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Jane Lewis

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# GENDER AND WELFARE STATE CHANGE<sup>1</sup>

**Jane Lewis**

Department of Social Policy and Social Work, Oxford

**ABSTRACT:** This paper suggests first, that in the recent literature on welfare states, while family change has received considerable attention, the issue of gender equality has not. Second, it examines the nature of welfare state change, in particular the recasting of the work/welfare relationship, focusing on the UK in comparative perspective. Building on Peter Hall's (1993) framework, the paper argues that the policy developments associated with the new work/welfare relationship represent very different levels of change in different countries. Nevertheless, from a gender perspective, it is argued that the changes amount to a modification of the masculinist model of work and welfare and its generalization to women. This has profound (and sometimes ambiguous) implications for women's role as unpaid carers. Finally, the paper suggests that a gender-centred model of welfare state change highlights the need to develop policies that value and redistribute care work, and in particular that address the issue of time.

**Key words:** gender; welfare regime; welfare restructuring; work/welfare relationship; individualization; adult worker model family

## 1 Introduction

The development of modern welfare states addressed the fundamental issue of the relationship between capital and labour. Thus social insurance, the central mechanism of twentieth-century social provision was part and parcel of the old labour contract (Supiot 1999). But it has been increasingly recognized, first by feminist contributors to the comparative literature on welfare states (Lewis 1992; Orloff 1993), and finally in the

1. This paper was first given to the European Sociological Association Conference in Helsinki in 2001, and subsequently to a meeting of the EC's COST ACTION 15 in Oslo in March 2002 and at the EUJ in June 2002. I am grateful for the comments made by participants, and also to Ruth Lister, Katherine Rake and especially to Ann Orloff.

mainstream literature (Esping Andersen 1999; Crouch 1999) that this 'welfare settlement' entailed a particular kind of gender regime. The old labour contract was designed first and foremost for the regularly employed male breadwinner, and provision had to be made for women and children as dependants. While adult women were never wholly dependent in that they were always engaged in the labour market to different degrees in different countries, it was assumed that the *primary* responsibility of men was to earn and of women was to care. Thus the model made provision for the performance of care work, albeit at the price of female economic dependence on men. This male breadwinner model family was widely accepted at the level of normative prescription by policy-makers and by people.

The recent literature on welfare provision has focused on the analysis of welfare state change, which was experienced by the UK (and other English-speaking countries) as early as the 1980s, but has been a more general feature of European experience since 1990. It is striking that gender features in this work almost as little as it did in the literature on welfare state building. One of the main feminist criticisms of the work on the growth of welfare states was that it focused on the relationship between the state and the labour market, and that the position of women was considered only when they entered paid work. Little has changed in this respect. Changes in family structure, which have been as or more rapid and dramatic in the last quarter of the twentieth century as labour market change, are now recognized as a driver of welfare state restructuring, but gender is about more than families, or women's employment, or indeed 'reconciling' family and (paid) work. In particular, the gendered division of care work, more often unpaid than paid, is crucial to understanding the gendered nature of welfare state change.

The literature on welfare state change has focused mainly on the debate over the drivers of change, whether in the form of external challenges (globalization) or internal challenges (mainly demographic and economic), and on the amount of change that has taken place. In this debate, family has entered as part and parcel of the internal challenges associated with low birth rates, ageing and the welfare dependency of increasing numbers of lone-mother families. Gender has entered instrumentally, as part of the solutions that are proposed. In particular, as the first two sections of the paper show, the focus has been on the re-casting<sup>2</sup> of the central work/welfare relationship and on the need to make women part of this new set of arrangements. The assumption on the part of academic commentators is often that care work can be and should be

2. This term has been used by Ferrera and Rhodes (2000) to cover a broader set of welfare state changes.

'de-familialized' and shifted to the state and/or market sectors, thus facilitating women's employment and the creation of an adult worker family model (see in particular, Esping Andersen 1999; Esping Andersen *et al.* 2001). To make such a case without examining the gender relations and contestations around care renders the argument not only incomplete but also dangerous.

It is difficult to find ways of describing what has actually happened to welfare states that capture the degree of change that has taken place. Indeed generalization has proved impossible and the analysis of the precise nature of the details of policy change in different countries has only just begun (e.g. Ferrera and Rhodes 2000; Kuhnle 2000; Levy 1999; Pierson 2001; Scharpf and Schmidt 2000a, 2000b; Huber and Stephens 2001). But as political scientists involved more generally in seeking explanations for policy change have pointed out, there are different levels of change to be considered. Thus Hall (1993) has suggested that it is possible to identify changes in the settings of a particular policy: for example, the level of benefits (first-order change); in the policy instruments used to achieve a particular goal (second-order change); or in the overarching goals themselves (third-order change).<sup>3</sup> Third-order change may well also result in a 'paradigm shift' in the framework of ideas and standards within which policy gets made. The burden of argument regarding welfare state change is firmly tipped in favour of continuity and of reforms that constitute first- and second-order change. However, where third-order change has occurred, as for example in the UK, it is vitally important to our understanding of the nature of welfare state restructuring. I shall argue that it is also crucial to our understanding of the gendered nature of welfare state change.

There is evidence of some common trends in respect of what social democratic governments<sup>4</sup> in Europe have actually done in respect of social policies (the UK included after the election of the New Labour government in 1997), most importantly in terms of recasting or 'recalibrating', to use Pierson's (2001) term, the central work/welfare relationship in order to promote labour market activation and to 'make work pay'. I argue that from a gender perspective such a recasting constitutes a third-order change; indeed women are being asked to bear the main burden of welfare state restructuring. For change at this level, based on the promotion of an adult worker model family, has tended not to be accompanied by the

3. Hemerijcke and van Kersbergen (1999) have made a good case for slightly modifying these categories for the study of social policies, but they retain the same meaning of third-order change, and it is the contrast between first- and second-order change, however defined, and third-order change that is important for my argument.

4. Before the elections of 2002.

first- and second-order policy changes necessary to support the shift by addressing care work. This makes it highly problematic. The final part of the article argues that a more care-centred policy analysis is necessary if gender equality is to be taken seriously. The discussion in the article is centred on the UK experience in comparative perspective and is intended only to offer a set of exploratory reflections.

## **2 The nature of welfare state change**

The literature focuses on the drivers of change, the degree of change that has taken place and the prospects for welfare state futures. I have used the term ‘welfare state change’ because one of the main issues for debate (that may be traced through the titles of recent contributions) has been about whether to emphasize retrenchment, restructuring or resilience. Some academic commentators have characterized the continental European social model as ‘sclerotic’ in the face of internal and external challenges (Esping Andersen 1996). However, more recent work has acknowledged that restructuring or recalibration has taken place, with considerable energy being expended on explaining why there seems to be more continuity than change, and why European social provision has proved remarkably resilient. One way of understanding apparent resilience is to look more closely at the approach to reforms and at the levels of change that have taken place. The identification of the challenges facing welfare states (by academics, governments and transnational organizations) has been accompanied by radical prescriptions for transforming and indeed dismantling much of the fabric of social provision. However, the UK apart, these prescriptions for changing the whole framework of ideas about social provision and the role of government have not been embraced and change has been confined to mechanisms and instruments (first- and second-order change).

The debate about the drivers of social change has been penetrated most dramatically by the literature on globalization, and in particular by the prediction that cuts in social programmes would surely follow the drive to increase competitiveness in the context of the diminishing control that national governments can exercise over exchange rates, devaluation and corporation tax (Scharpf 2000; Tanzi 2000). However, as much or more attention has been directed both to the internal challenges faced by welfare states and to the way in which the effects of globalization are mediated internally by political institutions and parties and in the context of different production regimes (Soskice 1999). Castles (2001) and Timonen (2001) have stressed the importance of internal economic problems to understanding why governments have tried to make changes

in social policies. Pierson (2001) and Esping Andersen (1999) have paid special attention to the demographic challenges, which are common to all European countries, albeit that the intensity of fertility decline and the forecasts of unfavourable dependency ratios vary. A set of arguments from the US and New Zealand has wrapped up concern about internal demographic challenges in the form of low birth rates and ageing populations into a notion of intergenerational conflict (Kotlikoff 1992; Thomson 1991). The conclusion from this work on 'generational accounting' is, in common with many globalization theorists, that current levels of social provision, particularly in respect of pensions, are unsustainable.

However, in terms of the amount of actual change that has taken place, a number of comparative projects using public expenditure data have failed to produce evidence of the 'race to the bottom' that has been predicted (Stephens *et al.* 1999; Castles 2000; Huber and Stephens 2001). Even in the UK during the 1980s, the picture was far from clear-cut (Hills 1990, 1995; Glennerster and Hills 1998). Looking beyond Europe and the US, Alber and Standing (2000) have again tended to confirm this view, albeit that they have detected a trend to lower social spending relative to a given level of wealth. Indeed, much of the analysis of welfare state change has focused on why, in the face of seemingly inexorable external and internal pressures, change has not been greater, in other words on the barriers to change, particularly in the form of 'institutional stickiness' and politicians' desire to avoid blame for cuts to social provision (Pierson 1994, 2001).

The gloomy predictions for mature welfare states were accompanied by radical prescriptions for reform. Thus the neoliberal prescriptions of the Washington Consensus have constituted a new framework of ideas about the proper conduct of social policy, dictating private rather than public provision, allocation by markets rather than on the basis of need, targeting rather than universal provision, charging rather than tax-based finance, and decentralization rather than central planning. If wholeheartedly adopted, such an approach to reform would constitute an effort to dismantle the welfare state. In the UK case alone in the 1980s and 1990s was reform pursued, albeit not entirely successfully, as part of a larger ambition to roll back the state. Thus, using Hall's (1993) categories, only the UK engaged third-order as well as first- and second-order welfare change.

During the 1980s, policy-makers in the UK, as in the US, increasingly defined social provision as part of the (economic) problem, rather than part of the solution as it had appeared to Keynesians, and it was argued that the moral hazard of providing cash benefits to lone mothers, or at the extreme, to any able-bodied working age adult was too great (e.g. Murray 1984). The notion that state welfare provision helped to cause rather than

to cure social problems carried the implication of a complete inversion of moral purpose, which served to undermine the *raison d'être* of the postwar social settlement. This was important because, as Schmidt (2000: 231) has commented, 'no major and initially unpopular welfare state reform could succeed in the medium term if it did not also succeed in changing the underlying definition of moral appropriateness'. Margaret Thatcher was widely understood as having a well-worked out picture of the kind of incentive structure needed to create the hard-working, self-reliant individual she wished to encourage, and this involved shifting the balance in the mixed economy of welfare away from the state and towards the market, the family and the voluntary sector; tightening eligibility criteria,<sup>5</sup> particularly in respect of benefits for the unemployed; and introducing market principles into the major social services of education, health and social care (Glennister 1995). It is only post-1997 that the UK model begins to be more comparable with that of other social democratic European countries, with the Labour government's introduction of the 'New Deals' (labour market activation programmes for different groups in the population) and policies to 'make work pay', including a minimum wage and generous wage subsidies in the form of tax credits. The policy goal is no longer to abandon as much of social protection as is feasible, notwithstanding the fact that many of the *instruments* used by the previous Conservative governments continue to be employed. The UK case demonstrates the importance of considering the levels of welfare state change, and in particular it shows that the ideational framework within which change is pursued matters (King 1999; Braun and Busch 1999).

Elsewhere the picture of change has been very different. Neoliberal prescriptions have influenced the pattern of welfare state change, for example by justifying the call to strengthen responsibility by matching entitlements to benefits with the requirement to train or to work, but they have not shaken the commitment to social provision in the same way. The gloomy predictions for Western European welfare states have served to direct the attention of governments to labour markets and competitiveness, and, as Atkinson (1999) has noted, the power of this discourse to change attitudes and norms, for example, in respect of the political *will* to redistribute (regardless of the extent to which it results in measurable cuts in social programmes or in the employment and pay of unskilled workers) should not be underestimated. Even in the absence of a 'race to the bottom', governments may adopt a more cautious approach. Certainly, the European Commission has stressed the importance of adult labour market

5. Korpi and Palme (1998) have shown the extent to which social entitlements were eroded in the UK under successive Conservative administrations, even though the aim of cutting public expenditure dramatically was not, on the whole, achieved.

participation in order to increase competitiveness (CEC 1993, 1995, 2000a, 2000b). Both the EC (CEC 2000a) and the OECD (2000) have emphasized the importance of policies to 'make work pay', and in the words of the EC, of strengthening 'the role of social policy as a productive factor' (CEC 2000b: 2). 'Globalization talk' of this kind has shaped and may well have legitimized welfare reform, but only in the UK was it actively and explicitly embraced under successive Conservative governments.

While there has been considerable restructuring of social provision elsewhere in Western Europe, it has been undertaken with the explicit goal of saving the social model and bolstering social solidarity. This is in large part what Torfing (1999) means when he describes the Danish version of welfare reform as an 'offensive' reform strategy, and what Timonen (2001) is also getting at when she describes the Finnish and Swedish changes as 'defensive'. In France too, the emerging view in the 1990s that the welfare state architecture could not effectively meet external and internal challenges resulted not so much in an effort to dismantle social provision but to reform it (Palier 2000; Levy 1999). Pierson (2001) has argued that all countries have practised cost containment, albeit to very different degrees, but that welfare state change may be best characterized as 'recalibration'. Social democratic welfare states have sought to recalibrate, in the sense of rationalize, their programmes; while Christian democratic welfare states have sought to recalibrate, in the sense of modify, their existing programmes.

The dimensions of this kind of first- and second-order welfare state change have been many, but central to turn-of-the-century social democratic states (the UK included after 1997) have been the efforts to recast the work/welfare relationship that has been fundamental to twentieth-century social provision and which involve institutional changes so as to tip the balance of priorities towards enforcing the responsibilities of claimants (Green Pedersen *et al.* 2001; Goodin 2001; Lewis 1999; Lødemel and Trickey 2000). Broadly speaking, the emphasis in these countries is on so-called 'active' rather than 'passive' welfare, albeit to different degrees<sup>6</sup> and with very different implications (for a critique of the active/passive dichotomy, see Sinfield 2001). There has also been evidence of interest in this new work/welfare model in Germany (signalled by the Blair/Schroeder 1999 document on the 'Third Way'). For the continental European countries, this model effectively joins a measure

6. Gallie and Paugam (2000) and Lødemel and Trickey (2000) both offer data for 1996 and 1999 respectively, but the figures for spending on active labour market programmes are very different. The degree to which such programmes serve to increase skill levels also varies markedly.



of ‘commodification’ to ‘recalibration’ (Pierson 2001), but of course the *conditions* on which such restructuring is promoted vary considerably between countries. In particular, there remains a huge difference between the UK’s low-wage, low-skills equilibrium and the production regimes of its continental neighbours (Soskice 1999). The large amount of surveillance that characterized the late 1980s and early 1990s reforms of the social security system in the UK still shapes the late 1990s arrangements in contrast to the Netherlands, which Goodin (2001) has characterized as a ‘post-productivist regime’, because of its high voluntary part-time employment rates,<sup>7</sup> and because it operates on principles that ensure income adequate to need and on terms that impinge minimally on the individual.

The evidence for a recast work/welfare relationship is nevertheless clearest for the UK, the Netherlands and Denmark. Welfare state change in the Netherlands has been clearly based on labour market activation and flexibility, alongside wage moderation (Visser and Hemerijcke 1997). In Denmark, the ‘workfare’ measures that were introduced in the 1990s focused again on activation, eschewing cuts in benefits and the minimum wage (Torfing 1999). Unlike Sweden, Denmark had a tax-based, universalist ‘passive’ welfare system. In many respects, the way in which Denmark has recast the work/welfare relationship brings it more into line with its Scandinavian neighbour, whose welfare model has long rested on the notion of an adult citizen worker who is granted permission to leave the labour market for cause. Green-Pedersen *et al.*’s (2001) discussion of Denmark and the Netherlands has emphasized the extent to which it is possible to observe a coherent set of supply-side changes in the form of job creation, labour market activation policies, high labour market participation, wage moderation and macroeconomic stability (to which may be added a commitment to invest in human capital particularly in respect of children, and particularly via education and health services). The level of change required to achieve this was obviously somewhat greater in the Netherlands, but it may be argued that governments in both countries had substantially to rethink their welfare systems and make institutional changes. Nevertheless, the goal remained the preservation of the postwar commitment to social provision and social solidarity. Thus considerable importance has been attached to ensuring that more flexible labour markets have been accompanied by a measure of security (Kvist and Thaulow 2001; van Oorschot 2001).

7. These are primarily female. It is also important to note the relatively high rate of male part-time employment, second only to Australia in the OECD countries, but the men working part-time are mainly young or over 55 and are unlikely to have family responsibilities. See below.

Goodin (2001) has emphasized the importance of the emergence of 'a new constellation of work-and-welfare variables' (p. 39), which is what connects the Dutch, Danish and UK cases, notwithstanding the very different context that the Labour government in the UK had to work with in 1997. Furthermore, the mechanisms for enforcing the new relationship between work and welfare may be characterized as a form of 'contractualism', designed to secure the 'active' participation of those making claims (White 2000; Gerhard *et al.*, 2002).

Indeed, it is interesting that the emphasis on paid work – 'work for those who can, security for those who cannot', in the words of Tony Blair's introduction to the 1998 UK document on welfare reform (DSS, Cmnd. 3805, 1998, p. iii) – is in line with the policy prescriptions of those who have strongly advocated an adult worker model as the only way of securing the future of the continental European social model (Esping Andersen 1999; Rosanvallon 2000). Esping Andersen (1999: 70) has strongly indicted the 'familialism' of the old welfare settlement, arguing that policies based on assumptions regarding the traditional duties of men and women in families are now the 'Achilles' heel' of welfare states, running counter to both family formation and labour supply and, with their low levels of female employment, reducing the tax base necessary to sustain the continental European social model. A major part of the solution to the rigidities of the Christian Democratic welfare model in particular thus becomes increased individualization and in particular the commodification of women's labour (see also Esping Andersen *et al.* 2001). Thus in the academic literature on welfare state *futures*, an adult worker family model based on a recast work/welfare relationship becomes crucial, and the analysis of women's position becomes singularly instrumental.

Moves towards the creation of a citizen worker model have obviously gendered implications and represent a major shift in thinking about gender arrangements. The 1998 UK document on welfare reform also commented that: 'the welfare state based around the male breadwinner is increasingly out of date' (DSS, Cmnd. 3805, 1998, p. 13). This is undoubtedly the case, but the instrumentalist way in which the new welfare/work relationship has been discussed by academics and policy-makers has masked the extent to which what may be described as first- and second-order changes to mechanisms and instruments in the broad context of welfare state change affect women disproportionately. The promotion of an adult worker model family is treated in some curious way as gender-neutral, with no discussion of the complicated issues that arise in respect of the gendered division of work, which includes the unpaid work of care. What is in fact happening is a recasting of the traditional male work/welfare model, from 'passive' to 'active', with the stress on responsibilities rather than entitlements, *and* its generalization to women. The old

male breadwinner model was based explicitly on the male worker; the recasting of the work/welfare relationship purports to treat men and women 'the same' – as citizen workers – but in so doing ignores the complexities of the issues inherent in the gendered division of care work. Indeed for women, what has been described as measures to 'recalibrate' social provision (first- and second-order welfare state change), become a much more profound, third-order, change.

### **3 The implications of recasting the work/welfare relationship for women**

The recasting of the work/welfare model for men and its generalization to women, constitute a radical change in thinking about gender regimes. However, in most Western European countries, the change in the framework of ideas about the nature of the contributions that men and women make, or should make, to households, has outrun the social reality (Lewis 2001). Women are not fully 'individualized' and large numbers, a majority in many countries, are in the labour market on only a part-time basis. Furthermore, there have been only relatively weak instrumental changes to compensate for the consequences of the new model in respect of the gendered division of unpaid care work. In addition, the first- and second-order policy changes in the form of labour market activation programmes and tax/benefit reforms that have characterized welfare state restructuring have not always been consistent in promoting the new gender regime for *all* adult women, tending to focus most on 'welfare-dependent' lone mothers. And yet the promotion of 'work' in the sense of paid work, increasingly assumes the capacity for greater self-provisioning, which may prove dangerous for women given the prevalence of a 'one-and-a-half breadwinner family' in Western European countries.

The 2001 Discussion Paper issued by the Swedish Presidency acknowledged that 'it will take some time before women's labour market participation matches that of men. [And] Unless compensated for, this will leave women at a disadvantage in terms of social protection' (CEC 2001: 4), but nevertheless confined its recommendations to women's employment. Similarly, while the European Commission has engaged with the problem of reconciling family and employment responsibilities, notwithstanding the difficulties in doing so under EU law (Meehan 1993; Hoskyns 1996), its agenda on this issue tends to run in parallel to and separate from its competitiveness agenda, which predominates.

Labour force participation rates for the last twenty years show women's participation rising, and rising relatively steeply in most European countries, and men's participation rates falling. However, while the trend is

**TABLE 1. Labour force participation rates of population at age 15–64 (per cent)**

	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	
	<i>1980</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>2000</i>
Denmark	88.3	85.2	71.3	77.3
Netherlands	81.0	79.2	38.2	56.2
UK	89.2	83.9	57.0	67.0

Sources: International Labour Organisation, *World Labour Report 2000*, Geneva: International Labour Office, 2000.

similar in virtually all OECD countries, the baselines are very different as Table 1 shows for the three countries discussed at greater length in the section above.

In 1980, Denmark had the highest female participation rate in the EC and in 2000 the second highest rate (behind Sweden). The Netherlands had one of the lowest rates of female participation in 2000, but one of the steepest rates of increase between 1980 and 2000. In addition, the nature of female labour market participation looks very different in these countries (Table 2). In most European countries the percentage of women workers who are employed part-time has risen over the last twenty years, but in Denmark it has fallen; only Finland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden have lower proportions of part-time women workers. In the Netherlands and the UK, virtually the whole postwar expansion of female employment has been part-time. Indeed, almost a quarter of British women with children under 10 worked 15 or fewer hours per week in the late 1990s (Thair and Risdon 1999), and 24 per cent of all female employees worked under 20 hours a week (Rubery *et al.* 1998). The vast majority of Dutch women work part-time, 80 per cent in 1994; 33 per cent work less than 20 hours a week (Hooghiemstra 1997).<sup>8</sup> The vast majority of women

**TABLE 2. Female part-time employment as a percentage of female employment and male part-time employment as a percentage of male employment 1983 and 1999**

	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	
	<i>1983</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>1983</i>	<i>1999</i>
Denmark	7.1	8.9	36.7	22.7
Netherlands	5.6	11.9	44.7	55.4
UK	3.3	8.5	40.1	40.6

Source: OECD, *Labour Force Statistics 1979–1999*, Paris: OECD Publications, 2000.

workers are employed in the service sector, but in the UK a greater proportion are in private sector services than in the Netherlands or Denmark (Daly 2000).

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, research revealed the extent to which the male breadwinner system no longer described behaviour for a significant proportion of families (Crompton 1999; Lewis 2001). But nor have families become fully individualized, with both partners engaged in full-time work and economically independent of one another. The male breadwinner model has eroded but the social reality is still far from a family comprised of self-sufficient, autonomous individuals. While women's behaviour has changed substantially in respect of paid work, they still perform the bulk of unpaid care work, which was their obligation under the old work/welfare model. Men have changed much less in respect of the amount of either the paid or unpaid work they do (e.g. Laurie and Gershuny 2000). The pattern of paid work between men and women in households is now much more difficult to predict, but patterns of unpaid work have not changed so much, although the mix of provision in respect of care (from market, third sector and public sources) that accompanies unpaid informal provision varies between countries, and according to both the hours of paid work carried out by women and their partners' earnings (Lewis 2000; Warren 2000).

When promoting the new work/welfare relationship, neither the full implications of the way in which the new policy logic<sup>9</sup> would be experienced by women were considered, nor the implications for the gendered division of work experienced by (or desired by) women. In the UK, the expectation that women would be in the labour market was accompanied by the first post-war effort to make collective provision for childcare via the 1998 National Childcare Strategy and the childcare tax credit. However, the coherence of policies in regard to care (for elderly people as well as children) has been markedly less than for those delineating the new work/welfare relationship, and the monies allocated to care are considerably less than those designed to get people into work and make work pay.

The shift towards a 'worker citizen' model represents a huge change for women, more manifest in the assumptions informing policy change than in women's actual behaviour. However, it is important to note that the effects of the change are differently embedded in different countries. Thus, it is impossible to generalize about the effects of the emergence of the new work/welfare relationship for women. In Denmark, where women were already established in the labour market on terms approaching equality

8. I am grateful to Trudie Knijn for this reference.

9. See Lewis (1998) for a discussion of this term.

with men by the 1990s, and where policies to help reconcile 'work and family' in the form of both cash benefits (parental leave) and services (care for children) were also well-established (Siim 2000), recent welfare state change may be expected to affect men and women much more equally than in the Netherlands. In that country, the encouragement of part-time work on the part of women was an explicit part of the package of policies that created the 'Dutch miracle' (Visser and Hemerijcke 1997). However, the signals given by Dutch policy-makers regarding the division of paid and unpaid work have been inconsistent (Plantenga *et al.* 1999; Knijn 2001). Tax and social security policies continue to privilege the male breadwinner in some respects, while policies on employment and working hours have aimed to increase female participation, and care services remain limited.

Just as first- and second-order change has been insufficient to meet the challenge of care provision, so also existing mechanisms for delivering cash benefits have not always changed in line with new-found assumptions regarding an individualized adult worker model. Policy ambiguity and inconsistency are common, especially in the UK case (Rake 2000; McLaughlin *et al.* 2001), but also in other continental European countries (Daly 2000). The UK, with its heavy reliance on means-testing and hence joint assessment, faces particular problems in this regard. The working families tax credit designed to 'make work pay' is administered on the basis of joint earnings and may thus actually reduce the incentive for partnered women to enter employment in low-paid jobs. The New Deal for the Partners of the Unemployed (mainly women) treats them both as having an independent relationship to the labour market and as dependants. Their access to the programme is dependent on being the partner of an unemployed man (see also Saraceno 2001 for a comparative analysis of such ambiguities in social assistance programmes across EU member states). Thus while ideas about the desirability of individualization have been clearly expressed in the UK and the Netherlands, it is still assumed that *married* women can depend on their husbands as and when necessary. In large measure this is because policies to promote women's employment were instrumental to broader social and economic purposes. In the context of the discourses framing the new welfare/work relationship, it is significant that both the UK and the Netherlands have acted unequivocally to push lone mothers into the labour market, in the face of strongly shared values among women in both countries that prioritize care work (Duncan and Edwards 1997; Knijn and van Wels 2001).<sup>10</sup>

10. It is important to note that such preferences are not held in many other European countries, even in a country such as Norway where motherhood has relatively recently been prioritized over paid labour for women (Leira 1992; Skevik 2001).

In many respects, women's labour market participation has become the new norm. It is increasingly assumed that both men and women will be employed. However, the fact is that the assumptions made by policy-makers regarding women's status as 'workers' are not matched by the reality of their labour market behaviour, which, in many countries, takes the form of part-time and often 'short' part-time work. This becomes crucially important if it is also assumed to any significant extent that individuals will, in the future, be able to make greater provision for themselves. For example, in the final chapter of their book on welfare state change and alongside recommendations for the firm adoption of the new work/welfare model, Ferrera and Rhodes (2000: 266) recommended that survivors' benefits be radically reformed, but without mentioning the fact that most 'survivors' are women. Similarly, pension reform has been carried out as if the implications are gender-neutral. But privatizing pension provision means that women will do disproportionately badly because of their unequal position in the labour market, while lengthening the number of years of work required for a state pension disadvantages women who leave the labour market to care. Ginn *et al.* (2001) have argued powerfully and convincingly that pension reform in EU member states has systematically disadvantaged women who already suffer the greatest poverty in old age. This is all the more striking given that the influential arguments of the 'generational accountants', who use the idea of generational conflict to press for the privatization of pensions, ignore the transfers in the form of unpaid work, chiefly between women, that are made between the generations (and which are in large measure sustained by state pension systems) (Arber and Attias-Donfurf 2000; Ginn *et al.* 2001).

The recasting of the work/welfare relationship and the generalizing of an 'active' welfare model to women as well as to men need not be inherently 'bad' for women. Indeed it holds out more promise than the old male breadwinner model and has long been supported by feminist analysts wishing to promote individualization in the sense of economic autonomy (Orloff 1993; see also Kessler Harris 2001). However, much depends on the conditions. Two of the most obvious problems of assuming the existence of an adult worker model family are the unequal division of unpaid care work between men and women, and women's unequal position in the labour market, which is due to their responsibility for unpaid care work, to the low value attached to paid care work, and to workplace-based discrimination. Anything to do with care tends to be poorly valued. Wages in the formal care sector are low and benefits and allowances for carers in the informal sector are also low. This means that in a world in which individualization and the capacity for self-provisioning is increasingly being assumed by policy-makers, carers are

profoundly disadvantaged. It also means that care continues to be associated with women rather than with both the sexes.

#### 4 A gender-centred approach to welfare state change

The shift towards an adult worker model family, which generalizes men's labour market behaviour to women, invites further consideration as to how to deal with the issue of care. The US case shows that it is possible to promote an adult worker model without doing this, albeit with high individual and social costs (Skocpol 2000). Neither the EC nor individual member states show any great inclination to follow this example. There is much that can be done at the level of instrumental change, for example by way of elaborating the provision of the care leaves, cash payments for care and direct care services that is found in the Scandinavian countries. However, taking the gender inequalities inherent in the provision of care seriously requires more by way of a thoroughgoing reassessment of the principles and meaning of social provision; in other words, a third-order change in the framework of thinking within which policy is made.

Care work crosses the boundaries between informal and formal, public and private, and paid and unpaid work (Daly and Lewis 1998, 2000), and yet it has never become an organizing concept for the analysis of social policies in the mainstream literature, and has certainly never become the centre of attention for policy-makers. Thus, for example, in France during the 1990s a series of policies to promote the employment of carers by families in households were implemented as a means of encouraging employment, without discussion of either the break they constituted with the strong French tradition of service provision in the care field, or the different kinds of work incentives and distributory effects involved in a shift in the nature of care provision (Martin *et al.* 1998; see also Daly 2001). The fate of women in respect of the new work/welfare relationship depends in large measure on what provisions are made for what was the unarticulated dimension of the traditional male breadwinner model: unpaid care work.<sup>11</sup> The implication is that care work will be commodified. However, leaving aside the issue of women's preferences, even in the Scandinavian countries where this has happened more than elsewhere – giving rise to high rates of female employment supported by highly developed care services and generous parental leave at high levels of replacement income – a large number of women are still disadvantaged in respect

11. In making this point and elaborating the argument that follows, I do not wish to underestimate the importance of improving women's position in the labour market.



of the new principles informing pension reform because they continue to work (long) part-time hours.

A care-centred perspective has been advocated by Knijn and Kremer (1997), but dismissed as utopian when it has entered the welfare state change literature at all (e.g. Fargion 2000). However, there are some developments, even in the English-speaking debate, that give cause to revisit this possibility and which also put a question mark over any simple commodification strategy. For while paid work and providing new mechanisms to promote it have occupied centre-stage both at the national and at the EC level, it is also possible to identify a wide spectrum of opinion that is concerned about care and about parenting in particular. Juliet Schor (1991) calculated that between the 1960s and the 1990s the average US couple added the equivalent of another half-time job per year, taking the hours out of time that used to be spent on children, leisure and sleep. Amitai Etzioni (1993) has referred to a 'parenting deficit', which becomes more significant in the context of the influential literature on the importance of social capital, that is the informal values and norms that permit a group of people to work together (Coleman 1988; Fukuyama 1999).<sup>12</sup> Trust and cooperation are held to be learned in the private sphere of the family (and in civil society) and to pass from there into the public sphere of politics and the market (Putnam 1993). In the context of the family, social capital consists of the relationship between the parents and the children, which gives the child access to the parents' resources, intellectual, material and emotional. In this sense, it is part of an investment approach to care and care policies, similar to that adopted by the UN's 1999 *Development Report* (UN 1999). It is perhaps not so surprising that social capital theorists and communitarians, while not actively promoting a return to the traditional male breadwinner model family, do tend to express a certain nostalgia for it. While few commentators, even in the English-speaking countries, advocate sending women back to the home, Popenoe (1993) has expressed the hope that they would decide 'spontaneously' to stay at home with children under 3. Others prefer a different approach to care work that pays attention to women's need and desire for a measure of economic autonomy. However, there are a variety of possible approaches that offer different prospects for the pursuit of gender equality.

In general, attention has been paid to care policies only as a means to promoting an adult worker model family. Thus Korpi (1999) has sought to categorize policies according to the extent to which they enable the redistribution of care work with the policy goal of promoting women's

12. This concept has not been gendered, but for a preliminary attempt see Stolle and Lewis (forthcoming).

labour market participation. Indeed, this has been the dominant approach of both the EC and member states seeking to reconcile work and family life. It is also well understood that the promotion of care services is more likely to promote women's paid work than cash payments for care leaves (Leira, 1998). The promotion of care services, whether in the public or the private sector, involves the commodification of care that is favoured by academic commentators concerned about the future of the continental welfare states and is part and parcel of a shift towards an adult worker model family; paid care jobs are disproportionately female jobs.<sup>13</sup>

However, care policies instigated as a means of promoting women's employment do not necessarily address either all the policy problems raised by care, or the issue of gender equality. In the first place, it is highly unlikely that all care work *can* be commodified. Care work can be 'active', involving some form of 'tending', but much of it is 'passive', requiring someone to 'be there'. Not only is it difficult to commodify passive care, but many parents want to 'be there', for example when a young child gets home from school. Second, care policies that stop at making it possible for women to go out to work do nothing either to promote a more equal gendered division of the carework that remains to be done, or to promote the valuing and recognition of that work at the household and societal levels.

In respect of this second point, it is noteworthy that interest in the role of fathers and the measurable effects of 'father involvement' (Lamb 1986; Marsiglio 1995) reached new heights at the end of the twentieth century. While policies in the English-speaking countries continued to focus mostly on fathers' obligation to provide for their children, the lack of time fathers spent with their children became more of an issue in these countries and dominated the debate over fathers in continental European countries (Hobson 2002; Knijn 1995). In the Scandinavian countries, the 'daddy month' was made part of parental leave schemes to force men to take (a small) part of the leave entitlement or lose it altogether (Leira 1998). The Dutch government has been alone in promoting the sharing of paid and unpaid work by men and women in households via the 'Combination Scenario' set out in a 1997 White Paper, the aim being to redistribute paid and unpaid work at the household level rather than by defamilializing care work (Svenhuijsen, forthcoming). The idea is that both men and women should work part-time and do care work. However, in practice the results have been disappointing. Dutch men have the highest rates of part-time work in Europe, but it is mainly those aged over

13. Indeed, the Scandinavian feminist literature of the 1980s was divided as to whether such employment represented a form of 'public patriarchy', or a 'woman-friendly welfare state' (Siim 1987; Hernes 1987).

55 or under 25 who work part-time, not men with young children (Knijn 2001). In terms of valuing and recognizing care work when it is unequally shared, a commitment to gender equality requires the promotion of new forms of social solidarity both at the collective level, via, for example, pension credits, but also at the household level.

The recasting of the work/welfare relationship assumes at base that wages are the best form of welfare. If it is also the case that welfare systems will increasingly expect more by way of self-provisioning, then the means to achieving economic autonomy become additionally important. However, this mode of thinking does not provide a space for the consideration of care policies and it is necessary to seek out frameworks that do. Amartya Sen's (1985, 1992, 1999; see also, Nussbaum and Sen 1993) work on 'capabilities' offers a rather different approach to welfare as well-being, and a means of addressing care work. Sen has defined capabilities as combinations of functionings from which an individual should have the freedom to choose. Money is important, but so is time, and capabilities encompass political and social life as well as life in the family. The concept thus embraces more than material well-being, more than wages, and more than paid work, although poverty necessarily restricts choice of 'functionings'. Furthermore, explicit rules and collective provision in the form of cash, services and measures to enhance human capital are necessary to give individuals the opportunity to achieve their potential and to guarantee genuine choice. Building on Sen's work, Desai's (2000) recent analysis of well-being has drawn attention to the importance of 'social goods', produced jointly by a household or a group, and therefore again to time, which he proposes as a proxy for well-being.

The literature that develops an ethic of care proposes an alternative model of relationship and connection and makes a strong case for enabling all human beings to care (Tronto 1993; Svenhuijsen 1998). The capabilities approach provides a way of recognizing and valuing care. This is important, because too often women experience little *genuine* choice to care<sup>14</sup> (Kremer 2000; Land and Rose 1985). Indeed, the recast work/welfare relationship entails modes of care provision that remain unarticulated. These are most striking in the case of lone mothers, who have no choice but to seek substitute carers for their children, usually in the form of grandparents or childminders.

Defining the goal of welfare states in terms of well-being rather than work and wages means that policies must address the distribution of time, something Goodin (2001) highlighted in his analysis of the Netherlands

14. Hakim's (2000) insistence that women's different combinations of paid and unpaid work in different countries reflects their preferences ignores the part played by government policies in constructing the work/welfare relationship.

as a 'post-productivist' regime, and which feminist analysis has stressed for three decades (see especially Balbo 1975; Land 1983). Some formal recognition of non-monetary data has been given in the revised system of national accounts, devised in 1993 and implemented in 2000. So-called 'satellite accounts' are intended to attach a value to unpaid work (Harrison 2000; Short 2000). As Nowotny (1994) has commented, time is no longer a private issue.

The French 35-hour week introduced at the beginning of 2000 for companies with more than 20 employees (with the possibility of working longer hours at peak times and fewer hours at others), comes closest to Schor's (1991) ideal of a 30-hour week for both sexes and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions' finding that 71 per cent of the citizens surveyed in EU member states would like to work between 30 and 40 hours a week (Bosch and Wagner 2001). But Creighton (1999) concluded from his analysis of working time, much like feminists in the 1970s (Coote 1981), that policies to address the issue of sharing work, both paid and unpaid, are vital. The Dutch government is alone in having explicitly encouraged the sharing of paid and unpaid work between men and women, albeit that their relative lack of success shows how difficult this is to achieve. It may be that policy-makers should begin to think more about the redistribution of paid work for men and women over the life course, with fewer paid working hours during periods of caring for young and old people.

But the choice to care depends further on valuing care. This is enormously problematic, whether attempted at the collective or household level. Barr (2001) has suggested that in recognition of the gendered division of unpaid work, half the woman's pension contributions should enter the man's pension pot and vice versa. While 'daddy leaves' have sought actively to change men's time-use, forcing such a redistribution from 'wallet to purse' would be more controversial. However, such a proposal has more purchase in securing gender equality than have transfers out of taxation to recognize care work. As Joshi and Davis (2000) have pointed out in respect of the new satellite accounts, the decision whether to use a fixed, flat rate of pay or an earnings-related amount for any such transfer has very different distributory effects.

Any collective effort to take the time to care and the choice to care seriously must logically encompass discussion of some form of basic income (Jordan *et al.* 2000 discuss the various forms). The idea of a participation income would encompass participation in the form of care work and avoid the problem of the 'free lunch' that is perceived to accompany a universal basic income, especially at a time when governments are determined to promote active rather than passive welfare. However, deciding who is eligible for a 'participation' income would be difficult. Nevertheless some

form of basic income is necessary for there to be the security to choose different forms of humanly and socially necessary activity, particularly care, which may be especially important in respect of the problem of falling birth rates.<sup>15</sup>

The nature of family change with increasing proportions of lone-mother and single-person households, together with women's increased labour market participation, makes it appear possible and indeed logical for governments to promote a revised version of the work/welfare relationship for women as well as for men, and as a corollary to assume a greater capacity for self-provisioning. The academic literature on welfare state change has tended to endorse the idea of laying any vestiges of the male breadwinner model that may remain in social policies to rest, not least as a means of 'rescuing' the continental welfare states. However, neither policy-makers nor academic commentators accord care work the attention it deserves. It may be utopian to seek to use it as the prism through which to view systems of social protection; certainly such an approach requires a huge shift in the approach to 'welfare'. But as an exercise it serves to expose the issues that come to the fore when care is allowed to take centre-stage, and in particular the kind of policies that are necessary to provide time to care, a concern that is remote from the recast work/welfare relationship and that involves both instrumental change and a further shift in the whole framework of ideas within which policy is made.

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15. In Esping Andersen's (1999) analysis, commodifying women's labour and socializing the provision of care will address the problem of family formation as well as labour supply. Certainly in the late 1980s there was a great contrast between Sweden, where women were active in the labour market and the birth rate was high, and Germany where women had low participation rates and the birth rate was also low. Scandinavian policies to reconcile work and family seemed to deliver the goods. But it was apparently insufficient, for in the 1990s Swedish fertility rates fell. Explanation is undoubtedly complex, but increased insecurity, especially in regard to jobs, seems to be an important factor.

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**Jane Lewis** is Barnett Professor of Social Policy at the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of Oxford. Her recent books include: *Gender, Social Care and Welfare State Restructuring* (ed., 1998); (with K. Kiernan and H. Land) *Lone Motherhood in Twentieth Century Britain* (1998); *The End of Marriage? Individualism and Intimate Relations* (2001).

**Address for correspondence:** DSPSW, Barnett House, 32 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2ER. E-mail: Jane.Lewis@socres.ox.ac.uk