

BUYING WOMEN'S WORK: VARIOUS APPROACHES TO TRANSFERRING
CHILDCARE

by

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A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts
English

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Date: July 27, 2011

Summer Semester 2011
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

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ABSTRACT

BUYING WOMEN'S WORK: VARIOUS APPROACHES TO TRANSFERRING CHILDCARE

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George Mason University, 2011

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This article employs theory and case-study methodology to examine variations on approaches to childcare that best enable women to join the non-domestic labor force. Employing women's non-domestic labor is crucial to ameliorating poverty and increasing a country's competitiveness. Yet, childbearing has been, and still proves to be, a keystone of labor division that hinders women's autonomy and ability to fully contribute. The divisions between perceived public (non-domestic) and private (domestic) spheres enhance the gender role conflict, mirroring the Marxist concepts of class creation, recognition, and struggle for autonomy. As an oppressed class realizes its oppression and gains public visibility, it gains valuable political power. Supporting this claim are historic moments where labor pool needs softened gender role rigidity—where women were able to work outside the home, advances in gender equality movements followed soon after. Therefore, with a methodological framework built on the public/private rhetorical divide and Gøsta Esping-Andersen's welfare regime clusters, this article determines which

childcare policy configurations best supports female labor participation; side-effects of childcare policies are also noted. Social democrat approaches, such as Sweden's, prove most effective, treating childcare as a very public concern deserving of strong funding and protective legislation. The conservative/corporatist countries of Italy, Spain, and Germany, influenced by strong religious tradition, uphold the male-as-breadwinner family model, thus discouraging women from work and having more (or any) children. In the liberal economic regimes of the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, childcare needs are left to the family's discretion or private markets, which results in a you-get-what-you-pay-for system that places huge burdens on impoverished families. In the developed East Asian regimes of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, the mixture of strong Confucian family values and reliance on the private market and corporate social insurance schemes once again protects the male-as-breadwinner model; these countries currently experience the lowest birthrates in the world and rapidly shrinking taxation pools. Lastly, in the Latin American case studies of Chile and Uruguay, there exists a trend toward universal, public distribution of childcare services, but the lack of adequate public resources and parental leave laws overburdens mothers seeking to raise families and provide family income.

“Childcare,” writes Jennifer Marchbank, “is, and always has been, a radical issue in that it challenges the patriarchal divide of public/private like no other issue, and as such, goes to the root of struggle for gender equality and the public use of resources...childcare must be studied as a woman’s right whether she chooses to work or not” (2). Freedom of lifestyle is such a basic assumption, but it seems to often fade quietly into the background of grander dialogues about raising the gross domestic product, quantifying human nature, and designing elegant economic equations that justify the global status quo. Yet, the ability to choose one’s lifestyle proves to be a dream both persistent and essential. The right to fulfillment through life outside the home is frequently denied to women—who make up roughly half the world’s population—through a variety of ways. The most crucial restriction to freedom is one that arose out of the earliest, specialized division of labor: Raising children.

What’s at stake is not whether motherhood is the noblest goal for a woman, or if motherhood is the ultimate repressor; rather, what are the results of this division of labor in modern economies? World economic organizations like the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the Organization for Economic Development and Co-Operation (OECD) have come to the consensus that improving the lot of women is essential to further humanitarian goals and economic development. The progress toward closing that gender gap has been slow, almost painfully so, and mired with complexities.

What *is* this gender gap? The gender gap can be thought of as gender inequality through economic action. It refers to the “systematic differences in the outcomes that men and women achieve in the labor market...seen in the percentages of men and women in

the labor force, the types of occupations they choose, and their relative incomes or hourly wages” (Goldin). Economist Claudia Goldin concludes this definition with a musing of great potential: “Whether or not the gap will continue to narrow and eventually disappear is uncertain and probably depends on the gender gap in time spent in child care and in the home.” It is this premise that will be discussed at length in this paper. Academics were once (and often still) accused of having their theories and philosophies about patriarchy’s dynamics locked away in lofty isolation. Some economists have been frustrated about their own discipline’s hermetic, number crunching practices and policy schemes that are devoid of any meaningful humanitarian connection. The growing alliance between the two fields is vital to addressing the gender gap and much of the problem of poverty.

This paper seeks to become part of that interdisciplinary bridge. The thesis presented here is that universal, public (state/government) support of childcare needs, such that women are effectively able to join the non-domestic workforce, a necessary step to begin gender mobilization, further equality, and strengthen economic infrastructures. Economically liberating women frees their resources to mobilize and influence political action. This argument will be built upon an analysis which 1) contextualizes women as a uniquely exploited class and explains the necessary conditions for gender mobilization, 2) provides historic examples of key mobilization moments that enabled women to join the workforce, and 3) discusses the effects of various states’ approaches to childcare needs.

As numerous scholars have noted, childbirth and childcare are lynchpins to cultural sex roles and gender ideologies. Sex role differentiation is as ubiquitous as it is long-standing in many cultures throughout the world. However, sociologists and

progressive economists are coming to see that expanding women's roles is more than just a tribute to human rights and equality. The 2010 *Global Gender Gap Report* exhorts that, in order to “maximize its competitiveness and development potential, each country should strive for gender equality—that is, to give women the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as men” (Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi 31). How countries deal with the issue of childcare through economic policies impacts cultural perceptions of women's capabilities and their roles in a society.

1. Women as a Unique Class of Citizen

The birth of modern gender and labor equality movements can be traced to the cultural events occurring in the Industrial Age and the subsequent growth spurt of modern capitalism. The capitalist mode of production, currently the dominant mode of commodity production in the world, has roots in early mercantilism, but it flourished under the right cultural and technological conditions. New technology of the industrial age allowed for mass production and profit surplus, with the ability to secure accumulation of goods and private property from labor. Capitalism began producing new brackets of stratification; instead of feudalist tension between vassals and lords, conflict between new bourgeoisie and the working class developed. The new perpetual need for the reproduction and maintenance of an exploitable labor force to sustain commodity production highlighted this issue of class conflict.

A key critique about capitalism is its tendency to reify, or *thing-ify*, human beings as physical objects deprived of personal or individual characteristics—their sole purpose

is to be used and exploited for labor. The critique goes along these lines: To regard humans as usable objects creates a sense of alienation between the employer and the employed; this attitude enables employers to view people en masse as merely a means to a profitable end, rather than persons with individual needs, wants, or motivations.¹ Karl Marx examined such work force exploitation and developed the idea of class conflict. He noted in *The Communist Manifesto* that a class typically forms when its members become aware of their exploitation by another class. Once a class achieves this consciousness of shared interests and common identity, they can mobilize to take political action. With the rise of the Industrial Age, women came to realize and articulate that they are a uniquely exploited class of citizens denied the same rights as men.

Industrialization and subsequent urbanization brought with it a large shift in family structure as nuclear families shrank and moved to where jobs were located, making extended family or historic community bonds tenuous and transient. New factories sought women as a desirable labor pool; they were thought of as cheap, demure employees who were easier to control than men. In response to increasing power conflicts within the household and rising female participation in the non-domestic labor sphere, scholars examined existing institutions and labor dynamics and formed a theory of patriarchy—the historical, institutionalized exploitation and oppression of women as a class in human society. Were women destined to remain “masters” of the domestic sphere, or were they allowed to expand their roles outside of the household? Someone needed to raise the children, who would later grow up to be the new labor pool. The

¹ Labor unions are perhaps the most visible, formal manifestation of the challenge to employer supremacy.

relationship between production, capitalism, and labor pool reproduction and exploitation developed under Marxian analysis; feminists added patriarchy—a system of social organization where males govern and dominate—as a unique heuristic dimension. The tools of patriarchal oppression proved two-fold: Socially, and then economically. The two frequently overlap and influence one another.

Feminist anthropologists and sociologists traced labor role rigidity to the biological capability of women to give birth. By virtue of this biological function, a sexual division of labor began very early in human society. Nancy Chodorow, in her essay *Mothering, Male Dominance, and Capitalism*, described mothering as the structural crux of humankind's sex-gender systems. The very role of *being* a mother influences “the social organization of gender, ideology about women, and the psychodynamic of sexual inequality...women's mothering affects other aspects of women's lives, the sexual division of labor, and the ideology and practice of sexual asymmetry in any society” (Chodorow 86-87). The roles socially permissible and encouraged for women (and men) are restricted from our very births, as it were.

Frederick Engels articulated the modern economic subordination of women in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, originally published in 1884. Engels posited that the material basis of society consists of material/commodity reproduction and human reproduction, and this split between production and reproduction led to the privatization and cultural devaluation of women's work in the home, since women do not have the same access (and rights) to property. Prior to industrialization, production of commodities like clothing and food was based in the home. With the

extraction of production from the home, women's work and the maternal role became devalued in modern economies because, as Chodorow puts it, "they are outside of the sphere of monetary exchange and unmeasurable in monetary terms" and divorced from publicly visible and recognized "profits and achievement" (88-89). Industrialization and modern production thus enhanced the contrast between the domestic and non-domestic labor roles.

The significance of these feminist socio-economic critiques is the observation that there exists a *private*, reproductive sphere of work that encompasses chores historically taking place within the home and regarded as exclusively women's work. This feminized work, which consists of tasks such as laundry, cooking, and, notably, childcare, is overlooked in mainstream economics because of lack of monetary compensation, thus resulting in a devaluation of women's work. "The personal is political," a popular feminist catchphrase taken from Carol Hanisch's eponymous 1969 essay, speaks to the omission of private, or domestic, concerns from public focus or debate—matters of the home were (and often still are) regarded as private affairs that should be taken care of individually by each household, without state or government interference. Since the private, domestic sphere comprised a woman's world, matters that specifically impact women failed to be communicated to the larger public knowledge—these matters could range anywhere from the feelings of malaise and boredom as housewives to domestic violence. An important underlying concept to Hanisch's essay is that congregating and discussing private affairs, even under the guise of 'therapy', brings voice to a silenced

population. The concept is akin to Marx's theories on class creation and mobilization.

Voice and recognition engender empowerment.

Nancy Fraser elaborates on this public-versus-private dynamic in *Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy*. The public sphere, Fraser notes, "has been used by feminists to refer to everything that is outside the domestic or familial sphere: This usage conflates the state, the official economy of paid employment, and arenas of public discourse" (489). In other words, transforming the private into the public—the *politicizing* of taken-for-granted aspects of human life and lifestyle—mobilizes a population into demanding and effecting egalitarian change. "The idea of an egalitarian, multicultural society," states Fraser, "only makes sense if we suppose a plurality of public arenas in which groups with diverse values and rhetoric participate" (499). This notion of an egalitarian society seems self-explanatory given that democratic nations are built upon the notions of freedom of choice and the freedom to voice it, but the crux of the matter is whether a marginalized group receives that recognition or visibility. Without such visibility or recognition, a group has little opportunity to supplant, let alone alter, dominant cultural ideology.

2. Key Socio-Economic Moments of Female Mobilization

The class-stratifying nature of the capitalist mode of commodity production raises the question of whether the entire system requires dismantling to achieve true freedom and equality. Some Marxists and early feminists, like radical/anarchist feminist Carol Erlich, advocate "breaking down the state and all other forms of centralized, hierarchical,

and coercive organization” (131). Relinquishing the restraints of motherhood and entering the workforce can only mean total subjugation to the even more masculine structures of the working world—in other words, trading in a private patriarchy for a public one (Marchbank 169-170). However, a vital weakness of these critiques is their generic view of national governments—viewing the state as purely an expression of patriarchy obscures the fact that there exist policy variations which could be beneficial to women (Sainsbury 2). The more recent, interdisciplinary studies do not necessarily advocate dismantling capitalism wholesale and instead take a more nuanced, global approach, accounting for differences in state welfare approaches. Empirically grounding academic work with real life circumstance is crucial for relevant, effective political action (Beneria 12). As April Gordon puts it most succinctly “regardless of the problematic aspects of capitalist development, the expansion of capitalism is inevitable...if capitalism cannot be avoided (at least in the near future), the challenges it poses must be met head on and, as much as possible, directed to maximize human welfare” (viii). This is a sober but practical approach to the problem of persistent gender roles; most countries in the world, even those that are self-proclaimed Communist regimes, are trending toward more liberal, capitalist economies in order to encourage entrepreneurship and bolster global competition.

Furthermore, though the goals of capitalism and patriarchy appear one and the same (to control labor pools and extract surplus profit), capitalism and patriarchy frequently function as two separate systems, the interests of which sometimes converge and, at other times, diverge. Heidi Hartmann, in *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and*

Feminism, states how “the partnership of patriarchy and capital was not inevitable; men and capitalists often have conflicting interests, particularly over the use of women’s labor power” (19). She provides an example of such a situation that occurred in the early stages of industrialization. Women and children were used as cheap labor sources almost exclusively for the first factories, and their access to independent wages threatened to undermine the authority of the male figure by standardizing low factory wages and reallocating women from free domestic labor to external, paid industry (*The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* 20). Backlash occurred. Powerful men’s unions formed, protective labor laws were passed, and the “family wage”—a wage large enough to sustain the entire family and negate the need for the wife/mother to earn income—was demanded by working men and institutionalized.

Despite this backlash, it’s clear that capitalism’s dynamics, within the context of a society undergoing industrialization, created a situation in which women were employable outside of the home. Women’s participation in the workforce prompted the government to institute laws regulating labor and indirectly regulating the role of family members. Though the immediate result in this example was the reinstatement of women into the domestic realm, the resultant visibility proved vital to galvanizing change in favor of women’s rights. Feminist demand for equal pay for equal labor, fair hiring practices, and affordable childcare would follow shortly after. Indeed, that moment where human society made the transition from agrarian- to industrial-based economies, with production and employment moving outside the domestic sphere, granted women an opportunity to join the publicly visible, non-domestic workforce.

Capitalism's balancing effect on gender roles is not restricted to the West, either. Pre-revolution China offers a solid example of where patriarchy's and capitalism's interests diverged. Judith Stacey, in her analysis of China's powerful patriarchal culture (rooted strongly in the co-dependent family unit), cites that a crucial historical event served the foundation of the beginnings of changes to the Chinese family unit—this event was the arrival of Western traders and industrialists. With the rapid influx of new, cheap commodities (in particular, textiles), traditional consumption and production patterns in China changed. It became cheaper to remove production from the home and place it into the factories; economic self-sufficiency for traditional Chinese households was no longer guaranteed. The opportunity, writes Stacey,

for even a small proportion of women and youth of both sexes to be employed outside the home was probably the decisive factor in the undermining of traditional authority. Industrial capitalists found a ready pool of cheap labor in women of the poorer classes. (301-302)

Although factory conditions were terrible, the employment allowed women to embark on paths to greater economic and physical freedom from a repressive household, and women did indeed take that opportunity as Stacey notes that divorce rates and women's outside employment rose simultaneously.

Yet another historical moment, this time a global one, illustrates when labor needs trump traditional patriarchal norms. World War II saw women stepping outside of their normal domestic roles to fulfill labor pool shortages, particularly in the war and munitions industry. The image of Rosie the Riveter is now legendary, underscoring the

significance of women's visibility in roles traditionally deemed "hard" or masculine. With World War II's heavy draw on male soldiers, women's presence in the industrial, "masculine" sphere was welcomed and proved to be a necessity to war effort success. Women's participation in skilled wage labor exposed them to the possibility of economic independence through performing non-domestic labor. Even after the war's conclusion, some women chose to continue working, deriving satisfaction from the increased independence and fulfillment outside of domestic work. Betty Friedan's pivotal, post-war feminist opus, *The Feminine Mystique*, discusses in length the disillusionment of women restricted to a housewife lifestyle due to cultural and economic discouragement, their non-domestic talents, intelligence, and skills fated to marginalization.

Research indicates that societies that uphold a sharp separation of gender spheres "tend to be ones in which men regard women as objects to be protected" and, more importantly, "controlled" through coercions like sexual harassment, employment discrimination, cultural ideologies which place tantamount value on women's corporal purity, and rape (Collins et al. 197). Well, critics of feminism say, it is not so much a cultural issue as it is acts of individual barbarism; worse, it's "just the way things are." So if not for the sake of ethical democracy and equality, why *should* we encourage women to work? A society stands to benefit not only socially but also economically when women are more fully incorporated into the non-domestic workforce. The countries ranking highly in the WEF's Global Gender Gap² studies also occupy the top positions in the

² The mission of the *Global Gender Gap Report*, as stated on page 3 of the 2010 report, is as follows: "The Global Gender Gap Index, introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006, is a framework for capturing the magnitude and scope of gender-based disparities and tracking their progress. The Index benchmarks national gender gaps on economic, political, education- and health-based criteria, and provides country

Human Development Index³ and enjoy relatively stable, high GDP rates. For the corporate world, numerous studies have shown that the integration of women into internal organizational leadership structures bear strong, positive correlations to a company's fiscal success (Zahidi and Herminia 11).

Though women's integration into the public labor workforce raises discomforts about their objectification as wage workers, the end result can actually further egalitarianism and democracy. "Commodification," notes John Vail, "may not be automatically objectionable on egalitarian grounds, for the introduction of markets in certain instances may improve the likelihood of realizing core progressive values"; his examples of marketing gay identities to the point of socialized acceptability and distributing cash stipends for children in Mexico such that school participation and health flourish are compelling (322). The commodification of women as a labor pool in the capitalist world has likewise created a situation ripe for gender mobilization. The increased entry of women into the modern workforce has precipitated the double-burden work day problem for women who participate in the workforce but still perform the majority of domestic labor, particularly childcare, at home. Women, collectively, work

rankings that allow for effective comparisons across regions and income groups, and over time. The rankings are designed to create greater awareness among a global audience of the challenges posed by gender gaps and the opportunities created by reducing them. The methodology and quantitative analysis behind the rankings are intended to serve as a basis for designing effective measures for reducing gender gaps."

³ The Human Development Index, as stated on the Human Development Reports website, is as follows: "The HDI – human development index – is a summary composite index that measures a country's average achievements in three basic aspects of human development: health, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. Health is measured by life expectancy at birth; knowledge is measured by a combination of the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary, and tertiary gross enrollment ratio; and standard of living by GDP per capita (PPP US\$)."

more now than ever, and thus the new disequilibrium sets the stage for increased gender struggle—more women will be moved to protest (Hartmann, *The Family* 392).

The usefulness in focusing on childcare as a gender role lynchpin is that “any change in childcare policies and practice do affect women disproportionately to men” (Marchbank 39). This paper up to now has discussed the historical exigencies for creating a visible mass with political power to enact change. The next sections will detail actual case studies of various countries/cultures whose configurations of childcare differ according to government handling of childcare—whether it is strictly a private matter or one that should be given public government assistance.

3. Methodology for Analyzing the Transfer of Childcare

Governments, through economic welfare practices, either reinforce gender role ideology or subtly set the course for progressive social change. No truer could be said of childcare policies. Particular welfare configurations will be examined in terms of how effectively they transfer the burden of childcare and enable women to work and sustain a career. In some cases, we will find that women are still treated as a class uniquely denied the right to economic autonomy. The degree of social welfare provisioning and the way childcare is framed, either as private or public concern, determine women’s role, position, status, and overall capacity to contribute to their society.

Public/private rhetorical framing tends to align with welfare regime clusters. Some governments wholeheartedly funnel public funds to provide for social service needs, while still other governments feel that too much public funding and government

involvement is an intrusion of privacy and individual freedom (sometimes it is even regarded as corrosive to moral values).⁴ The case studies herein will be organized, examined, and presented according to the following sets of welfare groupings, which have been devised with a considerable nod to Gøsta Esping-Andersen's original welfare topology theory:

- Social democratic – Characterized by considerable universalism and state provisioning of social services; the state typically features a standard of living that is relatively independent of market participation and fluctuation and the presence of a healthy middleclass
- Liberal – Characterized by the limited scope of state provisioning for social services which, correspondingly, heavily impacts the poorer and working class. Minimal social service is typically provided through targeted, strict means-testing (income must fall within a very low bracket); the state intervenes only when market fails to provide, and welfare use usually comes with a heavy social stigma
- Conservative/corporatist – Characterized by the status-differentiating nature of social policy and the commitment and defense of the traditional family and its functions; provision of social services is committed through the wage earner's contributions or only when the family fails to provide
- East Asian – Characterized by the reliance on private industry to provide social services, as with the Liberal regimes, and the presence of strong traditional

⁴ An ironic counterargument is that this mentality tends to leave disadvantaged populations very vulnerable to social changes and misfortunes, thereby limiting their individual freedoms and autonomy even further.

values, as with Conservative/Corporatist regimes; provision of social services is typically through private insurance schemes

- Latin American – Characterized by recent political instability and reliance on a mixture of fluctuating or impermanent social service provisioning; the state may not be able to provide all the necessary social services

In 1990, Esping-Andersen crafted three welfare cluster topologies—social democratic, liberal, and conservative/corporatist—to categorize the different ways in which states/countries rectify socio-economic imbalances. Since then, Esping-Andersen himself and other scholars have, and are still, attempting to define new topologies for the economies of East Asia and Latin America. The *East Asian* and *Latin American* welfare categories used here are by no means comprehensive and established, but they suit the purposes of the research on public/private childcare policy conducted in this paper.

A variety of childcare solutions became apparent during research on the case studies:

- Offer generous maternal (and paternal) leave
- Enact strong labor laws to secure a mother's job upon her return from parental leave
- Provide state-run daycare (especially for children under 3)
- Indirectly encourage privately-run daycare
- Provide social insurance stipends to the household breadwinner/primary income earner
- Allow or indirectly encourage migrant childcare labor (immigrant nannies)

- Indirectly encourage mothers' entry into informal labor markets and part-time work

Again, these solutions tend to fall along the public/private divide and correspond to the different welfare topologies. The more social democratic countries, which regard childcare as an area that requires the support of the state, employ multiple publicly-backed/funded solutions with a heavier regulatory hand, with the result that birth rates and taxation are stable, and the quality of life for women and children are high.

Conservative/corporatist economies feature the presence of pension schemes which more actively reinforce the male-as-breadwinner family structure; this approach is informed to a great degree by the presence of strong, traditionalist religions in these economic regimes. However, as more women choose to join the workforce and have careers, these countries experience a sharp decline in birthrates, which threatens to undermine the stability of the taxation base and national economy. Liberal economic regimes, while moderate in birthrate and women's labor force participation, regulate less and leave the burden up to the family, who then turn to private daycare centers or migrant labor, which results in a you-get-what-you-pay-for scenario and the marginalization of economically disadvantaged populations. East Asian regimes show the strong presence of Confucian familial values and a reliance on private/corporate social insurance schemes; migrant labor is, as in the liberal regimes, finding heightened popularity. Birthrates here are among the lowest, and the populations are said to be "hyper-ageing." Latin American economies are unique in that they are in a state of flux due to recent historical events like the recent transition from dictatorships to democracy. Where possible, state-run childcare

centers are provided but limited due to lack of adequate resources, so mothers often turn to informal, flexible labor markets to generate enough child-raising income. Private industry provides for some childcare needs, but is costly. Lack of strong protectionist labor laws for female job security lead to a reassertion of the male-as-breadwinner family structure.

The countries selected as case studies for this paper were chosen with a few key factors in mind:

- 1) Advanced, or relatively advanced, level of development—these countries have attained late-stage industrialization and so are experiencing considerable changes to the family structure
- 2) Role as an exemplar state—countries having passed several stages of political and economic development are most likely to be regarded as “lessons” for nations currently undergoing development or seeking to improve their economies
- 3) Abundance of research material, both in the academic world and in current affairs
- 4) Demonstrable distinctiveness of welfare approach

Overall, the case studies reveal that universally endowing both men *and* women a degree of economic insulation from social instabilities (fluctuating job market, sudden unemployment, health complications, etc.) is key to bolstering gender egalitarianism and supporting economic stability. To give women economic freedom and protection from social instability and risk is to provide universal, public support for childcare.

4. Social Democratic Approaches

The social democratic welfare model is most associated with the Scandinavian countries, though the Netherlands, mentioned later in this section, is also known for its generous social services. A distinctive characteristic of the Scandinavian welfare states is the incorporation of women as a non-domestic labor power. The state funnels large amounts of public funding to social services and individual benefits in a universalized, distributive way. There is broad public support for broad social inclusion.

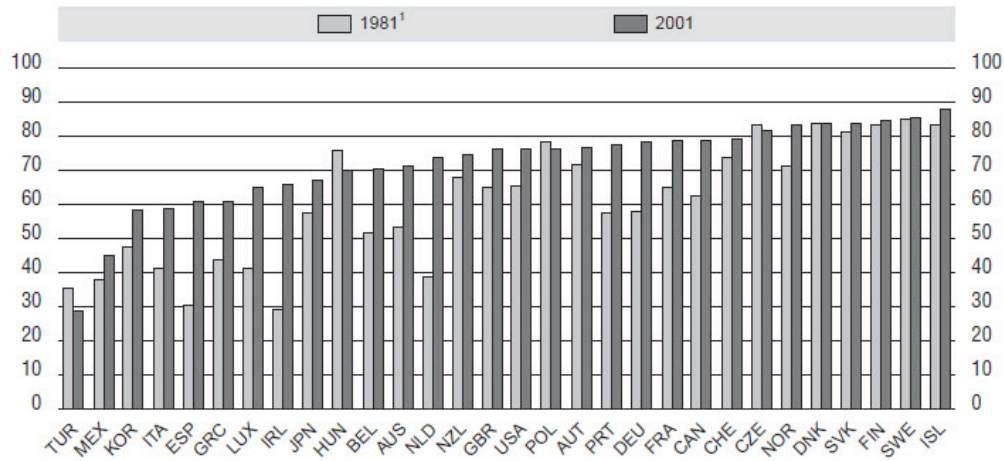
Sweden makes for an appropriate case study; a text authored there influenced the beginnings of strong Scandinavian child care policy. Framing of childrearing and childcare policies as public subjects began with a pragmatic approach to the economic depression of the 1930s. Alva and Gunnar Myrdal's book, *Crisis in the Population Question* (published in 1934), called attention to the role of the state in social welfare. The book's premise was that, to improve economic stability, the very low fertility rate must be increased and working class poverty ameliorated. In order to accomplish these goals, the Myrdals advocated the removal of the social stigma associated with poverty by making childcare available to all regardless of a family's income level, and Alva Myrdal in particular promoted the idea that institutions trained expertly in childcare could offer qualitatively superior childcare better than mothers with little or no experience (Gustafsson 49). Working women, Myrdal and fellow feminists argued, had a right to assistance for establishing families, and without targeted rights or support, the country would suffer higher illegitimacy rates, illegal abortions, and the postponement of family household formations as both men and women would be too busy working to raise

children. The feminists' translation of social welfare into active public policies proved effective and garnered broad political support in Sweden's workforce-starved, low-fertility rate economy in the 1930s.

Sweden, through trial and error with various childcare policies, now employs the following solutions to secure female labor: Generous parental leave for mothers *and* fathers, strong labor laws which secure employment for women taking temporary leave of their careers to raise children, and excellent, flexible state-run childcare facilities that accommodate mothers' re-entry and participation in the non-domestic labor force. If desired, parents can also make use of private childcare facilities. Women are engaged as a more readily accessible and cost-effective labor pool than immigrants, since immigrants draw upon costly state-provided language classes and patriation services (Gustafsson 50-51). It is this constellation of policy approaches, all developed under the belief that state-support even into so-called "private" matters of the family, that has bolstered female participation in the workforce and alleviated great poverty gaps (Esping-Andersen, *Investing*).

The effectiveness of this rhetorical approach is marked by high economic and human development rankings, sustainable birthrates, high levels of child wellbeing, and the gradual softening of rigid sex roles. Sweden, along with its fellow social democratic Scandinavian states, hosts the top rates for female labor force participation in the world (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Labour force participation rates of prime-age women (aged 25-54), 1981 and 2001



1. 1983 for Greece and Luxembourg, 1986 for New Zealand, 1988 for Turkey, 1991 for Switzerland, Iceland and Mexico, 1992 for Hungary and Poland, 1993 for the Czech Republic, 1994 for Austria and the Slovak Republic.
Source: OECD Labour Market Statistics.

Figure 1. Female labor force participation rates around the world, reprinted from Jaumotte 52.

Mothers in Scandinavia are encouraged and supported in their efforts to maintain a career whilst establishing a family.

Despite criticism that large social expenditures degrade economic strength and competitiveness, the Scandinavian countries consistently occupy the very top spots in the annual Global Competitiveness Report and Human Development Index (Schwab, *Human Development Report 2010*). Birthrates continue to be amongst the healthiest in Europe, helping to augment growth and reproduction of a new labor pool and taxation base.

Contrary to fears the public childcare services dilute the quality of care, Scandinavian countries score quite high in measurements of child wellbeing (see figure 2).

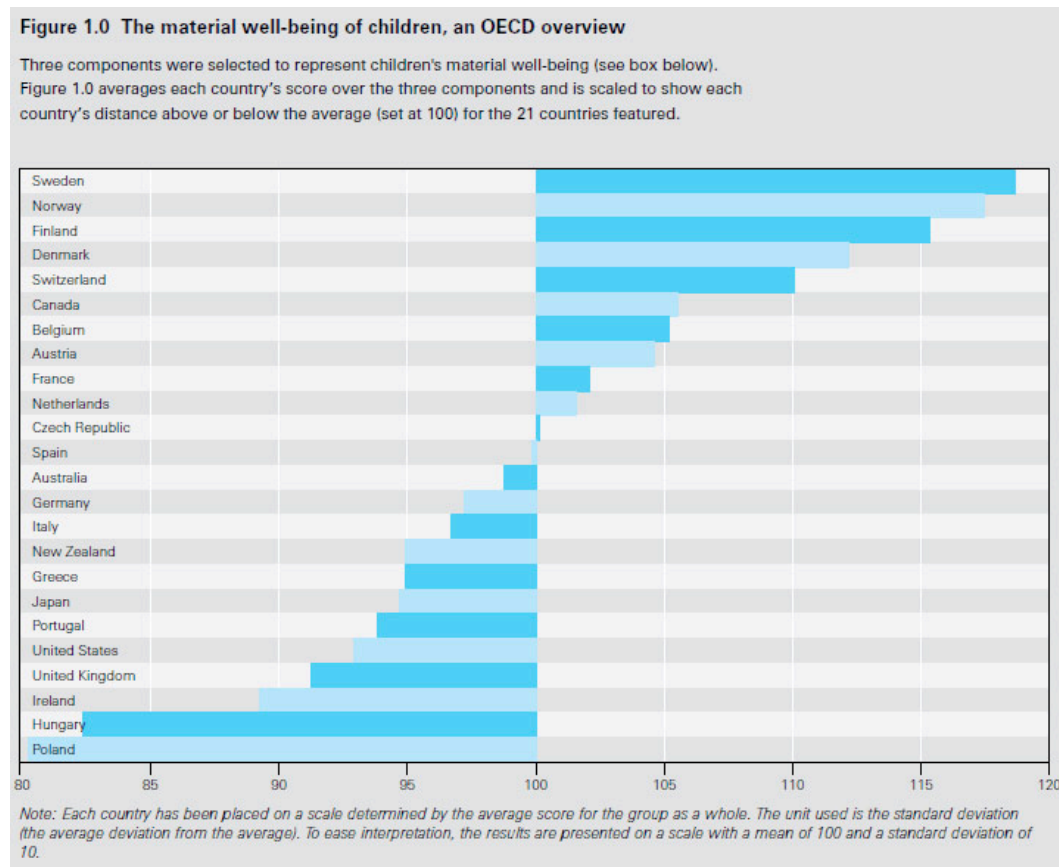


Figure 2. The material well-being of children graph, reprinted from UNICEF 4.

Lastly, there is indication that rigid gender roles are indeed shifting due to proactive policies. Jennifer Hook, in her 2006 survey of men's unpaid labor in twenty countries between 1965 to 2003, found that "in contexts where women are more involved in the public sphere, men are more involved in the private sphere...because of societal shifts in gendered behavior" (655). The survey results have important implications for future

policies that aim to equally and *fairly* distribute domestic work: “Researchers and policymakers have identified increasing men’s family time as a strategy for increasing gender equality, child wellbeing, and decreasing work/family conflict and the care deficit...[policies] extending parental leave to men increases men’s contributions” (Hook 656). Policy makers in Sweden have grasped the mutual interests between economic necessity and increasing equality.

There exist, however, variations on the social democratic approach, which can negatively impact women’s ability to work outside the domestic sphere. The Netherlands provides a case study of high social service provisioning and the reinforcement of traditional sex roles, underscoring the significance of relegating childcare to the private sphere. Childcare and labor needs in the Netherlands are fulfilled in ways that tend to support social systems already in place, like the head-of-household breadwinner structure, rather than the more progressive dual income model supported in Scandinavian states (Bussemaker and Kersbergen 18). Rather than directly address childcare needs with universal, public childcare policies as in Sweden, the Dutch government instead grants generous social security benefits to working men (the family wage providers), who are thus guaranteed market insulation and economic sustenance in times of unemployment. These approaches are due, in large part, to a government dominated by traditionalist Christian Democrats (Gustafsson and Stafford 169).

The result has been a high degree of female dependency and stratification between men and women—“Social rights are indeed highly advanced, but in a specific, gendered way” (Bussemaker and Kersbergen 22). Social rights must be accessed through

a wage provider; social security benefits are designed to replace the family income since, in Dutch society, women are not expected to become breadwinners. Dutch women who are single parents, widowed, elderly, or otherwise unable to access the benefits of having a steady breadwinning companion are left economically and socially vulnerable.

These practices are viewed as an equitable approach to family structures already in place in Dutch culture; furthermore, it is feared that women entering the workforce would bring about a worsening of the quality of social services provided (Bussemaker and Kersbergen 23). While social services are plentiful and generous in the Netherlands, the lifestyle options available to women (and, correspondingly, men) are highly restricted at best. While the Netherlands enjoys considerably high global competitiveness and a strong economy, gender role balance and female workforce participation will prove especially important in the future as Dutch women are increasingly choosing non-domestic work in favor of independence, nor will traditionalist attitudes toward women's roles insulate all members of a population against economic fluctuations that bring hardship.

5. Conservative/Corporatist Approaches

States following a conservative/corporatist approach to social welfare adopt a hands-off approach to social needs, and childcare is no exception to this rule. The idea of government-provided social services seems redundant at best, and morally obtuse at worst. In these regimes, the family or smallest local provides social (and especially childcare) services, and the state may intervene to provide only in the case of the former's

failure. Social insurance is committed through the head-of-household in a “pay-as-you-go” contributory investment system, which automatically benefits the male breadwinner. Continental, pre-dominantly Catholic European countries are most associated with this welfare model.

Italy, Spain, and Germany, states where government policies tend to support the social structures already in place, serve as case studies. The framing of childcare as a private family affair begins with indirect state reliance on the Catholic Church to provide social doctrine and policy. The Church’s policy is one of *subsidiarity*, where matters should be handled and resolved by the smallest organizing unit or authority; the family and church should provide needed social services, and the state may intervene only upon the failure of the church and state to provide. Papal encyclicals reveal the highly critical view of bureaucracy and the praise of women’s mothering roles. Pope John Paul II focused on the “excesses and abuses” of the welfare state and reasoned that welfare states intervened too much on the family’s natural caregiving function, for “a workman’s wages should be sufficient to enable him to support himself, his wife and his children” (Pope John Paul II, as qtd. by Borchorst 33). Childcare, considered a private, family-only (women-only) concern, fails to receive targeted, government focus. Women, correspondingly, are not viewed as a possible labor pool resource.

The solutions to childcare in these states have been left to the family. Publicly-funded childcare options for women remain lacking or non-existent (Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds* 162). Parental leave is scant compared to the Scandinavian countries, and leave payment and duration hinge upon the employer, with contingencies upon

participation in social insurance contributions or health insurance plans (*Maternity at Work*, Esping-Andersen, *Investing*). There is little government effort to engage women's non-domestic labor power.

Have these solutions to childcare been effective in enabling women to work? No—and worse, the end result in these case studies appears to be a distinct vulnerability to demographic shifts in the population, which threatens to directly undermine economic stability: Aging workforces, pension shortages, and declining birthrates. Global competitiveness and HDI rankings are lower than those of the social democratic regimes; the same can be said of child wellbeing. Sex roles are reinforced at a cost.

Simply put, as women reach for more economic autonomy, they are less incentivized to form households and have children. Minimal government assistance with childcare needs lead women to decisions of pure practicality: Work in the public sphere, or child-rearing confinement to the private sphere. There is not enough time or resources for both. Echoing Jennifer Hook's findings on male participation in household labor, Almudena Sanz cites that populations in which household tasks are shared (where gender roles are more progressive and less rigid) tend to yield more stable, positive rates of household propagation:

More recent time use studies reveal that women in Italy and Spain devote on average around 5 hours to domestic work per day, one more hour than women in Sweden, Norway or Finland. Similarly, just about 70 percent of Spanish and Italian men engage in household activities in any given day versus 92 percent of Swedish men. (3)

Increasingly vocal complaints from women in these conservative states support the research. An Italian woman interviewed by the explains for the declining birthrates summarizes thus: "I have a friend who is married to someone who didn't help enough around the house. She didn't cave in to having a second child until he promised - on his mother's head - that he would do more" ("Italian Women"). As it stands, birthrates in Germany, Italy, and Spain are amongst the lowest in the developed European Union ("The EU's Baby Blues").

The ramifications on economic stability are considerable. Roger Mortvik and Roland Spant researched the correlations between gender equality and economic development (see figure 3) and confirmed that traditionalism is bound to face chronically low birth rates in modern economies, "whereas the birth rate trend is positive and the demographic structure more balanced in countries where gender equality in the workplace is more developed...populations that evolve and adapt are likely to be economically stronger in the long run" (1).

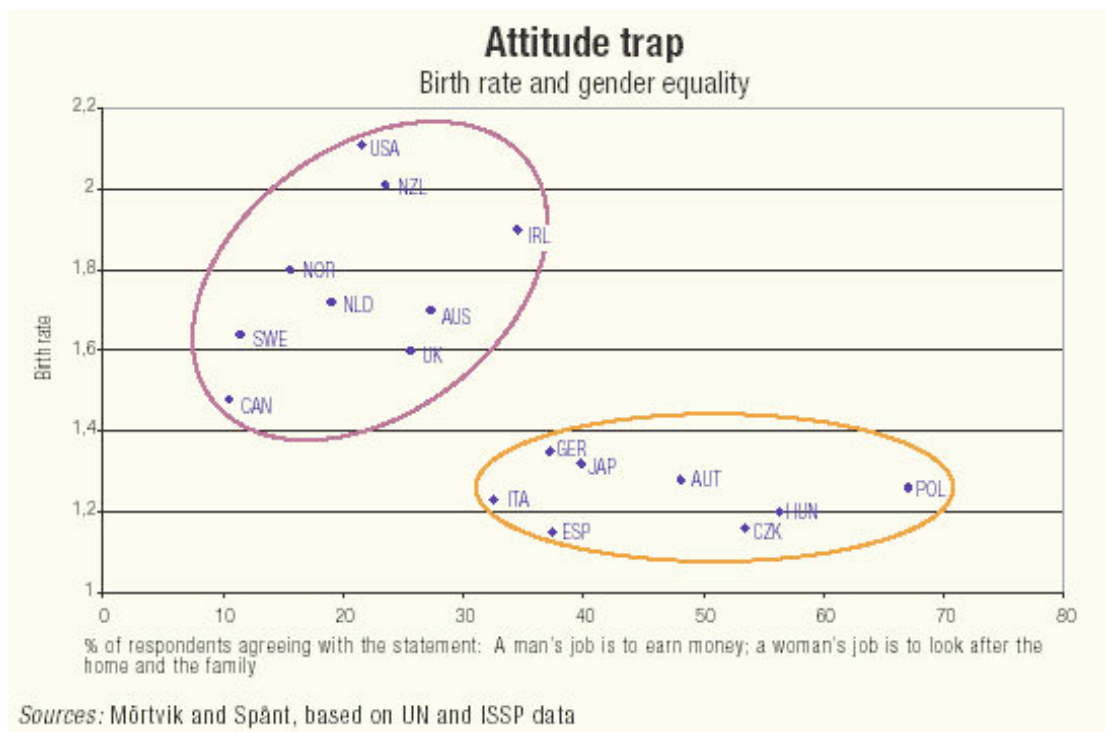


Figure 3. Birth rate and gender inequality correlations chart, reprinted from Mortvik and Spant.

There is some promise, however, in the remedial actions some of these conservative governments are taking. Policy makers anxious to stop the hemorrhaging birthrates are coming to acknowledge the relationship between gender roles, childcare, and policy-making.

Germany suffers so dire a birthrate forecast that legislators are considering pro-natal measures, some of which include making childcare costs tax-deductible (Martin). Spain, due in large parts to persistent feminist lobbying, gender quotas, a supportive socialist prime minister, and increased secularization from the Church, has implemented legislation, known as the Law of Equality, that mandates 40% female occupancy of

electable political candidates and corporate boards of certain sizes (Valiente). Integral to this Law of Equality, passed in 2007, is the marriage of gender equity to economic goals which “[aims] at getting more Spanish women into elected office and corporate boardrooms - and more men heating baby bottles and changing diapers”; even fathers are given extended paternity leave by legal mandate (Woolls). It is too early to determine whether their particular pro-natalist policies prove effective in the long term, but the fact that most of these policies are devised by governing bodies that are currently male-dominated is of too much important consequence to be disregarded. The percentages of women employed in positions of power and visibility in parliamentary bodies is revelatory, with the conservative regimes consistently displaying low rates of female involvement; they average at less than 10% as compared to social democratic regimes (Borchorst 41). The historic solutions for childcare needs in these countries have had the effect of diminishing the conditions necessary for strong gender mobilization. Great social inequalities exist for women without access to an adequate wage-earner. Childcare remains a feminized topic that is not given any direct public support. Resources for the oppressed gender remain limited.

6. Liberal Approaches

Liberal economic regimes in which self-sufficiency and competitiveness are prized adopt a more laissez-faire attitude toward social services—particularly toward childcare. Economic growth is prioritized above all, and social welfare is distributed via strict means testing. Workers must invest in their own social insurance through

withholdings of work stipends. A hallmark of these regimes is the phenomenon where large-scale privatization of services and government deregulation of corporate trade practices invariably expand the income and wealth gaps between the poor and rich in a society (xiii Beneria, Burtless).

The United States, Canada, and Great Britain serve as case studies to represent the liberal approach to social welfare. Minimal government funding goes to social programs, so social services and needs are backed by private industry, which are deemed to maximize fiscal efficiency. Policy makers in these states have a great fear that provision of too much social support restricts economic growth and disincentivizes people from working (Goodin et al. 172). Welfare recipients experience negative societal stigma for their inability to thrive independently of the state. These countries provide minimal welfare assistance, and it is always means-tested by narrow margins. There is a lack of solid public consensus on the appropriate forms and levels of childcare support that should be provided by the state—direct income re-distribution is negatively received by the general public (Gustafsson 57). Correspondingly, many social concerns, especially childcare, are relegated to the private sphere and left to the jurisdiction of individual families. Childcare remains conspicuously absent from public debate, and politicians uphold the moral superiority of the joys of motherhood while attacking public spending (Pateman 138). Despite the gains made by feminists in these countries, political backlash against social spending on so-called female-only matters never trails far behind. Women's participation in the non-domestic labor pool is not hindered even if not directly facilitated.

The solutions for childcare are left to individual family discretion. Childcare support is partially funded and indirectly distributed by way of tax credits (cash returns) and the family leave/benefit policies of individual employers (generous benefits are rare). In these countries, for-profit childcare centers have swelled in numbers to ameliorate the need for childcare support for working families. Some families, in search of “bargains,” seek out the cheaper services of immigrant nannies. Finally, single parents rely on informal labor and part-time work to make up for the income needed to raise children.

The effectiveness of these solutions to childcare needs and female labor are just as varied, but trend toward the negative—by omitting childcare from public discussion, lawmakers have relegated childcare, myopically, to the private sphere. Private industry does not always support equality, especially when doing so would mean a large initial investment in family benefits (despite any long term gains). Development and global competitiveness rankings are relatively high, measuring right around the range of Scandinavian countries (Schwab, *Human Development Report 2010*). Liberal economies, unlike their conservative/corporatist peers, enjoy relatively high birthrates. Yet, child wellbeing and their future success is highly stratified. Imbalances are created as much as new wealth. Gender roles fluctuate, with rising conflicts against tradition creating undue childcare burden on women. There is a frustrating inadequacy in the solutions available to women wishing to raise families while establishing careers. Lastly, the reliance on migrant caretaking labor introduces a problematic, racially exploitative dimension to domestic labor.

Although women in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain can, and do, choose to work, seeking economic autonomy, they are indirectly penalized for it. Women experience this “mommy penalty” when attempting to maintain careers while balancing the needs of the family. Kathleen Deveny, in her call for families to “man up,” describes a classic situation working mothers face in the United States:

When a working father takes time off to watch a ballet recital, he's seen as noble. When a working mother rushes out of the office to care for a case of head lice, she's more likely to be labeled undependable. Mothers looking for work are less likely to be hired, are offered lower salaries, and are perceived to be less committed than fathers or women without children, according to a 2005 report by Shelley Correll, now an associate professor of sociology at Stanford University. (1)

To compensate, career mothers work even harder to dispel the negative bias. The reluctance on the part of short-sighted corporations to hire women, especially to managerial positions of power, becomes a self-fulfilling cycle. Douglas Wigdor, a lawyer who represents women suing former employers for “mommy track” bias, attributes this cycle to the fact that managers, who are usually male, “perceive that working mothers may not work as hard as men, and may not be with the firm as long so they can be with their children. That can make women seem more expendable” (Stempel). The problem compounds when women with infants are unable to devote the same amount of time as their male colleagues to overtime work or special projects that would propel them into positions of higher authority.

A few lucky mothers can afford to be stay-at-home parents or purchase adequate private childcare, which is *not* regulated like the public facilities in Scandinavia. Essentially, parents “get-what-they-pay-for,” and since the quality of private childcare differs dramatically, only the wealthier families benefit from this type of childcare scheme (Gustafsson 59). In the United Kingdom, private childcare does not always require professional qualification; “as such, it indicates and reinforces the lowly status (and consequently the financial rewards) accorded to the care of children in our society” (Marchbank 165). The lack of universal access to adequate childcare support and the fiscal conservativeness of most private industry mean that poor families experience the worst impact of economic and social fluctuations. Single, poor women are the most vulnerable in this situation, and families headed by single women make up about half of the working poor, living in deep poverty, in the United States (Gustafsson and Stafford 171-172). Some of what accounts for the poverty is the lower wages and inability to work longer hours. Consequently, children in these families face healthcare, educational, and societal disadvantages (Esping-Andersen, *Investing* 9). Poverty becomes a generational legacy.

In cases where private childcare is too expensive for middle-class working mothers, immigrants move in to fill the domestic labor void, thus complicating childcare provisioning with a racial element. The phenomenon is a global one, involving the migration of Third World female workers to developed countries; these women help facilitate the entry of high-skilled women into the non-domestic labor force (*Human Development Report 2009* 88). Immigrant working-class women “are often seen as

docile, cheap to employ, and able to endure boring, repetitive work...gendered images and ideologies of femininity and masculinity are used in various sectors of international capital to construct desirable workers (and managers) and desired behaviors” (Acker 18-19). There is even the perception that nannies of certain racial/ethnic backgrounds are more well-suited to raising children—a United States news report, *Tibetan nannies: Parents’ new status symbol?*, comments on the growing trend of viewing nannies as status symbols (Thomas). However, these immigrant nannies have children of their own that need care. In a strange microcosm of the larger childcare problem in liberal regimes, an immigrant nanny often relies on the free/inexpensive labor of her own elder children or kin to attend to the domestic duties she left behind in order to care for another family’s children; this phenomenon is often nicknamed “the crisis of care” (Mattingly 382, Beneria 119).

Canada and the Great Britain also face controversy surrounding the exploitation of immigrant nannies. As in the United States, Canadian families cite lower costs and greater perceived docility in migrant nannies, particularly Filipina ones, that make them appealing. Perceived stereotypes also develop within the migrants’ very own ethnic circle; for example, for Filipina nannies within their own society, the label “nanny” begins carrying connotations of inferiority and reputations as husband stealers (Pratt). Worse yet, research of domestic worker conditions in Canada indicates that the informality of this carework structure and decentralized, uneven worker’s rights enforcement foster abuses ranging from unpaid overtime and wages lower than the legal minimum to sexual harassment and assault (Stasiulis and Bakan 122). In Great Britain,

Rosie Cox and Paul Watt find that the informality of nanny work and the delicate illegitimacy of their citizenship status makes nannies less likely to report true earnings and labor hours, making official tracking and punishment of abuses that much more difficult (42).

The families of nannies in these countries also face considerable disruption. Even if their children are allowed into Canada, they experience difficulties adjusting to the language and different education system—bear in mind the unpopularity of public funding in liberal regimes, especially for non-citizen support like language classes. Drop out rates are high, and the young adults often take up lower-paying jobs which are tied to the already-marginalized service industry (“Nanny Program”). The cycle of impoverishment repeats. Work that is more public and visible tend to be dominated by caucasians, while minorities are overrepresented in caretaking jobs of lower wages and lower social value (Duffy, Beneria 119).

In *Women, Power and Policy*, Jennifer Marchbank writes at length on how topics designated as women’s issues receive short shrift in Great Britain: “As our society views childcare as only affecting women...it receives little attention and resource...the study of childcare as a political issue is a study in how gender is kept as a non-issue” (39). This is certainly the case in the liberal welfare regimes. By not taking active public action on childcare burdens, the United States, Canada, and the Great Britain have subtly subverted childcare into a private issue. Single, widowed, and immigrant mothers can expect little government help. In all cases, the liberal state’s reliance on the private sector to address

childcare does little to actively encourage female participation in the workforce. The high degree of class stratification fights the potential for strong gender mobilization.

7. East Asian Approaches

Developed East Asian economies feature a mix of social welfare schemes similar to the ones employed in the conservative/corporatist and liberal states, with a dash of strong, familial cultural traditions pervading nearly all policy rationale. The family is expected to provide most social support needs, including childcare; social policies historically support the male-as-breadwinner model. Benefits are mean-tested, and welfare is granted through employee contributions and restricted entitlements to pension benefits. The stratification of classes is maintained and reproduced.

Japan, Taiwan, and (South) Korea serve as the case studies for developed East Asian economies. In these regions, rapid development occurred with lots of exposure to the international markets. The lightning-fast, “miraculous” post-World War successes of these economies have only encouraged policy makers to value economic development even more. However, the clash between economic progression and cultural traditions result in a tension between the public and private, with vague delineation between the spheres.

Yih-Jiunn Lee and Yeun-wen Ku found that these states have a unique take on social welfare that includes elements of Esping-Andersen’s corporatist and liberal topologies, but “virtually no evidence of any similarity...[to the] social democratic regime type” (197). Government institutionalization and universalization of social

services is minimal. Any social welfare program that is in place is established primarily for the sake of promoting economic growth or minimizing cost of social investment (Holliday 20). Likewise, social policy that proactively changes family harmony is seen as intrusive, so social insurance is secured and provided by the main breadwinner/head-of-household, who is typically the dominant male figure (Chiu and Wong). When issues of childcare arise, it is within a framework of family duty and morality—good women are good mothers, and good men are good providers. In fact, the powerful Confucian tradition of familial piety and loyalty bears strong resemblance to the Catholic subsidiarity principle in Europe (Esping-Andersen, *Hybrid of Unique*). Historically, childcare has been strictly a private sphere concern, but women's increasing desire for socio-economic freedom, coupled with a rapidly ageing population, have prompted policy makers to more directly address childcare needs. Correspondingly, childcare is supported publicly via private channels.

The solutions for childcare follow patterning very similar to the ones in liberal economies; overall, women still overwhelmingly bear the burden of child rearing. Parental leave and maternal leave usually fall on the conservative side, but where they are generous, the mother, rather than the father, takes the leave. Though public childcare facilities exist, they lack the inflexibility and availability parents require, so private, for-profit daycare centers have sprung up to accommodate mothers who wish (or need to) to work. Immigrant workers here, too, fulfill care gaps for families unable to afford expensive, adequate daycare. Lastly, some women seek employment in informal or part-time work to balance child-rearing and income generation.

These solutions still implicitly encourage the rigidity of the gender roles. Global competitiveness and HDI rankings are relatively high, but child wellbeing scores lower (Schwab, *Human Development Report 2010*, UNICEF). Gender-related topics familiar to Western countries with less gender equality resurface here, but with a twist. Whereas liberal economic states still experience healthy birthrates, the more extreme suppression of gender role shifting in these Asian states results in very low birthrates, much like in the conservative/corporatist regimes. The population is hyper-ageing, and fears of pension shortages run high. Wage gaps between males and females are more pronounced and extreme than in the liberal economies, yet again encouraging the male-as-breadwinner family model (Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi). The consignment of caretaking and childcare to the family inevitably reinforces cultural “gender lag” at home and in the formal labor market (Lee and Ku 2009).

Though women of Japan, Taiwan, and Korea are culturally and economically encouraged to seek marriage as a secure path to financial and social shelter, many choose to postpone or forgo having children. Echoing passages of *The Feminine Mystique*, Japanese women frequently cite employer reluctance to keep employment available upon maternity leave, inadequate and inflexible daycare, and the reluctance of tradition-minded fathers to cook, clean, and care for children as strong disincentives to start families: “Child-rearing can, in some cases, prove a lonely and exhausting solo experience for mothers, many of whom then decide to stick with just one child” (Fogarty). The percentages of East Asian women remaining unmarried are steadily increasing along with female literacy rates, urbanization, and employment opportunities in manufacturing,

clerical work, teaching, and service professions (Jones 18-19).

Women's great reluctance to start families has negatively affected the birth rate, much to the alarm and fear of policy makers with an eye on economic futures. The developed East Asian states reveal some of the lowest birth rates in the world (see table 1).

Table 1. Low Birthrate Ranks for the Developed East Asian Economies in 2011

Birthrate Rank	Country	(Births/1,000 Population)
207	Greece	9.21
208	Serbia	9.19
209	Italy	9.18
210	Macau	9.03
211	San Marino	9.02
212	Taiwan	8.90
213	Bosnia and Herzegovina	8.89
214	Slovenia	8.85
215	Czech Republic	8.70
216	Austria	8.67
217	Korea, South	8.55
218	Singapore	8.50
219	Saint Pierre and Miquelon	8.32
220	Germany	8.30
221	Hong Kong	7.49
222	Japan	7.31
223	Monaco	6.94

Source: Birth rate chart for the year 2011, truncated from "Country Comparison: Birth Rate," CIA World Factbook.

Note: The chart is based on a *total of 223 countries* surveyed. East Asian countries are highlighted here for easier visibility. Note also the presence of the conservative/corporatist economic states in this low birthrate bracket.

Japan in particular claims the second lowest recorded birth rate in the world, a fact which has gained a lot of attention in even international media. The exceedingly low birthrates, which fall well below population replacement ratios, promise a future crisis where a growing population of pensioners cannot draw enough social insurance funds due to a shrinking taxation pool. Due to changing demographics (as exemplified dramatically by Japan), family and kin networks can no longer provide for adequate care services as family size shrinks while women increasingly seek paid, skilled work outside the home (Ku and Finer 126-127).

Starting with Japan in the 1990s, East Asian governments began taking more heavier-handed approaches to increasing birthrates. Hallmarks of their new policies include greater cash bonuses and stipends for growing families, increased subsidies for childcare facility use (both private and public), heavy deregulation of the childcare market to promote private childcare industry, and more generous parental leave policies (Peng and Wong 80-81, Rhee 62, Japan 6). However, Confucian cultural values still exerted powerful influence over economic childcare policy. The governments' actions reveal a duality—a shift away from non-intervention while maintaining respect for family supremacy in childrearing:

East Asian governments are becoming more proactive and interventionist in their family policy, but prefer the role of a finance provider rather than a service provider, prefer home-based and community-based care over an institutional care system, and encourage shared responsibilities between

family and state rather than the wholesale socialization of care responsibilities. (Chiu and Wong 40)

While more funding has been funneled to childcare, the vehicles of distribution, which are selective rather than universal, still allow for gender imbalance and assertion of the male as primary breadwinner.

Cash allowances and subsidies for children are higher, but they are strictly means-tested—for a high quality of life, families are still expected to support their own families via paid work, so the presence of a high-earning breadwinner remains vital. Granting benefits according to individual contributions invariably leaves vulnerable or disadvantaged the working women who, on average, earn and occupationally achieve far less than their male counterparts due to careers stunted by shorter/discontinuous employment durations (Hsu 2). Parental leave is scant compared to the benefits given to Scandinavian parents—especially mandatory paternity leave (Kim 157). As in the liberal economies, mothers experience the “mommy penalty” and absence of job guarantee upon return from maternity leave, while men opt to forgo parental and childcare leave and shift most childcare and domestic responsibilities to the mother. In Taiwan, for example, mothers accounted for 84% of the parental-leave applicants as recently as 2009 (Gao). Lastly, while public and private childcare facilities have increased in number, parental complaints abound about the scarcity of public childcare, the cost of quality private childcare, qualitative heterogeneity of childcare facilities, and inflexible availability of services, which clashes with inflexible company work hours (Chiu and Wong 79, Wang 5 Kim 151, Japan 2).

A rising popular alternative to these childcare options is immigrant nannies, a trend mirrored from the liberal economies. This option is especially popular in Taiwan where, like in the liberal welfare states, stereotypes flourish through the intersection of preconceived notions about domestic labor and the nannies' precarious status as foreign workers. A man thus explains his different treatment of Taiwanese careworkers versus Filipina domestics: "It is mainly because Filipina domestics have low social status in Taiwan. If you treat them better, or different from their current status here, you will have problems controlling them" (Cheng 181). Taiwanese notions about migrant Filipino backwardness and poverty color the relationship between the two groups, ultimately perpetuating "the system of gender inequality that persistently relegates women to the realm of carework and devalues women's caring labor" (Cheng 184). A "crisis of care" is also present here, for immigrant nannies frequently leave their own family back home and so must rely on the childcare services of kin or local careworkers (Lan 194).

Filipina nannies are growing popular in Korea as well. *Filipinas a growing force in Korean homes* tells the stories of different Korean mothers who are willing to illegally hire Filipina domestic laborers without proper work permits. Both sides are motivated by money—one to fulfill a gap in child care, the other to make more money to provide for self or family back home. However, Kim Yoo-chul reports the rise of an informal labor market where participants are more prone to workplace and employer abuses: "Foreign workers earn far less than Koreans with their average paycheck lower than that of the bottom 10 percent, a government report says. A more chilling fact is their meager wages are not increasing."

The childcare policies employed in these East Asian regimes are a shadow of the policies enacted in the Scandinavian social democratic states. Public policy directly encouraging greater female workforce participation remains unwritten. Additionally, the lack of a truly universal approach to benefits and services fails to address class inequalities, which harms chances for strong cross-class gender mobilization. The persistent double-burden of childrearing (“mommy penalty”) prevents working women from achieving more positions of leadership and political power.

8. Latin American (Transitional) Approaches

Latin America is a highly complex and varied region. Relatively recent colonial independence, bouts of dictatorship, strong American political intervention, pressure from invasive one-size-fits-all IMF loan policies, and rapid trade liberalization are all important influences on the economic and social policies of Latin American countries. These transitional welfare regimes are in the midst of flux, with indications of trending alignment toward social democratic or liberal welfare principles, or a mixture of both. The countries falling under this category have reached a level of development where social welfare exists and is mostly informally or privately handled; a lack of resources prevents true universal committal of services.

Chile and Uruguay are developed enough—and, just as importantly, democratic enough—to serve as case studies illustrating the uniquely Latin American public/private divide on social services and childcare (Economist Intelligence Unit). Much of Latin America’s current social welfare problems developed out of firmly entrenched, powerful

interest groups that took advantage of turbulent historic/political events. Essentially, the governments implemented contributory social welfare policies which reproduced and favored pre-existing social stratification lines—workers of formally employed, white collar occupations benefited greatly (Seekings). Gender imbalances and gender-sensitive social policies can be traced back to both countries’ historical trajectories—even as far back as the early 20th century. The impact on childcare in Chile and Uruguay directly results from the two countries’ different socio-economic histories.

Uruguay’s small population and high degree of urbanization created an especially high demand for labor—contextual opportunities which Chilean women did not share (Pribble 95). Mobilization of large Uruguayan workers’ unions led to the rise of the Communist party in the 1930s, which bolstered Uruguayan women’s efforts to enter politics. Uruguayan women’s growing political power resulted pro-natal legislation as early as 1906; similar legislation did not emerge in Chile until over a decade later, and even then, the policies were more protectionist than pro-birth (Pribble 97). Meanwhile in Chile, the Partido Demócrata Cristiano (Christian Democratic Party) grew to power—this party has been (like its cousins in Europe) historically opposed to state intervention in the family and any change to the family structure. The Partido Demócrata Cristiano emerged in Uruguay only in the 1960s and has been a weaker force in the country. The advent of dictatorships in the 1970s would then expand the welfare differences in each country. Pinochet’s privatization and deregulation reforms in Chile (backed by exceedingly liberal economists trained in the United States) dismantled many state-provided social services, while in Uruguay, more universalistic welfare policies remained intact thanks to less

economic polarization between social classes (Castiglioni 6). Consequentially, childcare in Uruguay is framed and handled as a public matter, while in Chile childcare gets subverted under the umbrella of benefits for the family via the male wage-earner. Due to paucity of resources in both countries, however, a reliance informal work threatens gender equity and further labor force evolution.

The following breakdown in childcare policy is sourced from Jennifer Pribble's childcare study, published in 2006. Uruguayan solutions for childcare include cash stipends/family allowances for children regardless of the head of household's sex, parental leave which covers workers even in non-standard, informal jobs and is extended to recently unemployed mothers, and universal entitlement to childcare. Chilean solutions to childcare include family allowances, parental leave, and childcare entitlements which are bound to the head-of-household's formal and contractual employment. The recipient of childcare access in particular must be a working mother. In both countries, maternity leave is neither particularly high nor low, but paternity leave is very minimal (*Maternity at Work* 47). Also for both countries, private childcare exists but is very expensive, so public childcare is very popular though demand surpasses supply. Lastly, in both countries, gaps in adequate childcare provision and assistance are bolstered by women's income from informal labor and part-time work.

The effectiveness of these solutions are mixed and somewhat difficult to assess with finality given the countries' recent returns to democracy and recovery from economic and political turmoil. Global development rankings and birthrates are average. Job protection upon maternity leave is not a guarantee, especially for women working in

more rural areas, and employers tend to feel that mothers are burdens rather than assets (*The Legal Status*). Chile, while outranking Uruguay on the Global Competitiveness Index and Human Development Index, falls behind Uruguay in terms of income equality (Schwab, United Nations). The UN report on Human Development concurs that some countries—notably, Chile (and Mexico and Panama)—scored higher in the Human Development Index “despite an unequal income distribution when social expenditures were good or moderate” (United Nations 55). Birthrates are relatively healthy, far outpacing those of the conservative/corporatist and East Asian states (CIA). The OECD also admits that, despite Chile’s ostensibly high rank in the 2010 *Global Gender Gap* Report, the Chilean gender wage gap remains high, and female labor force participation low (26). Uruguay, meanwhile boasts a consistently higher margin for female labor force rates (see table 2).

Table 2. Fertility and Female Labor Force Participation Rates in Uruguay and Chile

Country	Total fertility rate 1980-1985	Total fertility rate 1995-2000	FLFPR* 1980	FLFPR 1990	FLFPR 2010
Chile	2.7	2.4	33.3	41.7	60
Uruguay	2.6	2.4	43.5	59.5	77

Source: Table data collected from Lim 204 and Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi.

Note: Female labor force under measurement includes women ages 25-54.

The discrepancies in index scores reveal the influence of historical legacy and social policy. Chile’s liberal economic policies and weaker union formation amongst the poorer classes means that only a select few of the population enjoy the fruits of rapid

development. Though not perfectly gender-sensitive, Uruguay's more universalistic social policies appear to result in slower development but enable greater gender mobilization.

Uruguay's policies of coverage and entitlement are not officially tied to conditions of full or contractual formal employment; hence, women who are informally employed or newly unemployed or working part-time can access childcare (Pribble 91-92). Chilean mothers experience greater difficulty accessing childcare resources—though these resources are publically subsidized, reciprocity is restricted to income limits and formal employment, thereby excluding the unemployed, self-employed, and those working in the informal labor markets. The greater inclusiveness of Uruguay's policies provides a greater poverty safety-net for mothers, especially for the jobless or informally employed. The cross-class nature of Uruguay's approaches to social policy mollifies the extreme differences between classes, encouraging a greater sense of shared fate and interest amongst Uruguayan women (Pribble 103). Uruguay's social foundations promise more stability for, and less backlash against, gender mobilization.

Despite the good intentions of both countries' childcare policies, resources remain scarce, so the bulk of childrearing responsibilities still fall upon the mother. Both Chile and Uruguay face increased urbanization, divorce rates, single parent households headed by females, and informal labor markets. With the current contraction of low-skill, formal jobs available, women and new mothers are seeking informal labor for greater flexibility and income, which leaves them prey to workplace abuses and exploitation. Women are indeed joining the workforce, but many mothers must assume doubled work burdens or

rely on kin and community when they are unable to secure access to public childcare or when private childcare proves too expensive.

Although Uruguayan (and some Chilean) policies officially declare universal distributions and access, childcare service scarcity leads these facilities to use selection criteria that targets lower income families (Medrano 7). Latin American countries trying to emulate the classical European welfare regimes would need to account for large populations well below the poverty line and a corresponding low tax base from which to draw funds. “That flawed combination,” writes Alejandro Foxley, “virtually [guarantees] that universal coverage for basic services [can] not be achieved. These basic services are often underfunded; furthermore, the civil servants who manage them are poorly paid and have no incentive to improve the coverage and quality of service” (33). Any social programs currently in place are “residual in terms of services, coverage, and functions,” so much so that “most citizens are unable to cope with social risks by accessing state services or by participating in labor markets. Individuals therefore are required to rely heavily on family and communal arrangements” (Franzoni 89-91).

With current economic crises enveloping the world, future progressive spending here may take a backseat to budget tightening and conservative backlash. Ultimately, the male-as-breadwinner income model, supported to some degree in Uruguay and slightly more in Chile, stubbornly persists. Patience and sensitivity seem to be key for these regions in socio-economic transition; there are some strong indications of progress. For example, very recently, the Chilean people elected a popular socialist female president, Michelle Bachelet, who led an effort to expand public childcare 240% between 2005 and

2007 (Madrano). Hopefully, as development and resources stabilize in these states, we will see continual growth of the young universal welfare policies born here.

9. Summary

The above cross-cultural comparisons of female labor and childcare schemes support the thesis that elevating the issue of childcare to public discourse, and framing it as a public concern deserving of public funding, is key to enabling women to join the workforce and promoting equity not just for women, but also for the lives of children.

Despite historical, cultural, and geographic differences, global patterns of obstructions to gender mobilization and equality begin to emerge. Ultimate factors that appear to inhibit gender mobilization and gender-sensitive policies include: Large class gaps in income levels, the strong presence of patriarchal traditions and or religions, and lack of sufficient childcare resources or funding.

Toward an Integrated Theory of Gender Stratification is a large, ambitious body of work by multiple scholars that outlines factors in gender discrimination and subsequent mobilization. The authors found that

gender conflict mobilizes into an overt movement when there is a combination of: a) inequalities in economic power and ideology, but inequalities which are not the most extreme; b) modest but increasing levels of resources for the oppressed gender, especially in the higher social classes; and c) segregated but well-connected organization of each gender, such that relatively large numbers can form collective networks...[and]

men become allies of rebellious women, because of ties of economic interest or common participation in a background social movement.

(Collins et al. 209)

As noted throughout this paper, connecting economic labor pool needs to women's workforce participation results in policies that enable more women to seek economic autonomy and contribute their skills and talents. Accumulated income translates into increased private ownership for women and enhanced bargaining/purchasing power within the home. When states have effectively "purchased" or funneled funds to childcare solutions, the ability of women to join the public, formal labor sphere and eventually mobilize is greatly enhanced. The visibility gained from the increasing female workforce participation slowly, but surely, allows hidden inequality issues to be recognized, considered on a public or political level, and galvanized into a challenge on dominant gender role ideologies.

The solutions to childcare which prove most effective include: Generous maternal (and paternal) leave, strong protectionist labor laws that guarantees employment upon a mother's return to employment, excellent public daycare options, and equal, universal distribution of benefits. These mixture of solutions best support the three aforementioned conditions necessary for strong gender mobilization: The lessening of extreme social inequalities, increasing levels of resources for the oppressed gender, and cross-class, public support of a topic typically designated to the feminist sphere. The Scandinavian welfare states prove most adept at implementing these solutions; the other welfare states described in this paper fell short of providing enough childcare solutions to allow for

adequate gender mobilization. Indeed, as Diane Sainsbury states, “there appears to be some convergence around the thesis that in nations where the state effectively transfers the private duty to the public responsibility of care, the conditions for the development of a full civil, political and social citizenship of women are better fulfilled” (16). When governments frame childcare as a basic necessity that needs the support and *protection* of public institutions, the path is left open for a gradual shift in perceptions about gender roles.

Why is a gradual shift important—shouldn’t we approach egalitarianism as fast as possible? The trend toward conservative backlash appears is puzzling considering the gains to be had from promoting equity. Alarming, the breadwinner structure is enjoying a worldwide resurgence due to post-2008 economic crises around the globe. Allan Johnson, in his book *The Gender Knot*, discusses at length the powerful psychological influence of “paths of least resistance”—that is, when assuming a lifestyle and identity, a person will prescribe to a gender role pre-dictated for him and her by the greater society. Oftentimes, if an individual chooses a different path or lifestyle, he or she will be subject to coercive social penalties. Jane Mansbridge and Shauna Shames, studying cases where ambitious civil laws have been introduced then quickly withdrawn or watered down, elaborate on the penalizing principles that occur when change is introduced too fast. Progressiveness dies when change is introduced too suddenly, or too insensitively, for the general public to accept or accommodate— “going too far, too fast” causes the worst backlash (Mansbridge and Shames 628).

Backlash in the case of gender role alteration, then, is a reflexive attempt by those

who currently have power to retain it. This is why I believe that universal, public support of childcare, such that women can join and remain in the workforce, is so crucial. The changes wrought occur gradually as women slowly build more resources and opportunities to attain positions of leadership. When enough women have joined the workforce and changed the cultural perceptions of what they can accomplish (and when men perhaps find themselves enjoying more family time and time away from the workplace), they can safely take a more active role in shaping public policy that benefits not only women, but also men.

There are currently conservative calls for public expenditure scaleback even in the Scandinavian countries. John Stephens reviews arguments that claim the extremely generous welfare state is to blame for escalating budget deficits and rising unemployment. He finds that much of the fiscal damage is actually fostered by external sources and the unavoidable effects of internationalization and trade deregulation. He concludes that the economic pressures will in fact result in a deepening of the “feminist profile” of the welfare state:

The long-term trend toward shaping policy to enable women to enter the labour force and support dual income-earning families is likely to be intensified in the future. The institution of day care, parental leave, flexible work schedules, and so on over the past two to three decades, which have permitted the Scandinavian welfare states to adapt themselves to, and facilitate, [modern production familial structures] are likely to be deepened, resources permitting. (Stephens 32)

In the short term, inequality may rise as private companies step in to fill the void left by underfunded public institutions. In the long run, however, as these progressive economies are based strongly upon the contributions of their labor pools, it is likely that efficiency tweaks will be made where possible while the economic global storm rides its course, resulting in an even stronger entrenchment of universalist, distributive ideology. This same ideology is credited, even now, to maintaining Sweden's relative economic success and recovery "rock star" status even in this dour, global economic climate (Irwin). If Stephens proves to be correct, future public childcare provisioning will be stronger and more popular than ever.

The countries seen to be cutting back the most on existing childcare support are the nations that heavily rely on the private market or highly co-dependent family unit to provide social balance. Collectivizing these services, however, is crucial to securing greater freedoms. I quote here a lengthy but appropriate passage by John Vail on the role that public services play for populations:

...Many public goods, such as public parks, public streets, open-access scientific research, free software...are readily accessible to any member of the public and no one in the community needs the permission of anyone else to use them. As such, public goods constitute an important dimension of individual freedom and a platform for social cooperation...Public goods arise from the fundamental need to alleviate the harmful side effects generated by the complexity and interdependence of modern life, where the solutions to these ills are most efficiently undertaken by public not

private action. If sewers and waste treatment were provided as private services (as indeed they once were) rather than as public goods, they would likely cover only the small percentage of the population with the ability to pay... Second, if left to the market economy, the provision of public goods would be far below the optimal level. (325 Vail)

One of the greatest fears cited in taking childcare outside the private domestic sphere is the downgrading of quality of care. Yet, studies show that valuing and prioritizing domestic services results in more quality family time. Despite fears of family breakdown due to the rise of the dual-income family model, public service provisioning fosters even more quality family time: “By 1991 more Swedish infants were being cared for by their own mothers than were US infants (95 and 55 per cent respectively)” (Marchbank 87). Public services serve a corrective role not unlike the one served by law and the justice system. They serve as a type of “checks and balances” on the tendency of capitalism to exploit workers. While the notions of freedom and privacy are praised in liberal regime countries, the pressures to generate enough income for a satisfactory lifestyle virtually enslave the liberal regime worker, who must make enough to support his or her family and maintain quality of life. The widening gaps between rich and poor attest to the economic instability and social inequality of the liberal approach to social services in these countries.

Furthermore, as countries across the globe industrialize, develop, urbanize, and mature, changes to the family structure appear inevitable. Single-parent households, occupational specialization, and demographic changes are on the rise. As the East Asian

and Latin American case studies illustrate, it is better to anticipate these dynamics than to react to them. How the economic burden of demographic changes is handled will influence economic recovery. Where formal female labor is not encouraged by the government, women are overwhelmingly turning to flexible but informal jobs to support their families. A positive cycle can easily become a vicious one—Southern Europe and the majority of Latin America are experiencing the growth of the informal labor market which, due to lack of formal economic regulation, threatens to erode the tax base. Informalization of jobs also contributes to wage polarization and poor working conditions, reinforcing the feminization of poverty (Beneria 116). Countries truly pursuing greater equality and democracy must proactively grasp these societal exigencies effectively to engender real social and ideological changes.

10. Limitations of Research, Closing Thoughts

The research presented in this paper is by no means comprehensive; humbly, I admit that there are likely as many informational gaps as there are revelations. Nevertheless, the cross sampling of countries taken here provide enough trends that support this paper's thesis and provoke questions that will, hopefully, help lead to more targeted inquiry on approaches to establishing equality.

I have, for example, omitted discussion about developing nations enduring heavy loans. If the conditions of women engaging in the double burden workday or informal labor markets are dismal or “depressing,” what of the conditions for women in developing nations? Atrocious is too mild a descriptor. Increased globalization and

“economic imperialism” of neoliberal IMF and World Bank policies have resulted in the gross marginalization of the already disadvantaged (Beneria). The poor, by default, assume infinite burdens of economic restructuring. In these countries, women are overburdened with childcare *and* subsistence production.

What of third world feminists who criticize western feminism’s universalizing of the female experience and insensitivity to culture? Hegemonic notions about motherhood and what it means reach one’s full potential as a female are complex topics deserving of its own forum outside the scope of this paper. Third World feminists take umbrage with Western feminists for projecting their own brand of feminine identities without sensitivity to culture or tradition. I have omitted these concerns in favor of formulating a thesis that could apply to a broad spectrum of cases. Additionally, the research conducted in this paper indicates that cultures and traditions would *have* to change in order to make way for greater female freedom and contribution.

The experiences of men must also be considered. Are they their enjoying different liberties upon their new compulsory duties as child and domestic caretakers? Or the emancipation from high stress jobs without the worry of providing support for their families? To generate consensus on a truly universal approach to childcare, these men’s changing attitudes and behavior within patriarchal dynamics must be accounted for. There must be creative methods devised by which men can approach, and be encouraged to assume, non-masculine familial responsibilities without fear of social stigma or threats to their identity as men.

This question is perhaps the most troubling: Are policies that promote infinite pro-natalism sustainable? Jin-seo Cho points to the undesirability of population density and asks if lower birthrates are all that bad. "In South Korea," he says, "the impact of high population density is apparent. It is the world's third most crowded nation... With 486 people living together in per one square kilometer of land, the country is about 50 percent more crowded than Japan, 2.5 times more than China, 4 times more than France and 186 times more than Australia." Would countries, for the sake of developing their economies, end up destroying their natural resources and standards of living to do so? The topic of population control is extremely taboo, and perhaps touches upon the most private of liberties—the right to establishing one's own family. While on one hand we attempt to "solve the problem of world hunger," on the other, we are directly complicating that problem. In this paper, strong and universal childcare support has been shown to steadily promote positive birthrates and sustain the economies which heavily rely on their labor pools. It remains to be seen when the problems of overpopulation finally trump the need to reproduce productive labor pools.

The last question is one I can answer. Why discuss economics when discussing gender and egalitarianism? I grew up under the watchful eyes of two parents who deviated to a certain degree from their own prescribed gender roles as a Pakistani woman and Vietnamese man. I have fond memories of my father nurturing me, and playing matchbox cars and dolls with me. I have respect for my mother who worked long hours to provide for me and my sibling and trained us (with some severity) on our arithmetic and periodic table of elements. I have a deep love for both who claimed their own unique

contexts as man and woman once-removed from their own cultures and forging their own in America. We always worked hard and were able to get by. However, the struggles my parents endured—the single-room apartment that housed our family of four for years, frequent moves between extended families’ homes, unemployment, confrontations with prejudice and racism, my father’s cancer and my mother’s subsequent single parenthood—left unshakeable impressions on me. I have a deep and personal belief that money is a key factor in dissecting conflicts and generating identities and ideologies. “Money makes the world go round” is cliché, but it is impossible to ignore the correlations between something—or someone’s—monetary value and its perceived ethical and cultural value. Why the world is the way it is may not be a completely solvable question. But if we can better utilize all the thinking minds in the world, we might come closer to solving the question *and* improving our world.

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