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Luxembourg Income Study Working Paper No. 287

**CAREGIVING, WELFARE STATES
AND MOTHERS' POVERTY"**

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November 2001

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“Caregiving, Welfare States and Mothers’ Poverty”

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INTRODUCTION

During the past few decades, across Western nations women's economic and social status changed rapidly: their labor force participation increased, cohabitation increased, and single parenthood grew more prevalent. In light of these changes, some cite an increasing "care deficit" that occurs because most women are no longer caregivers at home on a full-time basis (Glenn 2000; Hochschild 1995). Hochschild (1995) discusses several different strategies to address the "care deficit." Some nations prefer the "traditional" solution, in which women provide care privately for their own children and are often full-time caregivers. In other nations, welfare states can subsidize women's care—in "warmer" ways that combine personal and institutional care, or in "colder" ways that rely heavily on institutional care. Below I focus on the "traditional" strategy and examine how social policies in nations that rely heavily on this strategy affect caregivers' economic outcomes. These policies often assume a "male breadwinner" family—a married couple in which women are the primary caretakers of children, the elderly, and household affairs, and men are the primary breadwinners.

The contribution of this paper lies in its analysis of how different welfare states affect the economic status of primary caregivers—mothers and single mothers—compared to other citizens.¹ While existing research examines the gendered assumptions underlying social policies (Lewis 1992; O'Connor et al. 1999; Sainsbury 1994, 1996), little research examines the economic effects of living in "male breadwinner" welfare states. Past research rarely focuses explicitly on mothers and single mothers, even though these women are typically the most economically disadvantaged citizens in

nations (Casper et al. 1994; Christopher et al. 2001; McFate et al. 1995). Thus, below I focus on the economic penalties or advantages that mothers incur when they live in welfare states that privilege women's unpaid carework over women's paid work.

I begin with a review of the literature that considers the gendered assumptions upon which many welfare states base their social policies. Next I present my research questions, discuss data and methods, and present analyses of how welfare states affect the poverty rates of mothers, single mothers, and other citizens in nine Western nations (Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, UK, and US). The analyses show the extent to which social assistance programs reduce mothers' and single mothers' poverty rates—in an absolute sense, and also how welfare states reduce their poverty rates relative to the poverty rates of other groups (such as female non-mothers or non-single mothers). I find that the welfare states most representative of the “male breadwinner” model (Germany and the Netherlands) are problematic not only with their gendered assumptions about women's carework; compared to other countries, they also do less to reduce mothers' poverty rates relative to those of female non-mothers and men. In other words, in Germany and the Netherlands, many social policies assume that mothers are primary caregivers, but their social assistance programs fail to lower mothers' poverty rates relative to those of other citizens. I conclude with the implications of these findings for mothers' economic dependence on male partners. First, I present a brief discussion of the theoretical literature on the gendered nature of welfare states.

GENDERING WELFARE STATES

The literature on gender and welfare state regimes in large part consists of reactions to Esping-Andersen's (1990) influential classification of welfare state regimes.² His classification of welfare regimes overlooks how welfare states are gendered in their assumptions and outcomes. Orloff's (1993) renowned critique points out that Esping-Andersen's concept of independence from labor markets--"de-commodification"--is not inclusive of women; especially in past decades, many women were not reliant on the labor market, but on male partners for their economic survival. In addition to independence from labor markets, feminist scholars stress women's independence from family relationships, or "defamilialization" (Knijn and Ungerson 1997; Lister 1995). Orloff (1999) stresses that women should be able to create and maintain autonomous households, and this "require[s] an absence of coercion, including the kind imposed for years on women to marry because of their own dismal economic prospects" (12). Given persistent gender inequalities in the family—in which women have been disproportionately responsible for caregiving—and in the labor market, many women continue to be economically dependent on their partners. And in many welfare states, social policies bolster women's economic dependence on men. These issues are not considered in Esping-Andersen's classification of welfare state regimes.³

Other feminist scholars are more upfront about how welfare states embody gendered assumptions and affect gender inequality. Sainsbury (1994, 1996) creates a typology based on two ideal types of welfare regimes—the "male breadwinner" and "individual" models. The "male breadwinner" model includes policies that uphold: a

strict division of labor within couples, receipt of benefits by the male breadwinner, entitlement based on the male breadwinner family form, and private, unpaid care labor.⁴ In contrast, the individual model includes policies that encourage: a shared division of labor, an individual (rather than familial) basis for entitlement to and receipt of benefits, and state-subsidized, paid care labor (Sainsbury 1996). In short, the “male breadwinner” welfare states leave caregiving responsibilities to mothers. In contrast, the “individual” model states take steps to externalize the responsibility of caregiving to the state (and to men in the most progressive welfare states). In welfare states based on the latter model, women are more able to engage in paid work and thereby be less economically dependent on male partners.

Sainsbury (1996) discusses the marked differences between countries in their adoption of “male breadwinner” or “individual” policies. With her analysis of the UK, US, Netherlands, and Sweden, she finds that while all four countries show some vestiges of the “male breadwinner” model, the Netherlands most closely resembles the “male breadwinner” model while Sweden corresponds to the “individual” model.⁵ An in-depth discussion of the extent to which different welfare states adhere to these different models is beyond the scope of this paper; see Christopher (forthcoming) for a detailed discussion of how social policies across different nations resemble the “male breadwinner” and “individual” models. Of the nations considered below, Netherlands and Germany adhere to the “male breadwinner” model, while Sweden, Finland and France adhere to the “individual” model. Generally, social policies in the English-speaking countries reflect both of these models.

Social scientists have also categorized welfare states by the social policies available to single mothers. As Sainsbury (1994, 1996) and Hobson (1994) suggest, the social and economic status of single mothers is often quite distinct from that of married mothers. In caring for their children on their own, single mothers often face a severe lack of money and time.⁶

Regarding single mothers, Lewis and Hobson (1997) formulate a typology of welfare states based on two ideal types: the Caregiving model and the Parent/Worker model. The former model describes policies such as social transfers or tax credits that allow or encourage women to stay home and care for young children rather than enter paid work. The latter includes employment supports like paid leave and subsidized child care that allow mothers to enter and stay attached to the labor force; in the Parent/Worker model women are expected to enter paid work at equal rates with men. Of the sample nations below, the Netherlands, Germany and the U.K. are more representative of the Caregiving model, while Sweden, Finland and France are the most representative of the Parent/Worker model. Social policies in the English-speaking countries represent both of these models.⁷

While the literature on gender and welfare states has thoroughly examined the gendered assumptions underlying different social policies, research rarely examines how women, mothers and single mothers fare economically in the different models of welfare states described above. I turn to these issues in the analyses below.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There is an abundant literature on how welfare states affect the economic outcomes of families. (For recent cross-national analyses of the effects of social transfers and tax systems on economic outcomes, see Behrendt (1999), Kenworthy (1999), and McFate et al. (1995)). Yet this literature rarely considers two things: the economic consequences of living in more- or less- gendered welfare states, and how welfare states affect the economic outcomes of mothers and single mothers compared to other citizens.⁸ Both Sainsbury (1996) and Lewis and Hosbon (1997) suggest that the “male breadwinner” model and Caregiving models of social policy may not have adverse economic effects, particularly in nations like the Netherlands where social transfers are relatively generous. To assess these claims, I consider several research questions: first, what are the poverty rates of mothers and single mothers across several Western nations, and how do they compare to those of other citizens? Second, to what extent do social assistance programs pull the families of mothers and single mothers out of poverty? Third, I examine how welfare states treat mothers and single mothers vis-à-vis other groups: given that nations reserve a limited amount of social transfer and tax relief for citizens, to what extent do they target mothers and single mothers? With these questions I aim to examine how the different models of welfare states discussed above affect mothers’ and single mothers’ poverty outcomes.

DATA AND METHODS

To address these issues I use the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS).⁹ I use poverty as an economic indicator. With this measure I assume that money income is the central

resource used to obtain goods and services, and hence many kinds of social participation. Of course there are important resources that money cannot buy, such as living in safe neighborhoods, large social networks, or social capital. But because money is so liquid, it is a very important determinant of a person's life chances. Moreover, equal participation in society is perhaps more important for women, who historically have not been granted equal citizenship with men (see O'Connor 1993); thus poverty is an especially important indicator with respect to women's economic outcomes. Below I use poverty status as a litmus test of social policies: welfare states that reduce poverty rates by significant amounts are "friendlier" than those that do not.

The conceptualization of poverty I use here concerns whether families have adequate material resources relative to others in one's nation. In this analysis, poverty is measured by having a disposable income (after government transfers and taxes)¹⁰ of less than 50% of the median income of one's country. This is a relative measure of poverty rather than an absolute measure (such as the US poverty line); people are compared to others within their own country rather than compared to the same income level across all countries.¹¹ Like almost all measures of poverty, I use an equivalence scale to adjust family income for family size.¹²

The methods below include the following analyses: mothers' and single mothers' poverty rates and poverty ratios and the extent to which social transfers and taxes reduce mothers' and single mothers' poverty rates and poverty ratios. (In these analyses tax payments are considered social transfers, because in many countries the tax system redistributes money through tax credits.)

I first provide poverty rates and poverty ratios for mothers and single mothers. Poverty rates indicate the percentage of people whose disposable family incomes (adjusted for family size) fall below the poverty line. For example, as seen in Table 1, about 18% of U.S. mothers live in poverty. Poverty ratios divide the poverty rates of one group by those of another group; they indicate to extent to which the poverty rates of one group are higher or lower than those of another group. The poverty ratio of 1.69 for US mothers is computed by dividing the poverty rate of mothers (18.2%) by that of female non-mothers (10.8%) and indicates that mothers' poverty rate is 69% higher than that of female non-mothers. The mother-poverty ratios compare the poverty rates of mothers to those of two groups: female non-mothers and men. The single mother-poverty ratios compare the poverty rates of single mothers to those of four groups: female non-single mothers, single female non-parents, married mothers and men. These poverty ratios are useful because they show mothers' and single mothers' poverty rates *relative to those of other groups*.

I go on to show by how much countries' tax and transfer systems reduce the poverty rates of mothers, single mothers, and their comparison groups. I then ask which government transfers and tax systems most effectively reduce the mother-and single mother-poverty ratios—or mothers' and single mothers' poverty rates relative to those of

their comparison groups. In order to examine the role of social transfers and taxes in reducing poverty ratios, I examine the poverty ratios that result after any social transfer or tax payments a household receives are deducted from disposable income. If these pre-transfer, pre-tax ratios are higher (indicating that mothers are worse off) than the post-transfer, post-tax ratios, then the social transfer/tax system brings more mothers out of poverty than their comparison group. In this scenario mothers fare better (relative to their comparison group) when transfers and taxes are included in household income, and they fare relatively worse when transfers and taxes are deducted from income. These comparisons using mother-poverty ratios give us a sense of upon which family types governments focus their anti-poverty social transfer and tax policies.

RESULTS

The analyses below focus on mothers, single mothers, and other citizens. I first provide descriptive analyses of the extent of poverty among them; then assess the extent to which social transfers and tax credits reduce poverty among them; then examine the extent to which social transfers and tax credits reduce the poverty of mothers and single mothers more or less than that of other citizens. Altogether, these analyses will show which welfare states are most instrumental in allowing mothers and single mothers to form autonomous, solvent households independent of male partners.

Poverty Rates and Ratios

First I present the poverty rates of mothers and single mothers. As seen in the first two columns of Table 1, US mothers and single mothers have the highest poverty rates. Australian, Canadian, German and UK mothers have poverty rates around 12%-

14%, all lower than the US mothers' poverty rate (18%). Dutch, French, Finnish and Swedish mothers have the lowest rates at 8%, 7%, 3% and 2% respectively. With single mothers' poverty rates we see a similar ordering of countries, though poverty rates are higher across the board. In the English-speaking nations and Germany more than 30% of single mothers live in poverty, whereas in Finland and Sweden, fewer than 5% of single mothers live in poverty.

(Table 1 here)

As seen in column three in Table 1, the mother-poverty ratios indicate that in all but two countries—Finland and Sweden—mothers are more likely to be poor than female non-mothers. These ratios indicate, for example, that US mothers have a poverty rate 69% higher than US (female) non-mothers, while in the UK mothers' poverty rate is 133% higher than that of female non-mothers. This comparison essentially measures how the presence of children affects poverty differences among women; in most nations, children make women poorer.

I also compare the poverty rates of mothers to those of men. In all countries except Finland and Sweden, mothers are more likely to live in poverty than men. This effect is most pronounced in the US where mothers' poverty rate is 70% higher than that of men's. In other countries, especially France and the Netherlands, the disparity in poverty is much smaller.

The last two columns in Table 1 show single mothers' poverty rates compared to two groups—other women who are not single mothers, and single female non-parents. We see that in all countries, the poverty rates of single mother families are typically much higher than those of other family types. Single mothers are the most disadvantaged vis-à-

vis other women in the Australia, Canada, Germany, UK, and US, where their poverty rate is over three times as high as that of other women. When comparing single mothers to single female non-mothers, the former have lower poverty rates than the latter in Finland, and the disparity is low in Sweden. In all other countries except France, single mothers are much more likely to live in poverty than single female non-mothers. In other words, in most countries, among single women the presence of children substantially increases poverty rates.

Thus, in absolute terms, mothers' and single mothers' poverty rates are the lowest in Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands and France. Mothers' and single mothers' poverty ratios are the lowest in Sweden and Finland, the nations most representative of the "individual" or Parent/Worker model. In these nations, it appears that women are most able to form autonomous, non-poor households independent of men. In contrast, mothers' and single mothers' poverty rates and poverty ratios are the highest in the English-speaking countries and in Germany.

The Effect of Social Transfers/Taxes on Poverty Rates

To examine the role of welfare states in reducing poverty, I compare poverty rates based on disposable income (post-tax and post-transfer income) to poverty rates based on pre-tax and pre-transfer income. Table 2 shows the percentage reduction in the pre-tax/pre-transfer poverty rates that occurs after I include social transfers and any tax credits in measures of family income.

(Table 2 here)

The most striking contrast in Table 2 is that the US social transfer and tax system is by far the least effective, reducing the poverty rates of US mothers and single mothers

by only 13-14%. The German, Canadian and Australian welfare states reduce mothers' and single mothers' poverty rates by about 28-44%. The UK, Dutch and French welfare states reduce mothers' and single mothers' poverty rates more substantially (by about 50-73%). The Finnish and Swedish welfare states are the most generous to mothers and single mothers, reducing their pre-tax, pre-transfer income by 79-90%. In general this ranking of countries holds up for the other groups listed in Table 2. One exception is that the German welfare state reduces poverty more effectively among groups other than mothers and single mothers. Overall, we see that the "individual" and Parent/Worker welfare states most effectively reduce mothers' and single mothers' absolute poverty rates.

Yet in order to ascertain the generosity of welfare states towards mothers and single mothers, we need to examine how welfare states reduce their poverty rates relative to the poverty rates of other groups. In other words, from the standpoint of reductions in poverty rates, who benefits the most from the welfare state? To assess the role of social transfer and tax systems in reducing mothers' and single mothers' poverty relative to other groups, Tables 3 and 4 show the mother- and single mother-poverty ratios, measured by disposable (or post-tax and post-transfer) income and by pre-tax and pre-transfer income. For all of the comparisons, if the social transfer and tax system pulls more mothers out of poverty than their comparison group, we expect a lower mother-poverty ratio in the first row where social transfer/tax payments are included and a higher mother-poverty ratio in the second row where social transfer/tax payments are excluded. In this scenario, mothers fare better (relative to their comparison group) when social transfers and taxes are included in their incomes. (In the tables, a "+" sign under the two

ratios indicates this scenario.) These two tables show the extent to which welfare states reduce the poverty rates of mothers and single mothers relative to the poverty rates of other citizens. In nations where welfare states are more instrumental in reducing mothers' poverty rates relative to those of other citizens, mothers are more likely to be able to form autonomous households that escape poverty.

(Table 3 here)

The Effect of Social Transfers/Taxes on Poverty Ratios

Table 3 shows us the mother-poverty ratios measured by post-tax and transfer (or disposable) income and by pre-tax and pre-transfer income. The ratios compare mothers' poverty rates to those of female non-mothers and to those of men. Again, when the latter ratio is larger than the former—or if after transfer and tax payments are *excluded from* the measure of poverty rates, the relative poverty of mothers increases, these welfare states are more generous to mothers.¹³ By this measure, only Sweden is "mother-friendly" when comparing mothers to female non-mothers. In all other countries, the poverty ratios comparing mothers to non-mothers actually *increase* when transfers and taxes are included in income measures. These countries do not bring more mothers than female non-mothers out of poverty with their social transfer and tax systems. One possible explanation is that some countries have many benefits tied to labor force participation, and female non-mothers often have higher employment rates than mothers. In addition, since non-mothers include those who may have children that no longer live in the household or are older, some female non-mothers may be receiving social retirement benefits.¹⁴

Comparing mothers to men, we see that the social transfer/tax systems in all countries except France, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands pull more mothers out of poverty than men. In the latter three countries, there are many social assistance benefits tied to labor force participation, and mothers have lower employment rates than men. The French case is surprising, given its welfare state is known for targeting families with children.

Thus, with its highly developed universal policies like family allowances and paid leave, only the Swedish welfare state reduces the poverty of mothers more than other comparison groups. Finland is also friendlier to mothers than other welfare states. This suggests that the social assistance programs in the “individual” or Parent/Worker are the most instrumental in reducing caregivers’ poverty rates vis-à-vis the poverty rates of other citizens. In contrast, the social assistance programs in the “male breadwinner” or Caregiver model welfare states—namely Germany and the Netherlands—reduce the poverty rates of other citizens to a greater extent than those of mothers; this does not bode well for mother’s ability to form non-poor households without male partners.

(Table 4 here)

With respect to single mothers, Table 4 shows the poverty rates of single mothers divided by those of four comparison groups: female non-single mothers (or all other women), single female non-mothers, men and married mothers. (These poverty measures are analogous to those in Table 3, so I use the same indicators to assess how welfare states treat single mothers relative to other groups.) With the first single mother-poverty ratios in Table 4, we see that four welfare states—Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and UK—reduce the poverty rates of single mothers more than those of other women. It is

surprising that the other five countries do not target single mother's poverty with their tax/transfer systems, given that single mothers have higher poverty rates than other groups across all nations. This may be because single mothers have low employment rates in some nations, so are less likely to qualify for social transfers and tax credits based on employment.

When compared to single female non-mothers, more single mothers are pulled out of poverty in several countries: Australia, Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and US. The first two countries have means-tested benefits for single mothers but often few (if any) policies for single non-mothers. Finland and Sweden have many policies geared towards families with children and some supplements for single mothers. The Dutch welfare state is known for its relatively generous social transfers for single mothers.

The tax and transfer systems of all countries except Canada, Germany and France bring more single mothers out of poverty than men. The former two countries have many social policies that are geared towards workers, which may disadvantage single mothers. In France, most benefits are available to all families with children, and there are very few targeted programs for which only single mothers qualify (Bergmann 1996).

Lastly, I examine single mothers compared to married mothers and find similar outcomes to the previous comparison, except that in this case Sweden does not reduce single mothers' poverty relative to that of married mothers. So, Canada, France, Germany and Sweden bring more married mothers than single mothers out of poverty with their tax/transfer systems. Germany is likely to privilege married mothers due to social transfers and taxes that reward the male breadwinner family, as discussed above.

And as seen in Table 2, while Sweden does reduce the poverty rate of single mothers substantially, it does not reduce their poverty rates more than those of married mothers. One surprise here is France. With its comprehensive welfare state aimed at keeping children out of poverty, one would think that single mothers would receive more generous social transfers than other groups. But France does not target the poverty of single mothers with its welfare state. One explanation for this is that France offers much more generous benefits to larger families than to smaller families (Bergmann 1996), and single mothers often have smaller families. And, as stated above, in France there are few social assistance benefits for which only single mothers are eligible (Bergmann 1996).

Overall, only the Finnish and Dutch welfare states target the poverty of single mothers across all comparisons—their social transfer and tax systems consistently reduce the poverty of single mothers more than other groups in society. Sweden reduces the poverty rates of single mothers more than those of other groups in most comparisons. Thus, with the exception of France, the Parent/Worker welfare states are generally “friendlier” to single mothers than other welfare states; these welfare states facilitate mothers’ ability to live on their own and escape poverty. In contrast, neither France nor Germany reduces single mothers’ poverty ratios across any comparison.

Summary of Findings

The social transfer and tax systems in English-speaking countries (except the US) moderately reduce the poverty rates of mothers and single mothers (Table 2). The English-speaking welfare states reduce mothers’ and single mothers’ poverty ratios in some, though certainly not all, of the above analyses. With respect to reducing mother- and single mother-poverty ratios, Canada is the least effective English-speaking welfare

state (Tables 3,4). Overall, US mothers and single mothers fare quite badly: they have the highest poverty rates, high poverty ratios, and their social transfer and tax system is the least effective in reducing poverty rates (Tables 1,2).

In Finland and Sweden, mothers and single mothers have the lowest poverty rates and ratios (Table 1), and the Finnish and Swedish welfare states generally most effectively reduce mothers' and single mothers' poverty rates and poverty ratios (Tables 2,3,4). Both of these regimes represent the "individual" model of social policy, or for single mothers, the Parent/Worker model. The other "individual" or Parent/Worker nation, France, substantially lowers poverty rates with its welfare state (Table 2). Yet France does not reduce any of the poverty ratios of mothers or single mothers (Tables 3,4).

Dutch mothers and single mothers have moderate poverty rates, while those in Germany have high poverty rates (Table 1). The social transfer and tax systems in these countries moderately reduce mothers' and single mothers' poverty rates (Table 2). Germany and the Netherlands are quite unfriendly to mothers (relative to others) with their social transfer and tax systems, and the social transfer and tax system in Germany decreases the poverty ratios of neither mothers nor single mothers (Tables 3,4). However, the Dutch system quite effectively reduces the poverty ratios of single mothers (Tables 3,4).

CONCLUSION

The "male breadwinner" model or Caregiving regime is problematic not only with its assumptions about the primacy of mothers' caregiving; "male breadwinner" social

transfer/tax systems also fail to reduce mother's poverty rates vis-à-vis those of other groups. In this sense, the welfare state in Germany and the Netherlands devalues the work of caregivers—allowing them (and perhaps expecting them) to stay at home with children, but failing to lower their poverty rates relative to those of other citizens. In the absence of social transfers to keep their poverty rates low, many German caregivers work outside the home—which may give them some degree of economic independence from men. But when German caregivers work part-time, or are not employed, they are likely to have high levels of economic dependence on their male partners when in relationships, or high poverty rates when not in relationships. While the Dutch welfare state is relatively friendly to single mothers, Dutch mothers and single mothers have low employment rates, which can also lead to economic dependence on men. Economic dependence on male partners has many troubling implications for women; for one, battered women may face the difficult choice of staying with an abusive partner, or leaving—which could push them and their children into poverty.

In contrast, in Finland and Sweden welfare state services support labor force participation among mothers and single mothers, and tax and transfer systems help keep their poverty rates low. In these countries, the welfare state makes economic dependence on a male partner less common—and “defamilialization” more likely. While Scandinavian nations have high rates of part-time work among women and sex-segregated workplaces, caregivers nonetheless fare quite well with respect to poverty outcomes.

Thus, if the Dutch and German welfare states continue to respond to the “care deficit” by reinforcing caregiving as women's private responsibility in the home, it seems

that many caregivers in these nations will be economically dependent on male partners. An alternative would be to follow the “individual” or Parent/Worker model and increase state subsidized childcare and paid leave services, allowing more women to be employed for longer hours. An ideal solution for caregivers would combine these policies with those that encourage more flexible work schedules for all parents and men’s greater involvement in caregiving. For example, Norwegian and Swedish “daddy leaves” have “use or lose” clauses in which the family loses a portion of the paid leave if the father does not take it (Leira 1998). These “daddy leaves” are some of the few social policies in existence that actively encourage men’s caregiving in the home. These aforementioned policies are more representative of the “warm-modern” approach to caregiving (Hochschild 1995), in which women and men engage in personal caregiving, and also use institutional supports for caregiving. Certainly the English-speaking countries—typically stingy with state subsidized care services—could treat caregivers more fairly with these “warm-modern” approaches as well.

Yet, particularly in the English-speaking nations, the adoption of more “warm-modern” social policies may be difficult. For one, the political philosophy of liberalism, particularly popular in the U.S. and Canada, emphasizes market provision of income and social services and supports only very limited state provision of these resources. In these nations, it may be difficult to garner public support for “warm-modern” policies. Second, the “individual” or Parent/Worker welfare states are those in which left political parties have had the longest incumbency and strongest electoral support, and these parties typically support woman-friendly social policies such as subsidized child care (Korpi 2000). In addition, Swedish and Finnish women are among the most likely to hold

political office, particularly at the national level. Thus, left or social democratic political parties and governments with more female politicians should support “warm-modern” policies more than conservative political parties and male-dominated governments (Hernes 1987); countries that lack the influences of left parties and female politicians should have a harder time passing “warm-modern” social policies.

Of course, women differ substantially in their degree of support for social policies surrounding caregiving. But policies based on the “warm-modern” approach could bridge the divide between feminists who see employment as a necessary condition of women’s citizenship and those who see the valorization of caregiving as integral to a new conception of citizenship. Nations with more “warm-modern” social policies would allow all parents more flexibility in caring for their children when they are young, and would provide institutional supports (like subsidized child care) to facilitate parents’ labor force participation once their children are older. Thus, ideally, “warm-modern” social policies allow women to choose how they divide carework and paid work, encouraging a form of social citizenship that values both kinds of work.

Welfare states that encourage women’s caregiving—in their current form—often do not allow women’s economic independence from men; thus, the “male breadwinner” or Caregiving welfare states are currently inadequate in their provision of women’s social citizenship. With their generous welfare states that keep mothers’ poverty rates low, the Parent/Worker welfare states are more likely to promote women’s social citizenship; yet, in these welfare states, women’s employment is often necessary to ensure their low poverty rates. Thus, women in these welfare states could also benefit from more “warm-

modern” policies that promote and subsidize caregiving among fathers and mothers of young children.

In sum, the contribution of this research lies in its analysis of how different welfare states treat caregivers relative to other citizens. Further research should continue to focus on primary caregivers, paying closer attention to how their increased employment rates affect their economic and social well-being, and that of their families. As the above analyses focus on social transfers and tax credits, we need further research on how employment supports like subsidized child care and other policies that encourage either parental or institutional caregiving—or a combination of the two—affect caregivers and their families. While there are strong reasons to believe that “warm-modern” policies will be advantageous for caregivers and their families, we need future research to assess the extent to which these policies bolster caregivers’ attainment of social citizenship.

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TABLE 1: Mothers' and Single Mothers' Poverty Rates and Poverty Ratios

	Poverty Rates		Poverty Ratios^a			
	Mothers	Single Mothers	Moms/ Non-moms	Moms/ Men	SM/ N-SM ¹	SM/ SFNP ²
Australia 94	12.2	37.8	1.23	1.31	4.02	2.10
Canada 94	12.3	38.3	1.32	1.43	4.51	1.90
Finland 95	2.7	5.1	1.00	0.73	1.96	0.80
France 94	6.5	12.9	1.12	1.18	2.53	1.40
Germany 94	13.7	40.9	1.51	1.44	4.35	2.69
Holland 94	7.6	20.4	1.21	1.27	3.24	2.24
Sweden 92	1.8	4.4	0.72	0.49	2.32	1.05
U.K. 95	14.2	31.6	2.33	1.54	4.00	3.62
U.S. 94	18.2	45.4	1.69	1.70	4.20	2.18

^a Poverty ratios refer to the poverty rate of one group divided by the poverty rate of another group.

¹ Poverty rates of single mothers divided by the poverty rates of non-single mothers, or all other women.

² Poverty rates of single mothers divided by the poverty rates of single female non-parents.

Table 2: The Percent Reduction in Poverty Rates due to Each Country's Tax/Transfer System

	AS	CN	FI	FR	GE	NL	SW	UK	US
Mothers	43.3	38.5	79.2	69.2	28.6	53.4	89.8	49.3	13.3
Single Mothers	44.2	31.4	86.3	63.7	28.0	73.2	89.1	56.9	14.0
Female Non-mothers	47.1	41.1	79.4	77.1	47.7	68.3	84.8	60.6	16.3
Men	40.0	39.9	74.7	70.6	34.5	58.3	78.2	48.6	10.8
Single Female Non-mothers	32.1	28.6	74.3	63.6	36.4	70.4	85.7	65.3	6.3
Non single mothers	45.0	42.6	77.2	75.9	40.5	59.6	86.7	51.2	15.0

Table 3: Mother-Poverty Ratios ^a With Poverty Rates Based on Disposable (Post-tax/Post-transfer) Income and Pre-tax/Pre-transfer Income									
	AS	CN	FI	FR	GE	NL	SW	UK	US
Mothers/Non-moms									
Disposable (Post-tax/Post-transfer) income	1.23	1.32	1.00	1.12	1.51	1.21	0.72	2.33	1.69
Pre-tax/Pre-transfer income	1.15	1.27	.99	0.83	1.10	0.82	1.08	1.81	1.63
	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Mothers/Men									
Disposable (Post-tax/Post-transfer) income	1.31	1.43	0.73	1.18	1.44	1.27	0.49	1.54	1.70
Pre-tax/Pre-transfer income	1.39	1.40	0.89	1.13	1.32	1.13	1.04	1.56	1.75
	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	+	+

^aMother-poverty ratios consist of the ratios that result when dividing mothers' poverty rates by the poverty rates of two comparison groups: female non-mothers and men. They indicate the extent to which mothers' poverty rates are higher or lower than those of their comparison groups; for example, a ratio of 1.23 means that mothers' poverty rates are 23% higher than those of their comparison group.

Table 4: Single Mother-Poverty Ratios^a with Poverty Rates Based on Disposable (Post-tax/Post-transfer) Income and Pre-tax/Pre-transfer Income

	AS	CN	FI	FR	GE	NL	SW	UK	US
Single Mothers/ Other Women									
Disposable (Post-tax/ Post-transfer) income	4.02	4.51	1.96	2.53	4.35	3.24	2.32	4.00	4.20
Pre-tax/Pre-transfer income	3.96	3.77	3.26	1.67	3.59	4.88	2.83	4.53	4.16
	-	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	-
Single Mothers/ Single Female Non-moms									
Disposable (Post-tax/ Post-transfer) income	2.10	1.90	0.80	1.40	2.69	2.24	1.05	3.62	2.18
Pre-tax/Pre-transfer income	2.55	1.97	1.49	1.40	2.38	2.48	1.37	2.71	2.38
	+	+	+		-	+	+	-	+
Single Mothers/Men									
Disposable (Post-tax/ Post-transfer) income	4.07	4.45	1.38	2.35	4.31	3.40	1.19	3.44	4.24
Pre-tax/Pre-transfer income	4.37	3.90	2.55	1.90	3.92	5.28	2.38	4.10	4.40
	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	+
Single Mothers/ Married Mothers									
Disposable (Post-tax/ Post-transfer) income	4.25	4.97	2.22	2.93	4.17	3.24	4.00	3.19	4.20
Pre-tax/Pre-transfer income	4.40	4.10	4.13	2.13	4.09	7.53	3.54	4.34	4.26
	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	+

^aSingle mother-poverty ratios consist of the ratios that result when dividing single mothers' poverty rates by the poverty rates of four comparison groups: all other women, single female non-mothers, men, and married mothers. They indicate the extent to which single mothers' poverty rates are higher or lower than those of their comparison groups; for example, a ratio of 4.02 means that single mothers' poverty rates are 302% higher than those of their comparison group.

ENDNOTES

¹ While in recent decades men have increased their participation in caregiving, women remain the primary caregivers of children, even in nations where social policies encourage men's participation in caregiving (Cancian and Oliker 2000).

² Esping-Andersen (1990) outlines three types of welfare state regimes, based on their provision of social rights, their contribution to social stratification, and their nexus of state-market-family relations. In his scheme, the ideal welfare state is characterized by "de-commodification," under which the welfare state allows workers to enjoy a decent standard of living independent of labor force participation.

³ In his recent work, Esping-Andersen (1999) more fully integrates gender into his classification of welfare state regimes. He equates "defamilialization" with "policies that lessen individuals' reliance on the family; that maximize individuals' command of economic resources independently of familial or conjugal responsibilities" (45). He examines the existence of "defamilializing" policies across his different regime types with measures such as public spending on family services, the percentage of children under age 3 in daycare, and the average hours of women's unpaid work. Yet Esping-Andersen (1999) does not speak to the dimension of "defamilialization" that concerns

many feminists— the extent to which welfare states (or markets) allow women to form autonomous household without male partners.

⁴ “Male breadwinner” welfare states also emphasize joint taxation of spouses and employment policies that benefit men. In contrast, “individual” welfare states emphasize separate taxation and employment policies that benefit women and men.

⁵ Dutch benefits are often paid to the (typically male) head of household, and male breadwinners are privileged in tax, wage, and pension legislation. For example, in the early 1990s wives could not receive their own pension or unemployment insurance if their husband was currently working outside of the home. In contrast, Swedish women receive benefits as mothers and caregivers (regardless of marital status), individual benefits under social insurance, and supports for paid work such as state subsidized childcare and paid parental leave (Sainsbury 1994, 1996; Gustafsson 1995).

⁶ By “single” I am referring to never married, divorced, or widowed women. Some “single” women may have ex-husbands, male boyfriends or relatives that help them raise their children, so these women may not care for their children on their own. But given the low percentage of divorced women who receive alimony and child support payments in full, many single mothers are raising children largely with their own resources.

⁷ For in-depth discussions of social policies available to single mothers in these countries, see Christopher (forthcoming) or Gornick, Meyers, and Ross (1998).

⁸ A notable exception is Meyers, Gornick and Ross (forthcoming), who provide a

compelling analysis of how family policy packages—income transfers and employment support services—affect women’s and mothers’ economic outcomes. They examine differences in economic outcomes according to parental status, but they do not include single mothers in their analysis.

⁹ The LIS is a cross-national consortium of surveys from 25 industrialized countries, with comprehensive information on household income sources. All data sets include nationally representative samples of the population in each country. My sample includes: Australia (1994), Canada (1994), Finland (1995), France (1994), Germany (1994), the Netherlands (1994), Sweden (1995), UK (1995) and US (1994). In order to exclude most women and men who are students or retirees, my sample includes people age 25-60. Motherhood status applies to those who have children age 18 or under living in their household; if women have children above age 18 or who no longer live at home, these women are not considered “mothers” here. In the analyses below, “single” includes those who are unmarried, divorced, or widowed. Cohabiting couples are considered as “married,” as it seems likely that cohabiting couples share resources in ways similar to married couples.

¹⁰ Disposable income in the LIS includes all social transfers and near cash transfers (such as food stamps and cash-based housing allowances), net of income and payroll taxes. Disposable income does not include non-cash benefits like childcare, health care, and education. The benefit of using disposable income to measure poverty is that it reflects the spending money available to families, because it is after-tax income that includes

social transfers.

¹¹ I use a relative measure of poverty for two primary reasons. First, nations vary considerably in the social services (such as health care, child care and employment programs) they offer their citizens, and using an absolute measure of poverty would ignore these important cross-national differences. In contrast, a relative poverty measure compares citizens to others within his/her nation—who face the same set of social/economic services. Second, individuals are more likely to compare their economic situation to those within their own country rather than to some absolute, international standard.

¹² I use a common equivalence scale in cross-national research, in which family income is divided by the square root of household size. See Christopher et al. (forthcoming) for an in-depth discussion of equivalence scales.

¹³ I should clarify that these welfare states are more generous in the sense of bringing more mothers above the poverty line. This does not always mean that their tax and transfers systems give higher payments to mothers. This is because all of these measures are relative to the poverty line. The comparison groups (like men) may have higher incomes so are above the poverty line or very close to the poverty line with their pre-tax/pre-transfer income. Given this, men are more likely to be lifted above the poverty line with taxes and transfers because they typically start off closer to it.

¹⁴ Though this applies to a relatively small number of women, as the cutoff age for my sample is 60. Descriptive statistics show that few of these women receive social insurance (or pension) payments.