

## **The Politics of Mothers' Employment**

Across the Western world, societies have been transformed by the rise of mothers' employment. Most countries have experienced a substantial change in mothers' attachment to the world of paid work over the past three to four decades, raising questions about how to assure the care of young children. Policy makers in nearly all Western countries have at some point wrestled with this issue, yet their responses have been quite divergent. Comparing the policy decisions made across these countries, we can see differences in the extent to which societies accept both the idea of mothers working while their children are young and the idea that the state should have a role in shaping gender roles and children's lives.

In Sweden, for example, government policy since the 1970s has fueled the transformation of Swedish society into one of "universal breadwinners" in which all parents participate in paid work. Universal, state-run day care programs, as well as policies to encourage greater male involvement in child rearing, embody an activist state tradition in shaping family arrangements,

the care of children, and the equality of women. We can see a similarly activist state in France, reflected in its array of universal subsidies and services for families. Although French governments have not attempted a radical overhaul of gender relations, their approach toward working mothers often has been pragmatic and supportive. In the Netherlands, by contrast, public policy long endorsed and upheld the male-breadwinner model of social relations, encouraging mothers to be home while their children were young. This has been matched by leering toward state involvement in the lives of young children and an effort to leave responsibility for the care and education of children to the voluntary sector. The Dutch case resonates with the U.S. one, where there is virtually no tradition of family policy and a well-established pattern of leaving questions of family morality to individuals. Because of Americans' sharply divided views on mothers' employment, American policy has sought to shift this issue from the political to the market sphere, leaving parents to figure out their own child care arrangements with minimal direct support from the state.

This book examines and explains patterns of work-family policies in Sweden, France, the Netherlands, and the United States, giving particular attention to child care policy but also looking at parental leave and flexible work-time arrangements. The analysis focuses on how religion has influenced this dimension of the welfare state. Although much research emphasizes the role of Left parties and powerful unions in driving the welfare state's expansion, policies on child care and mothers' employment are not only about material redistribution and labor markets; they also reflect ideologies about gender relations and the family. More specifically, extending the programs of the welfare state to promote mothers' employment requires accepting that mothers should work while their children are young and that the state should influence family care arrangements. As the succeeding chapters will show, organized religion has played a critical role in shaping political ideologies about gender roles and the appropriate relationship between the state and the family.

Uncovering the roots of these ideologies and the ways in which they have influenced public policy requires a historical perspective. Contemporary welfare states represent over a century of policy decisions, with the politics and policies of one period often influencing decisions later on. Many scholars argue that the programs enacted during the welfare state's "golden

age"—the period of rapid economic growth and public sector expansion between 1945 and 1975—still affect the politics of social policy today, and this book will offer support for these arguments. These golden-age policies also did not emerge *sui generis* but were influenced by the political and policy legacies of an earlier period. Therefore, I begin my study in the latter part of the nineteenth century, exploring early public policies that would have great relevance for mothers' employment. I also investigate the roots of political forces and ideologies that would predominate in the decades after the Second World War and shape the politics of mothers' employment.

The late nineteenth century was a critical period of political development. Mass political systems were taking shape, and the role of the state in social life was steadily expanding. Religion was a significant source of political and social conflict in this period, particularly around the issue of who should oversee the education of children and protect the well-being of families. These conflicts sparked a political mobilization in some countries over the relative power of state, church, and competing religious groups. Patterns of church-state relations and religious conflict had an enduring impact on early family and educational policies, as well as the way religion would be incorporated into politics. In both France and Sweden, religious authorities were subordinated to secular state ones, facilitating an active state role in family policy and furthering the secularization of politics and social life. Secularization went furthest in Sweden, but religious forces would also play a constrained role in French politics through much of the twentieth century. In the Netherlands and the United States, by contrast, social conservatives gained more influence over politics than in France and Sweden—although by different means—and tried to shield the family from state influence while also espousing traditional gender roles.

The resulting structure of political competition shaped how governments responded to the rise of female workforce participation in the 1960s and 1970s. In France and Sweden, acceptance of an activist state in family affairs and the weak role of organized religion in politics created approval for both wage-earning mothers and state policies to support them. Although agreement on this was greater in Sweden and the policy shifts more radical, pragmatic acceptance of this social change in France led to policies that supported wage-earning mothers. In the Netherlands and the United States there was stronger opposition to both government family policy and shifting

gender roles, reflecting in part the greater influence of organized religion on both politics and society. The result in the Netherlands was a continuation of the male-breadwinner model of public policy, while American policy makers encouraged private-sector solutions to work-family problems rather than try to reach agreement on whether or not public policy should encourage mothers' employment.

Since the 1970s, secularization and the growth of women's employment have further eroded the foundations of the traditional male-breadwinner model in all countries, creating pressure for policy reform. There has been both stability and change in this policy area, however. The stability reflects the constraining effects of economic slowdown in the post-Fordist era and the institutionalization of different approaches to the work-family issue. Particular policy configurations have shaped beliefs about mothers' employment that endure, creating a powerful force for the status quo—whether for universal supports to working mothers in Sweden, the more mixed model in France, or private solutions in the Netherlands or the United States. At the same time, however, continuing social changes have created new tensions and problems, opening up spaces for political competition around the needs of working mothers. As we shall see in the case of the Netherlands, the growth of women's employment and the crisis of Christian Democracy in the 1990s created an opening for new child care, parental leave, and work time policies designed to encourage women's employment. Even so, the continued emphasis in Dutch policy on facilitating maternal care and the reluctance to involve the state too much in the provision of child care show the enduring legacies of one hundred years of debates about gender roles and the boundaries between the state and the family.

### *The Social and Political Significance of Work-Family Policies*

Child care, parental leave, and other work-family policies affect the lives of nearly everyone by shaping the experiences of childhood, parenthood, and employment. These policies influence how societies organize the care and education of young children, because they affect parental caring time and the availability of day care and early education programs. Access to child care also has consequences for women's employment. Some studies show that the

availability and affordability of day care affects how likely mothers are to remain in paid work, and the same is true for parental leaves that are neither too long nor too short and are reasonably well paid.<sup>1</sup> This is not to imply that work-family policies are or should be solely considered “women’s issues,” and there are efforts in a growing number of countries to increase the role of men in caring for children. Nonetheless, though men have increased their caring role in recent years, having children has virtually no impact on either men’s participation in the labor force or their wages. If anything, the relationship is the inverse: having children correlates with higher wages for men.<sup>2</sup>

Many scholars argue that work-family policies have major ramifications for women’s equality, autonomy, and social citizenship. The current gender-based division of labor in the home, in which women in two-income families are responsible for more than 70 percent of the “second shift” of child care and housework, affects women’s political participation, activity in the labor force, and long-term earning potential.<sup>3</sup> Recent analysis has linked the wage gap in the United States almost entirely to whether female employees have children; controlling for age, education, and experience, childless women earn 90 percent of what their male equivalents do, whereas mothers earn 73 percent. This gap is smaller in France and Sweden owing both to wage compression policies and to more continuous patterns of women’s employment.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, child care responsibilities reduce mothers’ entitlement to such social benefits as pensions, health care, and unemployment insurance because these are often related to participation in the labor market. Mothers’ dependence on husbands for these rights increases their vulnerability and susceptibility to poverty if they become widowed or divorced.<sup>5</sup> The feminization of poverty in some countries reflects the ineffectiveness of their welfare states—constructed around the assumption that most mothers would be full-time caregivers supported by working husbands—in socializing the costs of child rearing in an era of high divorce rates and growing numbers of single mothers.<sup>6</sup>

How states respond to the needs of families for child care may also affect the demographic future of these nations. According to some scholars, population stagnation in much of continental Europe reflects a failure to develop social services that would spread the burden of care across the larger society and support women in paid employment.<sup>7</sup> Ironically, in the

more conservative states that have sought to reinforce traditional caring arrangements—Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain—women face a stark choice between paid work and family and therefore delay childbirth and/or have fewer children. Fertility rates are falling below replacement rates, and these countries now face a veritable demographic crisis. In France and the Nordic countries, which have done more to support mothers in the workforce, fertility rates are considerably higher, although high fertility rates in the United States complicate this story.<sup>8</sup>

Work-family policies now figure prominently on the political agenda of many Western countries. In Sweden, France, and the United States, political debates about these policies began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the issue has been on and off the political stage ever since. In recent years, Swedish efforts have focused on the responsibilities of fathers for the care of young children, while American policy targets the needs of poor single mothers. The Dutch discussion began later but intensified in the 1990s as governments began adopting measures to increase women's employment.

In addition to these domestic debates, there is growing pressure from international organizations to develop early education programs and policies to help women "reconcile" work and family. The European Union (EU) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have been important agenda setters on these issues, calling upon their member states to increase the female labor supply in the name of both gender equality and economic efficiency.<sup>9</sup> The EU has set a voluntary benchmark for women's employment and provision of child care that the member states are supposed to meet by 2010. In addition, there is an increasing push at both the domestic and international level to promote early childhood education programs. As Jane Jenson and Denis Saint-Martin have shown, these initiatives have been promoted under the mantra of "social investment"—the need to enhance the productive capacities of the population.<sup>10</sup>

For comparative studies of the welfare state, employment policies toward mothers offer one way for scholars to evaluate the gendered impacts of welfare regimes. In recent years, much social policy research in history and the social sciences has sought to reinterpret the welfare state along gendered lines.<sup>11</sup> Many of these scholars have challenged existing gender-blind indicators of welfare regimes while developing new measures that capture the distinctive ways in which social programs affect women. Employment

policies toward mothers are important because participation in the labor force is often crucial for social citizenship rights.<sup>12</sup> In even the most universalistic welfare states, entitlement to generous social programs requires time in paid work—and the more time, the better. As Ann Shola Orloff has aptly phrased it, before one can be decommodified so as to reduce dependence on markets, one must first be commodified so as to gain entitlement to social benefits.<sup>13</sup> Participation in the labor market can also be a means of reducing dependence on men. Thus, to the extent that welfare regimes take into consideration the distinctive needs of women workers for leave time and care services, they are more likely to receive the appellation “women friendly” from feminist scholars.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, many feminists have argued that scholars and policy makers, in their drive to support women’s employment, may simply be contributing to the devaluation of women’s care work in the home.<sup>15</sup> From the beginning, feminist activism and theory sought to value women’s activities by tearing down the boundary between the privileged public sphere and the neglected private sphere. However, motherhood and care work have generated thorny questions about women’s interests. Do they lie in policies and social arrangements that glorify care work and support these activities, or in efforts to commodify or socialize caring responsibilities so that women can work for pay? In many countries, debates about mothers’ employment have mobilized women on both sides of the divide, with some arguing for “wages for housework” that will value care and others lobbying for measures that promote women’s employment.<sup>16</sup> This book does not take sides in this normative debate. Rather than adopt one definition of women’s interests, this study looks empirically at how different actors and polities have defined these interests and how these visions have been enacted in the policies and programs of the welfare state.

*The Diversity of Mothers’ Employment Policies:  
Some Useful Definitions*

A potentially wide range of policies affects mothers’ employment patterns, ranging from anti-discrimination measures to state-provided child care to the incentives created by different tax and benefit systems. This study

focuses mainly on child care, parental leave, and work time arrangements.<sup>17</sup> It also looks closely at some of the most significant programs that affect parents' decisions about child care and work. Comparing these policies is a complex enterprise, given differences in their actual meanings in different countries. Simply looking at the length of parental leave time or the percentage of children in public programs does not say enough about the real-world effects of these systems. For that reason, some definitions and interpretations are needed.

In the area of child care, it is important to distinguish between preschool and day care programs. Preschools are often part of the education system, and because their main objective is education, their schedules do not necessarily suit working parents. Many programs are part-time, but this varies cross-nationally. In France and Belgium, such programs are open for a full school day (often 8:30 A.M.–4:30 P.M. in France, 8:30 A.M.–3:30 P.M. in Belgium, with one day or afternoon free per week), and in some areas there are after-school programs that help round out a full working day. In Germany (particularly in the western *Länder*) and Austria, however, preschools usually close by lunchtime, and after-school care is minimal. As preschools usually follow the school schedule, there is also a lengthy break in the summer when there are no classes. Day care programs, on the other hand, exist almost entirely for the purpose of taking care of children while parents are working, so they usually fall within the jurisdiction of social services departments and are open for a full working day. The line between these day care services and preschool programs is often blurred and varies by country. The Nordic states lack this differentiation between care and education: programs for children from infancy to age six or seven (the mandatory school age) were originally developed under the auspices of social services agencies. Many of these programs had an important pedagogic component but also addressed the needs of working parents. The book will refer to all these services as day care, although in Sweden they are now called preschools (*förskola*) and the Swedish Ministry of Education now oversees all programs for children below the mandatory school age.

In all countries, the term day care generally includes both formal day care centers and family day care, where several children are cared for in a private home. The latter is usually a private arrangement between families and individual caregivers that is minimally subsidized (at most, through the tax



code) and often weakly regulated. However, a number of countries now regulate and fund family day care and conceptualize these services as part of their day care system. In France, these *assistantes maternelles* are part of networks of family day care subsidized by public resources, and they are guaranteed paid vacations, sickness and maternity leave, and a certain wage level. In Sweden, family day care is even more strongly subsidized and is overseen by public authorities. France and Belgium, as well as Sweden and the other Nordic states, include these programs in their statistical accounting of public child care availability, a convention this study maintains.<sup>18</sup>

Parental leave systems are also complex. Many countries have maternity leave programs that are specifically for women, relatively short, and paid at a high rate, such as 90 or 100 percent of a woman's previous salary. Parental leave, if it exists, generally follows the period of maternity leave and is open to both parents.<sup>19</sup> Usually these leaves are longer than maternity leave, but they are not necessarily paid. In some European countries, parental leave is part of the social insurance system and is treated as such. Work entitles parents to a certain level of benefits, and this parental insurance is then paid out during the time that one is at home caring for a child. Yet another form of leave, care leave, can be distinguished from parental leave in that it usually is longer but paid at a low rate, if at all.<sup>20</sup> Care leaves allow a parent to look after a child at home for an extended period and are either unpaid or paid at a low flat rate for two or three years. In both parental and care leave, it is important to distinguish the right to leave from work, on one hand, from the right to a benefit, on the other, because these are often distinct entitlements.

Interpreting the impact of leave systems is still more complicated. From the standpoint of maximizing parental caring time, longer and more generously paid leaves are preferable. From the perspective of promoting women's employment, however, leave systems that are either "too short" or "too long" may be detrimental.<sup>21</sup> Very short and poorly paid maternity leaves, for example, may encourage women to leave the labor market when they have a child rather than put their infants in day care—something many parents do not want to do. However, women who take very long leaves might find that their jobs have vanished when they return, or that their employment status has been downgraded. In all countries, women take the majority of parental and care leave days. In France, 98 percent of people who take the extended three-year care leave are women.

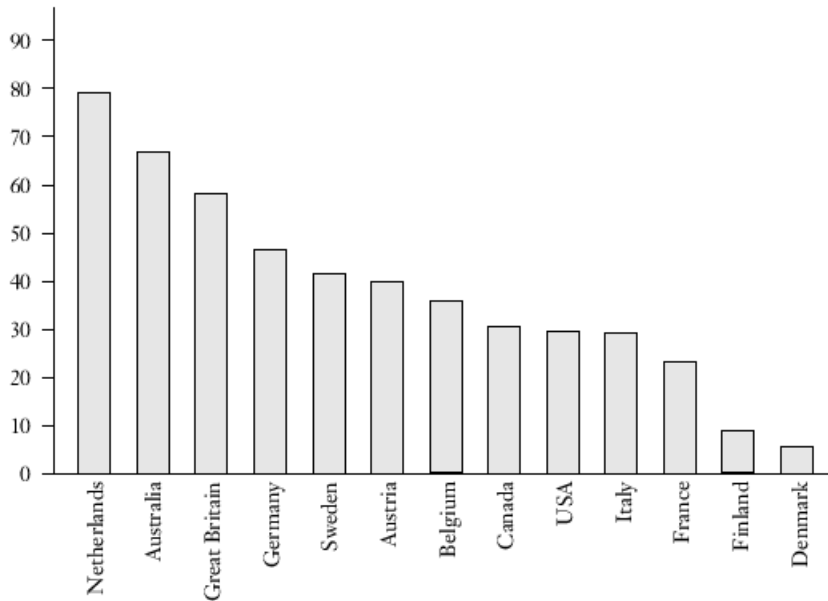


Figure 1.1 Percentage of employed mothers in part-time work (youngest child under age 6), 2002

SOURCE: OECD, *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators* (Paris: 2005), 41.

These data are for women aged 15 to 64. Part-time work is defined as employment for fewer than 30 hours per week except in Australia, Sweden, and the United States, where it is defined as employment fewer than 35 hours per week.

A third set of policies that affect women's employment are measures that enable part-time work. Part-time work among women is widespread, particularly among mothers of young children, although it is more prevalent in some countries than in others (figure 1.1). In the United States, fewer than one-third of employed mothers with children under six work part-time, but more than 40 percent of Swedish mothers and 79 percent of Dutch ones do so. However, it is essential to clarify the meaning of part-time in different countries. In Sweden, parents of children under eight are entitled to work six hours a day, and many of them do, which results in their being classified as part-time workers. This is quite different from the situation in the Netherlands, where many women who work part-time are working fewer than twenty hours a week. Currently, 35 percent of employed Dutch

TABLE 1.1  
*Employment rates of women by age of youngest child, 2002*

	Under 3	Aged 3–5
Austria	80.1	70.3
Australia	45.0	45.0
Belgium	70.4	67.4
Canada	58.7	68.1
Denmark	71.4	77.5
Finland	32.2	74.7
France	66.2	63.2
Germany	56.0	58.1
Great Britain	57.2	56.9
Italy	54.4	51.7
Netherlands	74.2	68.2
Sweden	72.9	82.5
USA	56.6	60.0

SOURCE: OECD, *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators* (Paris, 2005).

These data are for women aged 15 to 64.

women work fewer than twenty hours a week, whereas only 6 percent of Swedish and 9 percent of French women are in equivalent forms of employment.<sup>22</sup> Another important difference is the degree to which part-time work includes the rights and benefits associated with full-time employment. Dutch law requires that employers treat part-time workers the same as full-time workers in terms of pay and benefits. In the United States, by contrast, part-time workers often lack entitlements to health insurance or a pension. One reason many employers hire workers for fewer than forty hours is that it enables them to classify workers as part-time and therefore to deny them access to company-provided benefits for full-time employees.

Cross-national comparisons of work-family policies are a delicate enterprise; seemingly comparable statistics often conceal considerable differences in what these policies actually look like in practice. The same is true of data on mothers' employment rates. The figures provided in table 1.1 on the employment of mothers with young children must be qualified. First, the table does not distinguish between part-time and full-time work. Although Dutch mothers at first glance appear to be in the labor force in higher proportions than French mothers, only 23 percent of French mothers with children under six work part-time, compared to 79 percent of Dutch mothers. In addition, the figures overstate the proportion of women who are actually *at work*.

In Sweden or Austria women on lengthy parental leave are counted as employed, whereas in France, Germany, and Finland women on care leaves are not, even though they hold on to their jobs while on leave. Although at first glance it appears that Austrian mothers work in very high numbers, more than half are on parental leave, and only a small proportion work full-time.<sup>23</sup>

### *Typologies of Welfare Regimes*

One starting point for comparing how Western welfare regimes treat the issue of mothers' employment is Esping-Andersen's influential typology of welfare state regimes, which divides nations into three worlds of welfare capitalism.<sup>24</sup> *Liberal* regimes (Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, United States) privilege private social benefits and services while offering more residual public protections. Direct spending on social welfare is lower than elsewhere, but private provision of child care is often encouraged by such indirect means as tax breaks or regulatory measures.<sup>25</sup> The *Social Democratic* welfare states of the Nordic countries provide universal, equal benefits and services through direct public spending. Finally, the *conservative/corporatist* (or Christian Democratic) welfare states of continental Europe (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands) are generous yet status-reproducing. Benefits often are linked to professional status, making labor market participation a particularly important source of entitlement. Following the principle of subsidiarity, in which social burdens are left to the lowest levels of society, these states also assume that lower levels of society—such as families or the voluntary sector—should provide for human welfare needs.<sup>26</sup> The Social Democratic regimes promote employment for all through active policy measures, and the liberal regimes do so through the stinginess of their social protections. The conservative welfare states have been passive, encouraging the dependence of unemployed men on social benefits and the dependence of women on men.

This typology is useful for identifying patterns in work-family policies but does not map fully onto cross-national differences in these policies. The Nordic regimes are often held up as models of gender egalitarian social policy, and they show clear similarities in their approach to mothers' employment. All have high rates of participation by women in the labor force (albeit

often in part-time work), the result of explicit government policy to promote women's employment. In these work-oriented regimes, all adults are assumed to be working, and changes in tax and benefits systems since the 1970s have removed many of the disincentives to married women's employment.<sup>27</sup> Such measures have been matched by the development of public child care services and generous parental leaves tied to employment, both of which facilitate the balancing of work and family needs and obligations. Consistent with these welfare states' emphasis on public services, much child care is publicly run and provided by well-trained staff.<sup>28</sup>

These features make the Nordic countries a seemingly uniform cluster in their approach to work and family, but there are some significant differences between them.<sup>29</sup> As table 1.2 shows, the availability of public child care varies markedly: it is highest in Denmark and Sweden and substantially lower in Norway or Finland. The latter two countries also have developed extended care leaves of two or three years, creating incentives for parents—especially mothers—to leave paid work for a lengthy period while their children are young, whereas Sweden initially adopted and later repealed a similar measure.<sup>30</sup> In general, Sweden and Denmark have put the most emphasis on promoting mothers' employment, while Norway and Finland enable parents (mostly mothers) to take very long leaves from work.

The continental European countries are even more heterogeneous, and here Esping-Andersen's typology breaks down. Some countries fit the label of the conservative welfare state relatively well: Austria, (West) Germany, Italy, and, until recently, the Netherlands. Policy in these countries has strongly reflected the assumption that mothers are and should be at home caring for their children while they are young. Tax and benefits policies have long discouraged married women's employment, and the weak provision of social care services makes it difficult for mothers to work outside the home while their children are young. A religiously based notion of subsidiarity has justified minimal state provision for social care or early education while delegating these responsibilities to churches, other volunteer organizations, or local governments.<sup>31</sup> School schedules also are unhelpful for working parents, with the primary school day lasting only until 1:00 or 2:00 P.M. and few after-school programs available. In some of these countries, maternity leaves have been generous but short, while extended leave programs are very long and low paid. This nexus of policy measures encourages mothers to

TABLE I.2  
*Percentages of children in publicly funded services*

Welfare state cluster	0 to 2-year-olds	3- to 5-year-olds (or until school age)
<i>Social democratic</i>		
Denmark	52 ▶ 9 (under 1) ▶ 78 (1-2)	94
Finland	19.6 ▶ 1 (under 1) ▶ 36 (aged 1-2)	67
Norway	28.7 ▶ 2 (under 1) ▶ 40 (aged 1-2)	82
Sweden	43 ▶ 0 (under 1) ▶ 65 (aged 1-2)	91
<i>Conservative</i>		
Austria	11	85.2*
Belgium	29.8	100 (hours of operation are 8:30-3:30; closed one afternoon per week)
France	≈ 38 ▶ 27% of children aged 4 months to 2-1/2 years are in child care ▶ 32% of 2-year-olds in preschool (2-1/2 and older)	100 (hours of operation are 8:30-4:30; often closed one day or afternoon per week)
Germany	8.5 ▶ 2.7 <i>Western Länder</i> ▶ 37 <i>Eastern Länder</i>	89.8 (2002) ▶ 88.1* <i>Western Länder</i> ▶ 105.1 <i>Eastern Länder</i>
Italy	7	98
Netherlands	29* (most attend 2 to 2-1/2 days per week)	89* (4- and 5-year-olds)
<i>Liberal</i>		
Australia	20 (receive child care benefit)	35 (in child care, receiving child care benefit)
Canada	5	53*
United Kingdom	10.8	29.4
United States	6	53*

\* Indicates most children attend services for part of the day, or part of the week.

SOURCES: Australia: author estimates of the proportion of children receiving Child Care Benefit, from the Department of Family and Community Services, *2004 Census of Child Care Services* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005); figures do not include preschool attendance; data for Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and the UK are from European Commission, *Indicators for Monitoring the Employment Guidelines, 2004-2005*; France: Nathalie Blanpain, "Accueil des jeunes enfants et coûts des modes de garde en 2002," *Etudes et Résultats* 422 (August 2005), and *Repères et références statistiques sur les enseignements, la formation et la recherche* (Paris: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 2003), 63; Nordic countries: NOSOSCO, *Social Protection in the Nordic Countries 2002: Scope, Expenditures, Financing* (Copenhagen, NOSOSCO 2004), 60-61; U.S. and Canada: Janet C. Gornick and Marcia K. Meyers, "Supporting a Dual-Earner/Dual-Carer Society," in Jody Heymann and Christopher Beem, *Unfinished Work: Building Equality and Democracy in an Era of Working Families* (New York: New Press, 2005), 398 (data from around 2000).

leave the labor market while their children are young and to reenter in part-time work.

France and Belgium represent a more mixed model of work and family policy, diverging from other continental European countries in a number of ways. One of the most striking differences is the significant role of the state in family and educational services. This contrasts with the notion of subsidiarity that is so important in Germany and the Netherlands. As table 1.2 shows, children aged three to six have universal access to state-funded (and often state-provided) preschool education, and a substantial proportion of two-year-olds are in the same programs. Moreover, France and Belgium often have been more pragmatic on the question of working mothers, providing assistance both to mothers in paid work and to those who stay at home.<sup>32</sup> There are extensive subsidies and services for day care and also subsidies for parents at home. Although it cannot be said the parents have a perfectly free choice in the matter, there is a range of options and possibilities.

The liberal English-speaking countries are a fairly coherent cluster in their approach to work and family, but there are some important differences between them. All offer minimal or no maternity or parental leave. The United States now entitles workers in firms with fifty or more employees to an unpaid leave of three months. In the United Kingdom, maternity leave was relatively short until 2002 when, prodded by EU requirements, the Labour government improved the right to both paid and unpaid maternity leaves. Public provision of day care is fairly minimal and consists of either subsidies for very-low-income parents or part-day programs for preschool children. The Blair government has made significant investments in early education programs in recent years, but the main focus has been on developing part-day services.<sup>33</sup> Australian subsidies for day care also have expanded considerably in recent years, but overall spending on child care is low compared to that in the Nordic countries, and much care is in part-time services.<sup>34</sup> In many of these countries, there is much sub-national variation, with some state or provincial governments offering a greater degree of public services.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the lack of public support, private market options sustain a relatively high level of women's employment in the liberal welfare states. In the United States, private firms were developing unpaid and, in some cases, paid leave arrangements for parents even before the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act. Private child care is quite significant in many of these countries

and has been expanding in recent years. The United States has a large market of for-profit day care services as well as an extensive sector of nonprofit programs.<sup>36</sup> Recent developments in Australia and the United Kingdom also point to an expanding private sector of services.<sup>37</sup> By contrast, most continental European and Nordic countries lack much of a private market for child care, owing to high minimum wages and rigorous regulation of private services. This makes unsubsidized services difficult to sustain, particularly in the case of for-profit programs that do not benefit from volunteer labor.<sup>38</sup>

### *Analyzing the Issue of Mothers' Employment Policy*

One social science framework that seeks to interpret broad cross-national differences in welfare states is power resources theory. First elaborated in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this approach explains the creation, expansion, and nature of welfare states through the relative power of labor and capital.<sup>39</sup> Most scholars have operationalized labor power through the strength of Social Democratic parties, generating clear hypotheses about the role of political parties in shaping public policy. Strong Social Democratic parties and centralized unions have the political resources to enact their redistributive visions into public policy and thus create large and generous welfare states. Where leftist and labor power is weak and business power is great, welfare provision is stingier, less redistributive, and less likely to disturb the interests of capital. Greater nuance was introduced through the analysis of cross-class coalitions as well as other power-mobilizing groups. Esping-Andersen's typology has its foundations in power resources theory: each world of welfare capitalism reflects the power of liberal, labor, or conservative political forces.

A focus on leftist political power affords some leverage for explaining differences in work-family policies. Left parties have become champions of gender equality policies in many Western countries and generally favor public solutions to social needs. As advocates for the rights of workers, these parties have become defenders of the rights of female workers as well, favoring labor market regulations that enable parents to take parental leave. Many Social Democrats advocate universal, publicly provided services staffed by highly trained, and well-paid, public-sector workers. When these parties



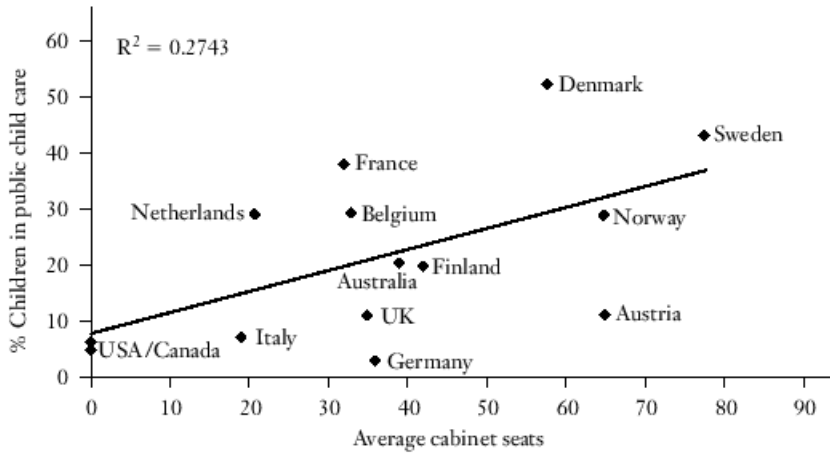


Figure 1.2 Social Democratic political power and public child care for children age 0–2

SOURCES: Figures on social democratic power are from Evelyne Huber, Charles Ragin, John D. Stephens, David Brady, and Jason Beckfield, *Comparative Welfare States Data Set*, Northwestern University, University of North Carolina, Duke University, and Indiana University, 2004. Child care data are from table 2.

Social Democratic power is a measure of the average percentage of cabinet seats held by Social Democrats, 1960–2000. The child care measure is the percentage of children under the age of 3 in publicly provided or funded programs as of around 2000–2001.

have pushed for public child care, their commitment to universalism and public-sector provision has shaped the form these services have taken. Strong unions also have kept wages and skill levels higher, impeding the development of a low-wage service sector that would enable a private market to develop.<sup>40</sup>

Beyond this, leftist political power cannot, by itself, explain patterns in mothers' employment policy. For example, as figure 1.2 illustrates, there is at best a weak correlation between the extent of Social Democratic political power and the availability of public child care. By 2000, public provision in Denmark was substantially higher than in both Sweden and Norway, even though Social Democratic parties have held cabinet seats less frequently in Denmark. Moreover, France has long superseded Norway and Finland in the development of public child care, despite the relative weakness of leftist political power. Finally, Social Democratic parties in Austria, (West) Germany, and the Netherlands hewed to the male-breadwinner model until at least the 1980s, and Austrian Social Democrats remain lackluster advocates of

wage-earning mothers; the high level of Social Democratic power in Austria has not produced policies to encourage mothers' employment.

Left parties have not been inevitable champions of gender equality and mothers' participation in the workforce. Many such parties long espoused variants of "proletarian antifeminism" that viewed women's claims for gender equality as a diversion from the main source of oppression—class.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, throughout the 1950s and much of the 1960s, Left parties throughout the Western world embraced the traditional family model as a social norm and a goal of public policy. Such views resonated with many in their working-class base, for whom it was a sign of social and economic progress that women no longer had to toil in difficult jobs while raising young children. Although Left parties generally have moved toward supporting mothers' employment and gender equality policies, these shifts have occurred in different countries and at different times. We need to find a way to explain differences in the behavior of parties on the same end of the political spectrum across countries and across time.

The first step is to identify and explain the ideologies held by political parties with regard to gender relations and the family. By ideology, I mean a coherent set of beliefs, values, principles, or attitudes about social relations that is expressed in the political arena by parties or other dominant political groupings.<sup>42</sup> Ideology is distinct from culture, which is a more diffuse, general force not linked to specific groups or focused on particular political aims.<sup>43</sup> In addition, cultures usually contain a multitude of often contradictory strands and traditions, whereas ideologies possess a certain amount of internal consistency.<sup>44</sup> A focus on ideology is also distinct from purely ideational explanations, which often try to show the independent causal weight of ideas by distinguishing them from raw self-interest. The concept of ideology can encompass the complex intermingling of ideas and interests that often characterize political action. Not only do the dominant political groups in Western Europe—which are either class-based or religious parties—espouse a particular ideological vision that transcends the particular interests at stake in each debate, but the origins and enduring power behind these parties have been organized labor and organized religion. Ideas and interests go hand in hand when, for example, Social Democratic parties push a vision of class-based redistribution. In the United States, where the dominant divisions in politics have been those of class, religion, geographical

region, and race/ethnicity, we can find a similar mix of self-interest and ideology at work.

Policies for working mothers lie at the intersection of distinct vectors of ideological thought. Programs that encourage mothers to work for pay are not straightforward gender-equality policies, which typically concern discrimination against women in the labor force or sexual violence, because these policies also are redistributive in nature, requiring governments to raise revenues and redistribute them from one category of people to another one. Child care and parental leave are not straightforward class-redistributive issues either because they also tap "values" questions about gender relations and the division of labor in the workplace and home. Thus, one can fully embrace the idea that the state should intervene in the economy but still believe that it should do so to enable men to support their families on one income. Another precondition for an active state policy in this domain is some acceptance of the state's role in shaping gender relations and family life. One may fully support changing gender roles but prefer that the state stay out of a person's private decisions in these matters. In short, to understand the ideological alignment of different political forces on employment policies for mothers, we need to understand their views on a wider set of questions: the relationship of states to the family, the relationship of states to markets, and the gendered division of labor. Beliefs on these underlying issues, as represented in ideologies, shape preferences in policies for working mothers. Although power resources theory can help explain the states-versus-markets dimension, we need other theories about the sources of ideologies concerning gender and the family.

One approach is to emphasize the power resources of women's movements. Gender egalitarian ideas have their origins in the second wave of the feminist movement that sprang up in Western countries in the late 1960s. As the case studies in this book show, feminist movements have had a clear agenda-setting effect, propelling child care, parental leave, part-time work, and other such policy ideas onto the political stage. Nevertheless, there is no clear link between feminist organizing, either inside or outside political parties, and the development of policies on mothers' employment.<sup>45</sup> Active feminist movements in Germany and the Netherlands failed to effect change in this area, but France has developed an array of supportive policy measures despite the fragmentation of its feminist movement. The United States has

had one of the most significant feminist movements in the Western world, yet it has failed to produce a national child care policy or paid parental leave. As the case studies show, policies on mothers' employment often have the fingerprints of women all over them—particularly “femocrats” who work within the state to push feminist policy goals.<sup>46</sup> Yet, given the heavy redistributive requirements of these policies, mainstream political forces need to see an electoral payoff for acceding to feminist demands.

Another alternative is that social structural changes have generated pressures on welfare states that policy makers have sought to address. The growth of women's employment since the 1970s has injected new concerns and issues into politics in many countries. Although structural economic trends do not guarantee a political response, they can change the calculus of political actors. Employed women often show different political orientations from women outside paid employment, such as increased sympathies with feminism and, in some countries, a tendency to vote for Left political parties.<sup>47</sup> As we shall see in the case of Sweden, the rapid rise in women's participation in the workforce in the 1960s and 1970s created a new source of workers for unions to organize—and thus a new pool of possible voters for Social Democratic parties. Similarly, Left and Right parties in France competed over gender equality issues in the 1970s and sought to address the growing population of employed women. At best, however, changes in women's employment may put new issues on the agenda but do not guarantee a policy response. Starting from similar rates of women's employment, Sweden, France, and the United States all enacted very different policies in the 1970s. In short, leftist political power, women's employment ratios, and feminist organizing all fail—on their own—to explain patterns of work-family policies.

Organized religion is an important source of ideologies about gender roles and the family that has not been fully explored by welfare state scholars.<sup>48</sup> Many family sociologists have long noted the connection between religiosity and family morality and behaviors,<sup>49</sup> and studies of public opinion demonstrate the link between religiosity and conservative views on gender and family issues.<sup>50</sup> Historically, the two dominant forms of organized religion in Western societies—Catholicism and the various permutations of Protestantism—have espoused a patriarchal view of social relations, conveying in both doctrine and church organization that men are leaders and

women are submissive followers. Moreover, the Roman Catholic view of marriage as a sacrament that exists solely for the purpose of procreation subordinates women within the family and to their reproductive role. Protestant views on these matters long upheld many of the same principles, although there are considerable differences between the various strains of Protestantism.<sup>51</sup> The dominant religions have adjusted to the widespread social changes that have produced individualized family relationships, lower fertility rates, and growing divorce rates, and some scholars link these very changes in church doctrines and/or practices to the secularization of Western societies.<sup>52</sup> Still, because many churches are the bearers of doctrines composed centuries and even millennia ago, they often perpetuate understandings of social relationships from the past and espouse traditional familial roles and behaviors.

Organized religions have sought to maintain their position as the dominant arbiters of community values and morality. The decline of religious power over the public sphere in the nineteenth century led to efforts by churches to preserve their role in the private one. This meant guarding the influence of religious organizations over child and family affairs. For example, given that churches and related sectarian organizations long had the predominant responsibility for children's education, the steady encroachment of the state into this realm turned schools into a source of political conflict. As I will show in chapter 2, the resulting conflicts shaped the development of educational systems and some of the early structures of the welfare state. Where religious forces maintained some degree of political power and could exercise their influence through the state, the conflicts were relatively minor or resolved to favor religious groups. Where these forces failed to gain such influence and were in an antagonistic relationship with public authorities, religious organizations sought to build their own centers of power and influence in society.

There also are contemporary examples of religious influence on public policy. In Western Europe, Christian Democratic parties have shaped conservative abortion and divorce laws, the nature of education systems, and spending on families.<sup>53</sup> At the macro-level, there is also a correlation between the strength of societal religiosity and the extent to which countries have developed public child care systems that serve to promote mothers' employment. Figure 1.3 shows the negative relationship between levels of

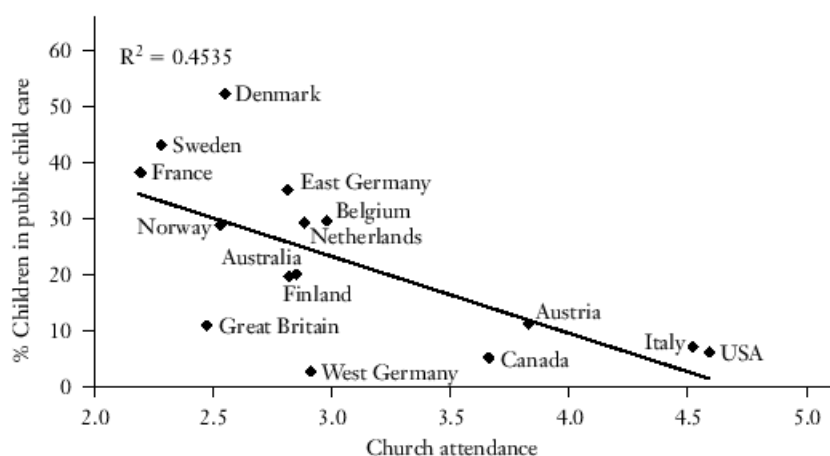


Figure 1.3 Church attendance and public child care for children age 0–2

SOURCES: World Values Survey. Child care data is from table 2.

Church attendance is the national mean of answers to the question “How often do you attend religious services these days?” “More than once a week” is 7; “never or practically never” is 1. Most church attendance data are from 2000, but for Australia, Norway, and West Germany they are from 1995–97, and for East Germany they are from the early 1990s.

church attendance and provision of public day care for several countries. Countries that have done the most to develop public child care services are the most secular, including many of the Nordic countries and France. As this graph suggests, secularization dampens an important source of conservatism with regard to women and the family.

Of course, this correlation says nothing about the particular mechanisms that link religiosity with public policy. It is puzzling to find such a relationship given the ongoing secularization of most Western societies.<sup>54</sup> Although rates of religious belief and practice first dropped to particularly low levels in the Nordic countries and France, there has been a similar trend in the Netherlands and the rest of continental Europe. The United States is one of the few countries to maintain high levels of religious practice and belief, albeit at lower levels than in the past. Clearly something more is needed to explain how religious institutions have influenced the development of policies on mothers' employment. This project does so by adopting a historical perspective on the development of public policy that enables us to see how past aspects of Western politics, societies, and their welfare regimes have a continuing influence on the contemporary politics of social provision.

*The Temporal Dimension of the Welfare State*

Viewing the welfare state as a historical construction enables us to trace how the political decision making and debates of one era influence the politics of social policy in later periods. In many countries, the welfare state has been a central feature of domestic politics for well over a hundred years and has affected politics in its own right. As students of path dependency have argued, social programs often shape the future politics of the welfare state by generating groups of beneficiaries that become strong supporters of the status quo.<sup>55</sup> More broadly, state programs can alter conceptions of the role of the state in social affairs. Once the state has expanded its authority into one realm, even those initially opposed to this expansion may come to believe that this area is properly the responsibility of the state—particularly given the growth of supportive social constituencies for this expanded state role. Finally, the policies and programs of the welfare state can affect patterns of social and political relations. Suzanne Mettler's study of the American welfare state shows how policies can be constitutive of notions about who should gain access to social citizenship rights.<sup>56</sup> We can posit a similar impact of social programs on gender relations, with some policies entrenching and reinforcing traditional gender roles and others helping to disrupt and restructure these most basic of societal relationships.

A temporal perspective on the welfare state also enables us to understand the political actors that affect social policy and how they have evolved over time. Many scholars now view the three decades following the Second World War as a key period in the development of the welfare state. However, the political forces shaping the welfare state during that time were hatched out of political cleavages of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>57</sup> The politics of the welfare state after 1945 were influenced not only by the policy legacies of the previous era, but also by the political legacies of past conflicts and debates. The same is true in contemporary social politics: the dominant political groups have deep historical roots, yet have evolved in response to changes in their social constituencies. The policies and programs of the welfare state also have shaped these constituencies, reinforcing the ways in which past debates and decisions affect present-day politics.

Although attention to the path dependency of social programs is essential, it should not blind us to the possibilities for change. One significant

criticism leveled at historical institutionalism is that it is unduly static, downplaying the potential for change. Kathleen Thelen suggests paying more attention to the complex realities of political phenomena, because political and social life is characterized by both stability and change—change that is at times, but not always, bounded by preexisting institutions.<sup>58</sup> A temporal perspective on the welfare state enables us to identify the mechanisms that produce stability in political or social arrangements and to observe whether change in those mechanisms gives rise to policy reform.

What is it that makes social policies stable and enduring? Social programs become embedded in the fabric of social relations, affecting citizens' behavior and expectations about their own lives and the state's responsibilities in ways that are slow to change.<sup>59</sup> For example, policies that support the male-breadwinner model influence the way people organize work and care, as well as their beliefs about what the state should and should not do in this area. Policies that fundamentally alter the gendered division of labor create new expectations about state responsibilities, generating pressure on politicians to fund programs such as child care or parental leave. The key lies in the constituencies for the political parties and the extent to which social policies reinforce or erode their sources of support.<sup>60</sup> Conservative parties generally are aided by programs that reproduce traditional gender roles and values, for these programs reinforce the constituency that is partial to their political vision.

At the same time, the social embeddedness of the welfare state is a source of dynamism and change. People inhabit a world that is bounded not only by the institutions of the welfare state, but by a larger set of economic, social, and cultural forces that can have a life of their own. Thus, despite male-breadwinner-supporting policies across the Western world, rapid economic growth in the 1960s and rising levels of women's education generated new social values and demands as women's participation in the labor market increased. The response to these demands was in no way guaranteed, but rising levels of women's employment put new issues on the agenda and spurred political competition over who could best meet the needs of this growing constituency. The irrepressible dynamism of complex societies often unsettles existing social and political arrangements, opening up space for new beliefs and demands.



How governments respond to these demands is likely to be shaped by both existing public policies and the structure of partisan competition. Faced with new problems, policy makers often reach for established repertoires of action, perhaps modernizing existing programs or services to fit new needs.<sup>61</sup> In addition, previous policies can affect current policy choices because they tend to generate both mass and bureaucratic constituencies with a stake in the status quo. In fact, sometimes the absence of past policies can create space for more innovation.<sup>62</sup> The structure of partisan competition also is an inherited feature of politics, reflecting the societal cleavages that give rise to the political parties, or factions within them, that dominate political life.<sup>63</sup> The nature of these political forces, their ideologies, and their strength in the political system affects how new social issues will be treated, namely through the way in which the parties compete around these issues. As the case studies will show, the rise in mothers' employment became a source of partisan competition in some countries but not others, reflecting the predominance of conservative ideologies about gender and the family in some places and their weakness in others.

### *The Politics of Mothers' Employment*

This project focuses on three distinct time periods: the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the era of welfare state expansion between about 1945 and 1975; and the period of welfare state "crisis" since the mid-1970s. Each era is marked by political and social phenomena that prompt policy change, but the periods are linked through the way in which debates and decisions in one time influenced those of the future. During the first period states were expanding their reach into social affairs, including the familial sphere. One of the most significant extensions of public authority was in education, although some states became engaged in other child- and family-related initiatives. The second period was one of high economic growth and expansion of the public sector. Although the male-breadwinner model initially informed public policy in all countries, by the late 1960s and early 1970s gender-equality issues had come onto the political agenda, and welfare states began to diverge sharply in the area of policies on mothers'

employment. The third period is characterized by continuing changes in gender roles and the family as well as a dense thicket of policies and institutions affecting decisions about work and care.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women's subordinate role in society and the family was widely accepted, and the dominant debates of the day were not about how to support or encourage women's employment. Instead, one of the most significant questions in the domestic politics of all countries was the development of mass education systems. Because churches traditionally had responsibility for children's schooling, the spread of public education often generated conflicts between secularist and religious forces and/or between competing religious groups. Four patterns of church-state relations and religious divisions shaped these debates: (1) a clerical-antierical model in France, in which there were sharp clashes between Catholics and secularist Republicans; (2) church-state fusion and religious homogeneity in Sweden, which generated relatively minor religious conflicts; (3) biconfessional and clerical-antierical divisions in the Netherlands, with cleavages between Catholics and Protestants and between secularist and religious forces; and (4) religious pluralism in the United States, where the early separation of church and state and religious diversity produced a complex landscape of religious groups.

The nature and resolution of these conflicts had enduring consequences for both public policy and politics. In France and Sweden, we can see the beginnings of an activist state tradition in education and family policy. In France, the triumph of secular republicans over Catholics in the Third Republic produced an expansion of national state authority over schools and family affairs in an effort to bring children into the ambit of secular state influence. France developed pro-natalist family policies and a centralized education system that provided services for children as young as two or three years old. In Sweden, the fusion of church and state produced a similar (though relatively peaceful) transfer of authority over family affairs from religious to secular authorities. The central state assumed responsibility for matters of family morality and well-being, as evidenced by a centralized, state-run education system and policies early in the twentieth century that sought to expand women's legal and economic rights within marriage and to protect the rights of children. This encroachment on paternal power, made possible by the weakening hold of the established church on both politics

and society, was indicative of the gender-egalitarian reforms to come later in the twentieth century.

In religiously diverse countries such as the Netherlands and the United States, opposition to allowing central state interference in the familial domain led to the emergence of a reticent state tradition in education and family policy. In the Netherlands, fierce conflicts among secularists, Protestants, and Catholics generated parties of religious defense that ultimately triumphed in the political sphere. These parties shaped education and early social services policy around the notion of subsidiarity so that religiously based voluntary associations would provide these services and thereby preserve their influence in child and family affairs. In the United States, the early separation of church and state and the country's extreme religious pluralism produced a desire to decentralize questions of morality and family life to the lowest levels of society. Because no one religion could claim a position as the national or even state-level arbiter of community morals, family-related issues came to be determined at the local level. Thus, education remained the responsibility of local communities and slowly came under the reach of state governments, although substantial local control was preserved.

The larger political consequence of these historical conflicts was to influence how religion was incorporated into modern polities and thus the role it would play in shaping ideologies about gender and the family. In France and Sweden, the subordination of religious forces to secular ones weakened a source of conservative gender ideologies and an opponent of state family policies. The change was more complete in Sweden than in France, but secularization advanced more quickly in both these countries than in the rest of continental Europe, and religiously based parties came to play a fairly weak role in politics. Both also maintained an activist state role in family affairs, as evidenced by centralized education systems and active family policies. Rejecting the subsidiarity model found in most continental European countries, the central state in both Sweden and France assumed direct responsibility for child and family well-being.

In the Netherlands and the United States, religious pluralism was a source of continuing religious vitality, although its impact on politics in the two countries differed. Christian Democratic parties became the dominant force in Dutch politics through most of the twentieth century. Religion had a more diffuse role in the United States, becoming a touchstone of political life

without generating any religiously based parties. In both countries, there was an enduring belief in leaving family-related affairs to lower levels of society and entrusting local governments or volunteer organizations (and, later, for-profit organizations) with the responsibility for many child- and family-related services. Conservative gender ideologies also maintained a significant foothold in politics, although these values were more hegemonic in the Netherlands. In the United States, a strong liberal tradition and commitment to individual self-determination created more room for changing gender roles. Still, throughout the twentieth century, the periodic mobilization of conservative religious movements in the United States usually has come in reaction to government policies affecting children, families, and gender relations.

Ideologies about gender roles and the acceptability of national family policies played a crucial role in shaping how governments responded to a new social pressure in the 1960s and 1970s—the rise in the number of working mothers. In Sweden, secularization and the lack of religiously based parties created a favorable environment for policies that undermined traditional gender arrangements. The politically powerful Social Democratic Party was essential for this transition in the welfare state, yet the party's own shift on this issue was facilitated by the absence of a religious cleavage that could fragment the working class and politicize gender and family questions. Swedish policy sought to eliminate the male-breadwinner model, transforming Swedish society into one of universal breadwinners in which all parents were also in paid work. In the Netherlands, the hegemony of religious parties and strength of religion in society impeded such a shift: Christian Democratic notions of subsidiarity and traditional family arrangements continued to guide public policy. Male-breadwinner and female-caregiver ideals were so hegemonic in society and politics that even Dutch Social Democrats hardly challenged them.

Secular center-right parties dominated politics in France during the 1960s and 1970s, and they responded with pragmatism to shifting gender roles and labor market needs. Although they did not adopt transformative public policies, as the Swedish Social Democrats had done, they did support policies to help wage-earning mothers. These measures, combined with the nearly universal preschool system, created a supportive environment for working mothers. In the United States, centrist Republicans initially

behaved in a similar fashion when they joined Democrats in advocating a greater federal role in supporting working mothers and assuring early-education programs for young children. Their efforts ultimately failed in the face of a conservative attack on federal family policy. Throughout the 1970s, continuing efforts to expand the federal role in this area faced a growing mobilization of social conservatives against changing gender roles and federal involvement in family affairs. Instead, policy measures sought to encourage private markets to solve the needs of working parents, thereby decentralizing responsibility and delegating debates over this question to local communities and families themselves.

Since 1975, the policy choices made in these earlier periods have influenced the way states cope with both economic crisis and political change. Economic stagnation and high unemployment in many countries have created an unfavorable environment for policies that encourage mothers' employment. At the same time, Western countries have experienced significant political changes with the erosion of the social cleavages and political alignments that had defined party systems for decades. In many countries, this has led parties to reach out to new constituencies, such as women, for whom changes in gender roles and family life created new identities and needs. Their expectations and preferences have been shaped in part by the existing policy context.

The transformation of Swedish society into one in which all parents were working created political pressures for expanded access to public child care. Because of the difficulty of meeting these demands in the immediate term, however, government policy also repeatedly increased the length of parental leave as a way to divert pressure from the child care system and to respond to demands of conservatives for more parental caring time at home. The end result is a system in which all parents have the supports and services they need to remain in paid work, although they may spend a substantial amount of time at home during the first year and a half of a child's life. In France, government policy since the 1970s neither sought to nor succeeded in transforming French society into one of universal breadwinners. With economic pressures on the welfare state and continuing divisions between mothers at home and mothers at work, governments of both the Left and the Right moved toward developing lengthy care leaves rather than promoting a universal child care system for children under three.

The American trajectory was distinct because of the development of private markets. Tax subsidies and regulatory policies have encouraged private child care and parental leave alternatives, which began developing in the 1970s. Although access to private services and benefits has been unevenly distributed throughout the population, these alternatives have addressed the needs and demands of many middle-class parents. This, in turn, has undermined the push for expanded federal policies in this area. There have been expansions in child care services for low-income families, but these have been scrupulously means-tested and kept out of the reach of families above the poverty level. As child care policy has become increasingly dominated by the goals of welfare reform, most parents ineligible for assistance have sought solutions in the private sector.

The lack of affordable private services in the Netherlands and the absence of paid parental leave created difficulties for the small but growing number of working mothers. As in all Western countries, women's participation in the workforce continually expanded during the 1970s and 1980s, creating new openings for political parties that could successfully address their concerns. Labor unions and the Social Democratic Party slowly moved toward supporting the demands of working women, and by the 1990s there were new debates about the demographic unsustainability of the welfare state and the importance of "activating" women's labor. Combined with the decline of the Christian Democratic Party in the 1990s and the very rapid secularization of Dutch society, the moment was ripe for policy change in the 1990s. A series of measures sought to make child care, parental leave, and part-time work available to parents so as to encourage more mothers to maintain their attachment to paid work.

This represents an important instance of policy change, but there is also a good deal of continuity in Dutch work-family policies. Reluctant to involve the central state in providing child care, governments of different ideological stripes have instead sought to subsidize private alternatives. In addition, the main thrust of Dutch policy encourages extensive part-time work for women in order to preserve extensive maternal caring time. In this way, policy makers have trod cautiously around deep-seated values about the importance of maternal care for young children. Clearly, Dutch policy has changed, but we can still see the weight of the past in contemporary work-family policies. In this, Dutch policy today represents an example of change that is bounded by the institutional and political legacies of the past.

*The Organization of This Book*

The next two chapters examine the foundations of contemporary politics around work and family issues. Chapter 2 analyzes politics and policy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, tracing the origins of policies regarding mothers' employment to the way religion shaped political development in four countries. Chapter 3 covers the first three decades after the Second World War, a period of rapid welfare state expansion. The chapter focuses in particular on the 1960s and early 1970s, when states began to diverge in their policies and programs for working mothers.

Chapters 4 and 5 look at the evolution of work-family policies since the 1970s, showing how economic slowdown, political change, and past policy decisions intersect to shape the contemporary politics of work and family. Chapter 4 traces the diverging paths of French and Swedish policy, while chapter 5 shows how the private model in the United States has undermined efforts to expand the state role in family policy. Chapter 6 then considers whether there have been openings for policy change in the 1990s, given improved economic growth in many countries and the continued rise in women's employment. Taking the example of the Netherlands, the chapter assesses the impetus for policy reforms in the 1990s and the extent to which these reforms represent a departure from past policy.

The final chapter briefly summarizes the arguments developed in the preceding chapters and their implications for the study of the welfare state. It also draws some lessons for American debates about work and family.