equality in difference”?

- “Maternalism” may be defined as "ideologies and discourses which exalted women's capacity to mother and applied to society as a whole the values they attached to that role: care, nurturance and morality" (Koven and Michel, *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* [New York: Routledge, 1993], p.4)

- Women entered the political sphere on the basis of "difference," attempting to rearticulate gender difference to equal citizenship claims (with some limited success)

- Maternalism (a feminist project?) vs. familialism and “male breadwinner” ideologies -- all assume gender difference, but maternalism challenged patriarchal ideologies and practices linking women's "difference" to inequality, dependency and exclusion from politics
Social Provision/Regulation and Gender

• The most visionary feminist/maternalist reformers called for universal motherhood endowments for full-time caregivers or generous family allowances plus equal pay for women.

• Nowhere did (nascent) “welfare states” embody feminist ideals of women’s individuality and independence -- maternalist aspects of policy present but subordinate.

• Policy-makers mainly responded to gendered demands of workingmen to secure their core masculine status of breadwinner (supports to fathers and husbands or through more universal support to workers, predominantly men).

• Linkage of social provision to eugenics, nationalism, religious chauvinism (“boundaries of welfare”)

On the road to gender equality?

- Women’s labor force participation up since WW2, but social policies “lag,” especially in terms of “work/family reconciliation” or “work/life balance”
- 1960s-1970s: breadwinner/caregiver model questioned; reforms dismantled some elements of maternalist/breadwinner policies
  - US, Canada, Britain, Australia: “maternalist” assumptions of sole-parent provision intact (formally), but some “protective” legislation outlawed and system of social provision made gender-neutral; anti-discrimination and affirmative action transform workplaces
    - Nordic countries: public child care, beginning of “dual earner/dual carer”
  - (Much of) Continental Europe: strengthening of support for “traditional” families through generous family social provision, but other concessions to gender equality
Evidence for change in gender policy logics -- completed in the Nordic countries, well underway in the (predominantly) Anglophone countries, starting in Continental Europe and East Asia?

- Policy changes: from a breadwinner/caregiver policy model to an “adult worker model” or “dual earner” (or “one and one half worker”?) or “dual-earner/dual carer” model:
  - full-time caregiving no longer supported, though may be sustained for temporary periods (e.g., parental leaves, time-limited social assistance);
  - development of public care services and/or tax subsidies to private services;
  - elimination/erosion of dependents’ benefits in retirement provision;
  - encouragement of mothers’ employment through tax credits, training or counseling, child care subsidies and service provision
- Women’s citizenship, political standing, and capacity to claim social benefits are based on employment or employment plus parenthood
What explains gendered policy and political changes, and variation in policies to support mothers’ employment?

• Women’s increasing labor force participation plus demographic changes? …but these are not exogenous to political processes… Variation in politics and policies -- a farewell in some places and not others?

• Literature on welfare states, social policy regimes: “politics matter.” But what about politics matters for mothers’ employment and gender equality? How does gender matter?

• Mainstream theories: recent attention to issues about family/fertility, care, activation, taxation; focus on reconciliation; regimes still defined in terms of workers, employers, states; gender matters as a set of outcomes, not as a set of “inputs”
Figure 10.9 Female labor profiles in a cross-national context on the basis of the continuity and extent of labor force participation
Women’s Employment and Children

- Women aged 25-52 with no children under age 15
- Women aged 25-54 with one child under age 15
- Women aged 25-54 with two or more children under age 15

* Children under age 16
^ Employment constitutes both full and part-time employment

Data taken from Table 2.4, OECD Employment Outlook 2001, Page 77. Figures from 2000, except United States, from 1999.
Mothers' to Fathers' Employment Rates
(Parents in Couples)

Dual-earner couples include part-time and full-time workers.
Employed Mothers' to Fathers' Hourly Wages
(Parents in Couples)

Source: Gornick & Meyer 2003
Mothers' Share of Parents' Total Earnings
(Parents in Couples)

Source: Gornick & Meyer 2003
What explains gendered policy and political changes, and variation in policies to support mothers’ employment?

• Women’s increasing labor force participation plus demographic changes? …but these are not exogenous to political processes… Variation in politics and policies -- a farewell to maternalism in some places and not others, where, perhaps, maternalism is being reconfigured rather than eliminated?

• Literature on welfare states, social policy regimes: “politics matter.” But what about politics matters for mothers’ employment and gender equality? How does gender matter?

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Gendering explanatory accounts of mothers’ employment policies:

Gendered accounts suggest expanded notions of political agency, an expanded set of institutions, and more expansive way of understanding familiar institutions:

- Women as political actors (e.g., “maternalists,” women’s movements and anti-feminist groups)
  
  Note: no assumption that women or men form coherent, politically-unified groups with common interests, ideas; intersectionality, contingent historical construction of gendered political actors

- Gendered goals, ideologies, cultural assumptions of all political actors: “social partners,” defenders of breadwinning fatherhood, state officials, political and policy entrepreneurs, religious leaders, intellectuals

- Gendered division of labor: organization of labor markets and of care/domestic work (with links to reproduction and sexuality)

- Gendered power relations, in polity and elsewhere
Explaining politics and policies relevant to mothers’ employment: Institutions, political economy, biopolitics

- The welfare regime, encompassing the ways in which states, markets, families, and civil society provide income and care
- The labor market: looseness or rigidity of labor regulations, implications for core/secondary workers; other features of political economy (e.g., wage regulation, extent of manufacturing versus service sector)
- Polity (e.g., electoral system; state capacities and structure)
- Nation, race, citizenship: state and nation formation, issues of inclusion and exclusion, immigration; perceived population heterogeneity; how family, welfare, care and employment policies are (or are not) racialized, or how such diversity (or lack thereof) contributes to political (dis)unity
Sweden: the paradigmatic dual earner/dual carer policy regime

- Social-democratic hegemony
- Social partners favorable to mothers’ employment
- Universalist policy regime with extensive benefits to citizens
- Women’s equality movements: support to earner-caregivers and to men’s care; lack of strong gender-conservative forces; women’s mobilization within a strong social-democratic movement
- Precedents for mothers’ “right to work,” women workers’ right to be mothers; dual-earner regime established prior to fiscal constraints
- Perceived ethnic homogeneity, lack of divisions around race or immigration at critical juncture of establishing dual-earner regime
- Labor market: expanding labor supply in the 1960s-70s: women rather than guest workers
- Questions: Sweden as a model of gender equality -- the problem of “Swedophilia” and portability; the challenge of “choice” and diversity; enduring gender differences?
The US: policy change ("welfare reform" and activation) as the triumph of neo-liberalism?

- Strength of center-right and business, weakness of unions and center-left: Welfare reform and the end of maternalism as a victory of neo-liberalism?
- State officials and politicians have mixed views on mothers’ employment, emphasizing the importance of “choice,” but no public support for either familial caregiving or mothers’ employment: Welfare reform as retrenchment?
- Race, nation, citizenship: “American exceptionalism” and racism: Welfare reform and end of maternalism as victory of racism?
- Women’s equality movements and their opponents: Christian conservative movements favor policies promoting “traditional” gender, family, sexual relations; racialized understandings of motherhood: Welfare reform and the end of maternalist policy as a victory of social conservatism hostile to poor black single mothers and to “illegitimacy”?
The US: a dual-earner regime based on the market (a gender policy logic of “employment for all”)?

Welfare reform enacted under Clinton, with little protest from his allies: why did Democrats, feminists and socially liberal interest groups “convert” on the subject of welfare reform, reject maternalism, converge on “employment for all”?

- Policy legacy of dualism, few alternatives to employment;
- US unusual in emphasis on maternalist policy among working-aged population, but lack of broader coverage for care needs;
- Employment-oriented feminism emphasizing civil rather than social rights, and maternalist legacy seen as barrier to equal opportunity;
- Relatively open and unregulated labor market: encourages (affirmative action, etc.) and permits mothers’ employment (market-based services);
- US political institutions, “wedge politics,” racialization of welfare;
- Fiscal constraints
The other sides of US policy: Make work pay for women and men?

Democratic welfare reform: “ending welfare as we knew it” (and “employment for all”), but “make work pay” -- an instance of “Third way” policymaking for neoliberal times?: Clinton’s expansion of employment-based policy:

- Family and Medical Leave Act,
- expansion of Earned Income Tax Credit,
- expansion of children’s health insurance,
- increase in minimum wage,
- child care subsidies

Current initiatives: health insurance; paid family leave; a broader program of social investment -- especially “investing in human capital” via programs for (poor or all) children; reinvigorating unions
Paid Family Leave:
Fully Paid Weeks Allowed, Following Birth or Adoption

includes: national social insurance programs, earnings-related benefits

Norway: 42
Sweden: 42
Denmark: 37
Finland: 29
Netherlands: 16
France: 16
Germany: 14
Belgium: 12
UK: 5
USA: 0

Gornick and Meyer, 2003
Early Childhood Education and Care:
Enrollment in Publicly-Provided or Publicly-Subsidized Care.

Source: Gornick & Meyer 2003
Workers' Average Annual Hours in Paid Work

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<thead>
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<td>Japan</td>
<td>1821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1834</td>
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Source: Gornick & Meyer 2003
The other sides of US policy:
Open opportunities for women and men of diverse backgrounds?

- Anti-discrimination and affirmative action
- Diversity, tolerance and pluralism as political values
- Sexuality and body rights

Challenges? Is the US a model (given spread of neo-liberalism, and/or increased flows of labor/immigration)? Ameriphobia?

The challenge of diversity in the rich democracies
Continental Europe: “ciao” to maternalism or familialism?

Paid work and family (reproduction/fertility) at odds, given the lack of market or public services to replace women’s familial care work and the inflexibility of paid work for caregivers. Challenges:

• Problems of agency/political and social mobilization for reforms (orientations towards women’s employment; influence of Christian Democratic parties) – a mobilization deficit?
• Problems of resources -- sunk costs in existing commitments makes it difficult to allocate resources to new purposes
• Problems of discourse, cultural preferences and public opinion, especially many women’s attachment to maternalism; influence of the Catholic Church, opposed to maternal employment
• Labor market focused on “insiders,” states uneven in their encouragement to development of services (public or private)
• Tensions over immigration and citizenship (“boundaries of welfare”), with some links to caregiving and fertility
European lessons?

- France: Historical commitment to mothers’ employment and education of children -- for natalist and anti-clerical reasons; policies developed in the interwar years continue to be used to support mothers’ employment.

- The Netherlands: “Dutch disease” gives way to “Dutch miracle,” “activation” policies reverse longstanding breadwinner/caregiver orientation, leading to increasing levels of mothers’ employment, changes in labor regulations to permit easier transitions between part-time and full-time work; official endorsement to the “combination model” (both men and women work long part-time hours, plus some state care). But, women’s participation concentrated in “small” jobs -- a one and one half (or even 1/4) worker model rather than two 3/4 worker/caregivers.

- Germany: New initiatives around parental leave and services: heralds of continental “defrosting”?
Gender-egalitarian social policy alternatives -- Impossible choices ("sameness/difference")?

“Sameness”/“Dual breadwinner”/“full commodification”:

• women’s responsibility for care work and men’s capacity to evade it is key to gender hierarchies; overall goal is to diminish gender differences -- towards androgyny? -- shift care from women to men in families and from families to public services (i.e., care work cannot be left entirely to private sphere -- there must be public component to care provision);

• paid work for women is the way forward, plus workplace anti-discrimination reforms to allow women to enter formerly-masculine positions (including anti-sexual harassment rules; affirmative action)

• The US model? Yes, the dominant model since the “liberal break” of 1960s/70s with earlier maternalist models… but even then, continuing (albeit secondary) maternalist orientation (e.g., welfare rights’ groups)
The costs of “sameness”?

- Can/should all care be commodified? What about care that cannot/should not be shifted? Can commodified care be high-quality care? Or is care inevitably neglected when life courses focused on wage earning are most prized? Is care then sloughed off to less-advantaged workers (e.g., immigrants) -- continuing a pattern of racialized divisions of care work, splitting of care work into “spiritual” and “menial”?  

- Denial of bodies (or, more abstractly, “difference”)? Denial more broadly of “inevitable dependency” (elderly as well as children, and disabled)? Some accommodation for giving birth, breastfeeding necessary for mothers to participate -- or “de-incentivizing” of parenthood.  

- Problems of “residualized” care -- for those who perform it, for those who receive it.
Gender-egalitarian social policy alternatives -- Impossible choices (“sameness/difference”)?

“Caregiver parity” (reconfigured maternalism?):

Devaluation of (feminine) care work is key to gender hierarchy; two key variants, depending on whether or not mothers combine carework with employment:
(a) provide resources directly to mothers for care work (caregivers’ allowances) [note difference from breadwinner approach, which channels resources for women’s caregiving through men’s wages/benefits]
(b) “reconciliation” measures for workers who are also caregivers (almost all mothers) -- development of paid leaves, public care services

The Nordic/European approaches? (strong versus weak male breadwinner model, or “conservative” versus social-democratic inadequate to describe -- there’s also the power dimension: resources/decisionmaking for women or men)
The costs of “difference” caregiver parity or neo-maternalism?

• Caregiver parity/neo-maternalism reinforces gender difference: to the extent “valuing care” policies targeted on women, probability of discrimination -- restricting women (even those are vocationally-oriented) to a “mommy track,” sex segregation of occupations [note high occupational sex segregation in Norden, low employment rates for mothers in much of Continental Europe]

• Women do bulk of care and domestic work, though under better circumstances [Norden: “reproduction going public” -- public services dominated by women; Continental Europe: care, domestic work privatized]

• To the extent that political power flows from employment in a capitalist society, women may be disadvantaged or marginalized

• Links with premise of “children as public goods” and instrumentalism?
Feminist social policy alternatives beyond “sameness vs. difference” -- “Universal Caregiver”/Dual-earner-dual carer

- “Universal caregiver” -- “make men like what most women are now,” ‘encumbered workers,’ workers who are also caregivers; “dual-earner/dual-carer” model
- Different policy proposals to encourage, support dual-earner, dual-carer arrangements:
  - “gender-neutralizing” state payments and de-emphasizing employment: citizen’s wage (or “stake” plus caregiver resource accounts) -- allows flexibility over lifecourse in terms of involvement in care work, employment
  - “gender-neutralizing,” or making more symmetrical, men’s and women’s life-course patterns, with employment as foundation: employment restructuring to accommodate caregiving, rights to “time to care” (paid leaves) and “rights to be cared for” (public services or subsidies); men encouraged to care, women to enter paid work (social-democratic feminist model)
How is the problem of gender inequality understood?

• Gender inequality is tied to gender differences in time spent on care and family versus employment and career.

• Feminists concerned with the family have concluded that persistent gender inequality in the labor market is both cause and consequence of women’s disproportionate assumption of unpaid work in the home. …[M]en’s stronger ties to the labor market carry social, political, and economic advantages that are denied to many women, especially those who spend substantial amounts of time caring for children (Gornick and Meyers 2007, p.16)

• Contemporary problems of gender inequality result from “incomplete transformations,” as we’ve moved from full to partial gender specialization; women have changed a great deal – taking up paid employment in addition to their work of caring (as we all know), but men have not changed enough, and still do much less care work than women.
What is the dual-earner/dual carer society?

The dual earner/dual carer arrangement “is a society in which men and women engage symmetrically in employment and caregiving and all parents have realistic opportunities to combine waged work with the direct provision of care for their children. A dual-earner / dual-carer society is one that supports equal opportunities for men and women in employment, equal contributions from mothers and fathers at home, and high quality care for children provided both by parents and by well-qualified and well-compensated nonparental caregivers” (Gornick and Meyers 2009)
Charting the terrain for feminist initiatives around work and care

- “Difference” remains potent culturally and psychically: motherhood as centrally concerned with care in the family, even if combined with paid work, and fatherhood as mainly about providing;
- If women can’t be made into “men” (wage-earners only), can men be made into “women” (worker/caregivers)?
- Care is deeply gendered, but even if men care, is this equivalent to women’s care (e.g., “mothering” versus “fathering”)?
- Bodies, care and gender equivalence? pregnancy, breastfeeding
- Differences among women and among men
- The “boundaries of welfare” -- citizenship, inclusion, “we-feeling”
- A single norm of the “socially useful person”? 
Charting the political terrain for feminist initiatives around work and care

- **Capitalism** -- business and some political elites demand economic “efficiency”; social partners may defend prerogatives; strong pulls and pushes for market employment, especially but not only for men

- “**Race,**” ethnicity, nation, and the “**boundaries of welfare**” -- how can support to reproduction and care be extended beyond the nation? To date, maternalist, breadwinner and citizenship-based policies have implicitly depended on “we-feeling” and perceived similarities (often “racial” or national, religious). But populations are becoming more diverse in terms of ethnicity, “race,” religion… Proposals to better value caregivers and care work through arguments that “children are public goods” seem to depend on perceived population homogeneity and “we-feeling”…
Charting the political terrain for feminists initiatives around work and care

Politics:

• Political institutions, partisan configurations affect groups’ organizational, mobilizing capacities

• “New politics of welfare” -- cost pressures, permanent austerity, pressures for (re) commodification and activation

• Policy legacies of “universal breadwinner” or “caregiver parity” (with or without employment) condition how ideals might be realized politically, in terms of available state capacities, definitions of problems and relevant expertise, available allies and potential enemies
Charting the political terrain for feminist initiatives around work and care

- Pluralism: Populations are also becoming more diverse in terms of lifestyle, ideology … People demand more “choice” in terms of how life courses are to be arranged… (avoiding heteronormativity, “repronormativity”)
- Democratic accountability
- Beyond universalism: need to engage politically with different visions, feminist and otherwise, of equality, in context of plurality
Farewell to maternalism? Adopting the Dual-earner/dual-carer model?: Concerns for feminists

Can we let go of maternalist or “difference” politics, given the tenacious hold of gender difference, culturally, psychologically, etc?

Can we not let go of maternalist politics, given the hold of “equality as sameness”/gender neutrality in the public sphere?

Employment as basic to citizenship rights; care as basic to human life

Pluralism and diversity

Democratic accountability

Open opportunities, remove obstacles for women and men to care and to work