

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Daniela Del Boca and **Cecile Wetzels**, eds., *Social Policies, Labour Markets and Motherhood: A Comparative Analysis of European Countries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 336 pp. \$US 99.00 hardcover (978-0-521-87741-1)

The male breadwinner model has significantly declined with the increase in women's labour force participation. Even though some claim that increases in women's labour force participation leads to fertility declines, recent studies suggest that the opposite can occur, depending on the policy and institutional context. *Social Policies, Labour Markets and Motherhood* aims to analyze the recent pattern of fertility and its relationship with women's labour force participation in Europe. Even though the long-term general fertility trend is similar in many countries, there have been significant variations among European countries. While Scandinavian countries have higher fertility and women's participation rates, Southern European countries have lower fertility and women's participation rates. This book uses the welfare state typology to study family, fertility, and labour market variations across countries.

The authors start with a general discussion of the welfare state literature, and its relevance to parental leave, childcare provision, and childcare systems. The welfare state regime typology is a useful conceptual tool for analyzing institutional differences among industrialized countries. According to Esping-Andersen, welfare states can be analyzed in three clusters (Social Democratic, Conservative-Corporatist, and Liberal) in relation to the role of state, family, and market in the management of social risks. Meulders and O'Dorchai analyze this typology, as well as alternative classifications and approaches, with a focus on the standpoint of women and mothers. It is concluded that, rather than pure forms, welfare states have hybrid features that foster different aspects of the welfare of children and mothers (p. 24).

Making use of European Community Household Panel data, the analyses provided here compare the outcomes of social policies in European countries. The first part of the book mainly focuses on childcare systems and parental leave, and their significant impacts on women's labour force participation and fertility rates. In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, De Henau, Meulders, and O'Dorchai rank the relative generosity of family

polices in supporting women's work and fertility across Europe. In their comparisons, the authors use the Linear Scaling Technique (which has also been used to construct the Human Development Index), to standardize the range of a variable across countries. In southern European welfare states (Greece, Italy, and Spain) childcare provisions are less developed, whereas in Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden, and Finland), Belgium, and France childcare provisions are more developed and higher quality. Rather than following other research by analyzing all preschool children in one category, they decompose children into ages 0–2 and 3–5. This decomposition helps us to understand differences not only among different welfare clusters, but also within the same welfare state cluster. Italy, for example, acquires a different character with its well-developed preschool education compared to other southern European welfare states. For childcare at ages 0–2, however, Italy follows the general characteristics of its group, with low coverage rates.

For maternal leave, the length of the qualification period, the length of job protection, and the replacement rate of earnings substantially differ across European countries. Unlike childcare provisions, southern European countries generally offer generous maternal leave. In Chapter 3, the authors reveal that maternal leave is well developed in Europe compared to paternity leave, except in Ireland and the UK. This shows the continuing power of male breadwinner ideology in European social policies. The countries that have implemented better paternal leave options are Scandinavian countries, Belgium, and France. The findings of the first part show that we should take into consideration childcare provisions as well as job-protected maternal and paternal leave, to comprehend the family and work balance. Chapter 4 examines child cash and tax benefits as a social policy intervention in the childcare sphere. Although the impact of cash and tax benefits on childcare is ambiguous, and there is a wide range of systems in Europe, all countries implement financial support for families with children. De Henau, Meulders, and O'Dorchai further suggest that rather than complex systems of tax and cash benefits, countries should provide direct, simple, and transparent cash support that is granted independently of parents' work status.

The second part of the book mainly concerns the impact of labour market and women's employment on fertility rates and motherhood. According to the authors, the delay in maternity is one of the most significant reasons for fertility declines. Part-time work opportunities, institutional regulations, housing market, and labour market opportunities for young people are some of the economic determinants of childbearing trends. The main result is that social policies have a significant impact on the choice and timing of childbearing.

While the book does not make theoretical advances, it undertakes an excellent examination of the impact of social policies and labour markets on fertility patterns. Written by economists, the book compares social policy institutions and economic factors particularly relevant to motherhood and women's paid work. Like other research emphasizing economic factors, the authors tend to assume that women are homogeneous across European societies and women's labour market status has a significant effect on fertility. However, the control that women have over their reproductive health after the second demographic transition, and the heterogeneity of women's lifestyle preferences, make the issue more complex. In order to understand the effects of social policies on fertility patterns, we need to explore sociological approaches that explain the secular fertility trend without neglecting the preferences of different populations. Moreover, this book mainly focuses on women's role on childbearing and their family-work conflict. A further analysis of men's child caring would be helpful to further comprehend the recent fertility trend and changing family structures across countries.

We have here an important contribution to welfare state research and family studies. While most welfare state research does not examine the relationship between social policies and demographic change, *Social Policies, Labour Markets and Motherhood* examines the impact of social policies on fertility changes across Europe. Also, the rich policy data presented in the text and appendixes will be very useful for other comparative research on cross-national policy variations. This book will be of interest to economists, policymakers, and demographers concerned with the effects of social policies on women's employment, family, and childbearing.

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