Rethinking the paradox: tradeoffs in work-family policy and patterns of gender inequality

Hadas Mandel[a]

[a] Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tel-Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Rethinking the paradox: tradeoffs in work-family policy and patterns of gender inequality

Hadas Mandel*

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tel-Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel

On the basis of aggregated data from the most recent ISSP surveys and data from secondary sources, this paper analyzes a wide range of country-level indicators that reflect different dimensions of gender inequality and pertain to the economic position of women in different class situations. The findings reveal that indicators of gender inequality pertaining to women in different class positions are oppositely related to the scope and levels of family policy. Specifically, countries characterized by generous family policies tend to address gender equality among disadvantaged groups, while exhibiting an unequal pattern of gender inequality on indicators related to advantaged groups. By contrast, countries characterized by ungenerous family policies tend to advance equality on parameters related to advantaged groups but perform very poorly on parameters of gender inequality pertaining to disadvantaged groups.

Keywords: welfare-states; gender; family-policy; class

Basándose en datos agregativos de encuestas ISSP más recientes y datos provenientes de fuentes secundarias, este artículo analiza una amplia gama de indicadores – a nivel de países- que reflejan diferentes dimensiones de la desigualdad de género relativos a la posición económica de mujeres de diferentes clases sociales. Los resultados revelan que los indicadores de desigualdad de género pertenecientes a mujeres de diferentes clases sociales están inversamente relacionados con el tipo de políticas familiares existentes en los países analizados. Específicamente, países que se caracterizan por tener políticas familiares 'generosas' tienden a favorecer la igualdad de género entre los grupos de nivel socio-económico bajo, pero al mismo tiempo favorecen la desigualdad de género entre los grupos de nivel socio-económico alto. Por el contrario, países que se caracterizan por políticas familiares 'no generosas' tienden a favorecer la igualdad de género entre grupos de nivel socio-económico alto y a favorecer la desigualdad de género entre grupos de nivel socio-económico bajo.

Palabras claves: estado del bienestar; genero; politicas familiares; clase social

Introduction

Although most comparative studies of welfare states and gender inequality highlight the favorable effects of work-family policies on women, a growing number of studies provide evidence of perverse effects of such policies on gender equality (Albrecht, Edin, Sundstrom, & Vroman, 1999; Estevez-Abe, 2005, 2006; Hansen, 1995, 1997; Ruhm, 1998; Wright, Baxter, & Birkelund, 1995). In my own previous studies,

*Email: hadasm@post.tau.ac.il

especially those coauthored with Moshe Semyonov, we have shown the unanticipated and negative consequences of work-family policies for the occupational attainments of women (Mandel & Semyonov, 2006) and, consequently, for gender wage gaps (Mandel & Semyonov, 2005). Based on these findings, we concluded that state interventions that reconcile paid with unpaid work, which are considered 'mother-friendly,' have paradoxically negative consequences for the labor market attainments of working women.

In this paper, my aim is to locate the findings of our studies within a wider context – not to challenge the findings themselves, but to question the conclusions that stem from them. My arguments, and the empirical evidence that supports them, are twofold. First, I argue that the impact of work-family policies is conditioned by class. The negative implications of family policies for women's labor market attainments, which were found in previous studies, are, in fact, a consequence of their impact on highly skilled and highly educated women. Among lower-skilled women these effects are not only diminished but also reversed. Second, I argue that when the focus is shifted from a single aspect of gender inequality and multiple aspects are analyzed simultaneously, the implications of work-family policies for gender inequality no longer appear paradoxical, for it becomes possible to see the inherent tradeoffs between the different aspects.

Based on aggregated data from the most recent International Social Survey Programme (hereafter ISSP) and updated data from secondary sources, I have gathered a wide range of country-level indicators, encompassing most aspects of women's economic activities that have been investigated in comparative research. In order to cover a broad spectrum, I chose indicators that reflect distinct dimensions of gender inequality. I then divided these indicators into two groups: one relevant to advantaged women and the other to disadvantaged. Each of these groups was subjected to a factor analysis and the resultant factor scores were plotted against a factor score for welfare state policies.

The findings reveal two distinct factors of gender inequality that indicate important tradeoffs. These two factors are oppositely related to the scope and generosity of family policies. However, when class differences between women are taken into account a more complex picture emerges. Specifically, countries that rank higher on the family policy factor, such as the four Scandinavian countries, exhibit the greatest gender inequality in indicators that pertain to advantaged groups but are the most egalitarian in outcomes related to less advantaged groups. The four liberal countries, in contrast, reveal an opposite pattern. The other countries, all conservative, are situated in the middle of these two analytical axes.

Background: welfare state policies and gender inequality

The extensive literature on welfare states and family policy points to profound differences among countries or welfare regimes, which explain a variety of gendered outcomes. Countries differ in both the typical modes of state intervention (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1999; Korpi, 2000; Misra, Budig, & Moller, 2007) and the quality and generosity of benefits (Gornick, Meyers, & Ross, 1997, 1998; Kamerman, 2001; Mandel & Semyonov, 2005, 2006).

Highlighting the qualitative differences between welfare regimes, Esping-Andersen (1990) and Korpi (2000) characterize social-democratic countries as

dual-earner welfare regimes that promote gender equality through universal benefits to working mothers and through social services and public employment. The more 'familistic' conservative countries as well as 'market-oriented' liberal countries have weakly developed family policies, typical of welfare state models that rely more heavily on family or private market solutions, respectively, to supply care services. These different patterns of state intervention have a major impact on women's economic activity and, consequently, on their economic dependency and poverty rates. Women's levels of labor force participation tend to be higher in social-democratic countries, where public employment is dominant and childcare facilities are publicly funded. By contrast, with their reliance on families as the major caregivers, the conservative welfare regimes have the lowest levels of female labor force participation (Daly, 2000; Esping-Andersen, 1999; Korpi, 2000). The high levels of women's and mothers' labor force participation in the social-democratic regimes are the main reason for their lower levels of poverty and economic dependency than in the other regimes (Bianchi, Casper, & Peltola, 1999; Hobson, 1990; Misra et al., 2007).

Due to the effectiveness of the social-democratic regime in raising women's employment levels and lowering their economic dependency, it has been viewed as the most gender-egalitarian and its 'earner-career strategy' (Misra et al., 2007) has been labeled the most 'women-friendly'. However, although the dual-earner strategy does attempt to break down gendered norms of care and employment (Fraser, 1994), feminist scholars have challenged its alleged egalitarianism by pointing to inegalitarian features of gender stratification in the Scandinavian labor markets. They claim that the massive entry of women into the labor market in social-democratic countries has not altered the traditional division of labor between men and women, as women are disproportionately channeled to public service and care roles while men obtain the more desirable jobs (Hansen, 1995, 1997; Hernes, 1987; O'Connor, 1996). In the same spirit, Iversen comments that 'women in countries with large service-oriented welfare states become "ghettoized" into the public sector instead of competing equally with men for the best private sector jobs' (2005, p. 27).

Empirical evidence for the conclusions reached by feminist criticism has been provided by studies that focus on women's labor market attainments rather than on their levels of participation. Wright et al. (1995) found that the gender gap in workplace authority is much greater in the 'mother-friendly' labor markets of Sweden and Norway than in the market-oriented welfare states of the United States, Canada, the UK, and Australia. Similarly, Estevez-Abe (2005, 2006) found that weakly developed welfare states tend to be less gender-segregated, both horizontally and vertically, and explains this by their weaker employment protection. She claims that strong employment protection characterizes economies with internal labor markets, which systematically disadvantage women due to their more frequently interrupted careers. Family-friendly policies make matters even worse, because in this context policies that shield mothers from work obligations further erode their attractiveness as employees (Estevez-Abe, 2005, 2006).

Maintaining this line of argument in my previous works with Moshe Semyonov (Mandel & Semyonov, 2005, 2006), we argued that family-friendly policies limit women's occupational attainments by inhibiting their access to powerful and desirable positions. We claimed that the very policies that support mothers by insulating them from labor market exigencies – for example, by providing them with

attractive working conditions in the public sector or by enabling them to exit employment for substantial amounts of time – also make them less motivated or less attractive to private employers, and thus less likely to obtain prestigious and lucrative positions. This claim is reinforced by other studies that point to the negative consequences of long absenteeism from work, particularly the harmful effect of long maternity leaves on women's earnings attainments (Albrecht et al., 1999; Ruhm, 1998). The general argument, then, is that state interventions that are considered 'mother-friendly' eventually have paradoxically negative consequences for the labor market attainments of working women.

The argument

The argument developed above is based on solid empirical evidence, but its validity rests on only certain aspects of gender inequality, namely, the occupational and earnings attainments of women. However, from a more holistic perspective, the separation of women's labor market attainments from their labor market activity would appear to be artificial, since different indicators of gender in/equality across countries can create non-random tradeoffs between them (Mandel, 2009). For example, high participation rates of mothers of young children, or of unskilled women, contribute to the formation of a less selective female work force, which may lower the proportional representation of women in high status occupations. If this is the case, any policy that supports female participation rates would be expected to negatively affect women's relative occupational attainments in a cross-country comparison analysis. Moreover, policies that reconcile paid with unpaid work (e.g., long parental leaves, reduced working hours for mothers, and job protection during the leaves) may contribute to increasing the economic autonomy of mothers, but at the same time could harm women's occupational mobility by increasing statistical discrimination against women.

In addition, the many gender-related outcomes that have been found to be affected by welfare state policies are clearly not relevant to all women. For example, poverty rates among mothers and women's representation in managerial positions are both gendered outcomes that have been found to be oppositely affected by work-family policies, but are obviously not relevant to the same groups of women. Furthermore, the effect of work-family policies on gendered outcomes that are relevant to all working women (e.g., earnings attainments) may work in opposite directions for women in different class positions (Mandel, forthcoming). For example, whereas highly skilled women (the potential candidates for elite positions), may suffer from stronger statistical discrimination as a result of welfare state protection, lower-skilled women may benefit from these protections (such as long maternity leaves) since they preserve their attachment to work. Thus, the effect of welfare states' policies on gender inequality not only depends on the specific dimension of gender inequality being examined, but may also vary by class divisions.

In light of that, in the empirical analysis that follows I shift the focus to the relationship between several aspects of gender inequality, and distinguish between indicators of gender inequality according to the group of women they pertain to. I will show that countries largely differ in their patterns of gender inequality, and that

these patterns are closely related to women's socioeconomic positions as well as to the scope and generosity of family policies.

Data and variables

To reflect the overall protection that the welfare state provides to women in general and to working mothers in particular, I have gathered updated indicators of state interventions that affect both women's well-being and their economic attainments. To capture a wide range of interventions, I have chosen indicators that represent the scope of family policies (such as maternity/parental leave policies and daycare facilities), as well as indicators that represent the level of public expenditure on families (tax reliefs, cash transfer, and public services). In addition, I have also included indicators of public sector and service sector employment as proxies for the volume of public services and the relative magnitude of the welfare state as an employer. For the sake of simplicity, I refer to all of the above as indicators of family policy. All indicators were gathered from updated secondary sources (mostly from Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] publications). Appendix 1 specifies their definitions and the specific data source of each indicator.

Most indicators of gender inequality are created by an aggregation of individual level variables from the ISSP data archive to the country level. For most countries I used the latest survey from *Leisure Time and Sports*, 2007. Data for Canada, Spain, and Italy, which are not available in the 2007 survey, were taken from the most recent available survey.[1] Since the ISSP data are standardized across countries, I was able to identify occupational groups (managerial, professional, and supervisory) and to compute comparative measures for gender inequality in access to attractive positions. However, because the ISSP wage data are not comparable across countries (continuous in some countries, categorical in others), I was able to compute only raw measures of women's representation in low- or high-wage quintiles/tertiles, but not to measure the gender wage gaps. In order to cover a broad spectrum of gender inequality manifestations, I also collected additional indicators from secondary sources. The specific description of each indicator and its data source is specified in Appendix 1.

Based on my theoretical stance, gender inequality indicators reflect distinct aspects of gender inequality and relate to different groups of women. Since each measure suffers from a different bias and emphasizes different nuances, I deliberately used several indicators for similar dimensions. For example, labor market participation is measured not only by the ratio of women to men but also by the participation rates of mothers and single mothers. Labor market attainments are measured by women's representation in several distinctive positions. Because my analysis is at the country rather than the individual level, I have grouped measures according to their substantive meaning. For advantaged women, I used seven indicators that measure their representation in powerful and rewarded positions in the economic as well as the political arenas. Indicators pertaining to less advantaged women refer to their economic position relative to men and their representation in undesirable occupations. In addition, there are three measures that concern the situation of single mothers, the most vulnerable group among women.

Lastly, since not all of the countries have information on all the variables, in order to capture the maximal number of countries each analysis incorporates only the

countries with valid data for the variables included in the analysis. Therefore, Canada and Italy do not appear in all the analyses.

Method

To empirically test the similarities and differences among countries based on their institutional contexts as well as their gendered outcomes, I use exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The EFA (hereafter factor analysis) is a statistical technique that can be used to analyze the interrelationships among a large number of variables and to explain them in terms of their common underlying dimensions. These dimensions, termed factors, are continuous latent variables, configured by condensing the information contained in the original variables on the basis of their correlations, with a minimum loss of information (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1992). I use factor analysis to create a measured variable of family policy based on the relations between the different indicators of family policies (the specific indicators and their loading on the factors are detailed below). Similarly, I analyze the interrelations among different gendered patterns of economic inequality (again, detailed below) to create factors of gender in/equalities. I then test the relationships between them to see how different policy packages coexist with different gender inequality configurations. Finally, I test the relationships between policies and the various indicators of gender inequality; each indicator is categorized according to the class of women to which it is most relevant.

Findings

Cross-country similarities and differences in family policies

The first two columns of Table 1 display the factor loading of seven policy indicators. These indicators resolved into two components, which together explain almost three-quarters of the total variance. The first factor, which explains most of the variance, loads very highly and positively on most indicators except for two: expenditure on

Table 1.   Factor analysis of family policy indicators.

Indicator	First analysis		Second analysis
	Factor 1.1	Factor 2.1	Factor 1.2
Service sector employment	0.934	−0.085	0.875
Public spending on family benefits in public services	0.888	−0.158	0.843
Public sector employment	0.876	−0.652	0.939
Length of paid maternity/parental leave	0.799	−0.724	0.884
Childcare facilities for children under 3	0.662	−0.328	0.674
Public spending on family benefits in cash transfers	0.220	−0.395	0.300
Public spending on family benefits in tax measures	−0.114	0.955	
Variance explained (%)	54.4	18.7	61.4
Correlation matrix			
Factor 1.1	–	−0.302	0.979**
Factor 2.1	–	–	−0.489*

Rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.
**$p < 0.01$, *$p = 0.05$, one-tailed.

tax benefits and expenditure on cash transfers. Public spending on tax benefits is the only indicator that appears to be negatively related to this factor. This indicator, in contrast, is the dominant indicator in the second factor, and the only one that is positively related to it. All other indicators are negatively related to the second factor, in particular the length of maternity/parental leave and public sector employment.

A glance at the raw data reveals that public spending on family benefits in tax measures, the dominant indicator in the second factor, unites the UK and United States with France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. While in most countries tax benefits for families are either absent or very limited, in all six countries they are comparatively high (although even in the country with the highest value, Germany, these benefits do not exceed 1% of the gross domestic product [GDP]).

When this indicator is eliminated from the analysis, the other six indicators reduce to only one factor, which explains 61% of the total variance. The factor loadings, presented in the third column of Table 1, are very high except for the sole indicator of public spending on family benefits. The distribution of countries according to their scores on this factor, shown in Figure 1, reveals a familiar picture: all four Scandinavian countries followed by Belgium and France are in the top of the distribution scoring high on most measures. Italy, Spain, Austria, and the United States score low on most indicators and are, therefore, located at the bottom of the distribution. All other countries are in the middle. This factor is almost perfectly correlated with the first factor of the first analysis and will be used as a measure of family policy in the following analyses.

Patterns of gender inequality and family policies

As noted in the theoretical section, differences in family policies among countries or welfare regimes explain a variety of gendered outcomes – first and foremost, the labor market participation of women, but also their performance within the labor
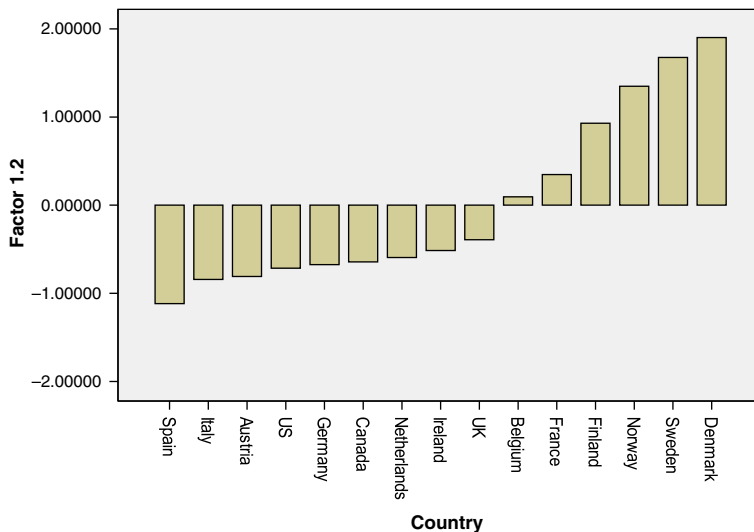

Figure 1. The distribution of countries on the family policy factor.

market. Consequently, my first analysis is based on common indicators of labor market participation and attainment. Because every indicator has different nuances, I use three indicators for each dimension. The indicators for participation include the ratio of women to men, the participation rate of mothers, and the participation rate of single mothers. Labor market attainments were measured by the percentage of women in managerial and high-wage occupations in addition to their percentage in supervisory positions.

Table 2 displays the results of a factor analysis of the six indicators. Two significant factors representing two different in/equality patterns emerge from the analysis. The first factor loads strongly and positively on all indicators of female participation rates, but negatively on indicators that measure occupational attainments. All four Scandinavian countries have the highest scores on this factor, while Ireland has the lowest score. The second factor, in a sense the mirror image of the first, singles out gender equality in access to managerial and highly rewarded jobs along with relatively lower levels of participation. The United States and Ireland, with impressively high levels of female representation in top positions, stand at the top of this scale.

My theoretical claim suggests that the two labor market profiles, which are captured by the two factors, will be closely related to the scope and character of family policies. In line with this expectation, the first pattern of gender in/equality is strongly and positively related ($r = 0.821$) to factor 1.2, the family policy dimension. This strong correlation suggests that countries with generous family policies tend to advance a clear tradeoff between female participation rates and labor market attainments. The second factor is negatively, although not as strongly, correlated with the family policy factor ($r = -0.356$). That is, countries with less advanced family policies tend to advance women's occupational attainments, rather than their participation per se.

The two factors revealed here, and their opposite correlation with family policies, support the notion that patterns of gender inequality are distinctively different rather than more or less unequal, and that their connection to family policy is better understood in terms of tradeoffs. Moreover, the indicators of gender inequality included in the analysis do not pertain equally to women in different socioeconomic situations. Although the labor force participation of women is a key indicator of the ability of women as a whole to gain economic independence, the indicators of occupational attainments (access to managerial and highly rewarded occupations)

Table 2. Factor analysis of gender in/equality indicators.

Indicator	Factor 1.3	Factor 2.3
Employment rate among mothers	0.947	–0.296
Labor force participation (ratio of women/men)	0.846	–0.296
Employment rate among single mothers	0.781	–0.314
Women's representation in managerial occupations	–0.278	0.867
Percentage of women in the top wage quintile	–0.314	0.867
Women's representation in supervisory positions	–0.459	0.595
Variance explained (%)	49.1	20.0
Correlations with the family policy factor (1.2)	0.821**	–0.356

Rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.
**$p < 0.01$.

are more relevant to women with high levels of human capital. The argument I advance in this paper is that the tradeoffs between participation and occupational attainment not only correspond to different welfare state strategies, but also benefit distinct groups of women differently. Since family policy is closely related to the two configurations of in/equality, the costs and benefits of family policy packages cannot be detached from women's class positions.

Division by class

To provide empirical support for the argument that welfare state strategies are not equally beneficial to advantaged and disadvantaged women, in the following analysis I divide the indicators of gender inequality into two major groups – manifestations of gender inequality that are more relevant to disadvantaged women and those that are more relevant to advantaged women. The first stage, again, is to identify latent factors according to the interrelationships among the indicators. Then I test the relations between these factors and the family policy factor.

For advantaged women, I have used seven indicators that capture their representation in powerful and rewarded positions. These are: the ratio of women to men in ministerial positions, the parliament, managerial occupations, supervisory positions, and professional occupations, in addition to female representation in the top wage tertile and quintile. Eight indicators are used for the less advantaged women: gender wage gaps among the lower educated and lower earners, female representation in the bottom wage tertile and quintile, the ratio of women to men in unskilled occupations, employment rates of single mothers, poverty rates of single parents, and poverty rates of non-working single parents.[2]

Table 3 displays the results of the two analyses. The left panel displays the first factor (out of two) generated by the interrelationships among indicators that relate to advantaged groups. This factor, which explains 44.5% of the total variance, reveals a negative association between gender inequality in the political and economic arenas.[3] The factor loads very strongly and negatively on the ratio of women to men in ministerial and parliamentary positions, public roles that advance affirmative action by allocating quotas. By contrast, all other measures of occupational attainment – women's representation in managerial, lucrative, and supervisory positions – are positively loaded on this factor. While market mechanisms are responsible for women's representation in managerial positions, political and cultural factors play a dominant role in determining women's representation in the parliament (Kenworthy & Malami, 1999). In Scandinavian countries, which have the highest representation of women in parliament (together with Spain and the Netherlands), the exceptional high representation is heavily determined by a quota system. Although sex quotas are implemented in all EU countries, in Scandinavian countries the system of party quotas is especially effective because the issue of gender equality is significant and has been on the political agenda of most governments since 1970 (Raaum, 2005). Summing up the left panel of Table 3, this factor reveals a clear pattern of gender equality in obtaining non-governmental, high-status occupational positions, which means that in a country that scores highly on this factor, advantaged women attain better occupational positions out of the political arena.

The right panel of Table 3 presents the first factor (out of three) extracted from the analysis of indictors pertaining to less advantaged women. This factor explains 47.7%

Table 3. Factor analysis of gender in/equality indicators by class.

Indicator	Advantaged women Factor 1.4	Indicator	Disadvantaged women Factor 1.5
Women's representation in ministerial positions	–0.897	Poverty rate among single parents	–0.959
Women's representation in parliament	–0.818	Poverty rate among non-working single parents	–0.930
Women's representation in supervisory positions	0.620	Gender wage gaps among low earners	–0.785
Women's representation in managerial occupations	0.607	Gender wage gaps among low educated workers	–0.764
Women's representation in professional occupations	0.451	Employment rate among single mothers	0.461
Percentage of women in the top wage quintile	0.459	Percentage of women in the bottom wage quintile	–0.193
Percentage of women in the top wage tertile	0.293	Percentage of women in the bottom wage tertile	–0.154
		Women's representation in manual occupations	–0.069
Variance explained (%)	44.5		47.7
Correlations with the family policy factor (1.2)	–0.601*		0.923**
Correlations with factor 1.4	–		–0.562*

Rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.
**$p < 0.01$, *$p = <0.05$.

of the total variance, and loads highly and *negatively* on most indicators of gender *inequality*: gender wage gaps among low-educated and low-waged workers, and poverty rates among single parents (both workers and non-workers). The sole indicator for gender *equality* – economic activity among single mothers – is positively loaded on the factor. Although indicators of female representation in unskilled and low-waged occupations are not strongly related to this factor, the interrelation of most of the indicators clearly indicates that it is negatively related to measures of gender inequality; that is, the higher the factor's score, the more gender equality is indicated.

The two factors, then, exhibit a pattern of gender *equality* with the rise of the factor's score, but for indicators that relate to different groups: the first (1.4) to the advantaged, the second (1.5) to the disadvantaged. The argument developed in this paper leads to the expectation that the two patterns will be oppositely related to the family policy factor. This expectation is supported by the significant and opposite correlations of the two factors with the family policy factor and is illustrated in Figures 2a and 2b, which plot each of the two factors with the family policy factor.

Figure 2a displays a negative and significant correlation (– 0.601), which indicates that countries that rank high on the family policy factor exhibit a less egalitarian pattern in indicators that pertain to advantaged groups. In other words, in these countries the access of skilled women to attractive non-governmental positions is more restricted. By contrast, countries with more egalitarian access to managerial and

(a)

(b)

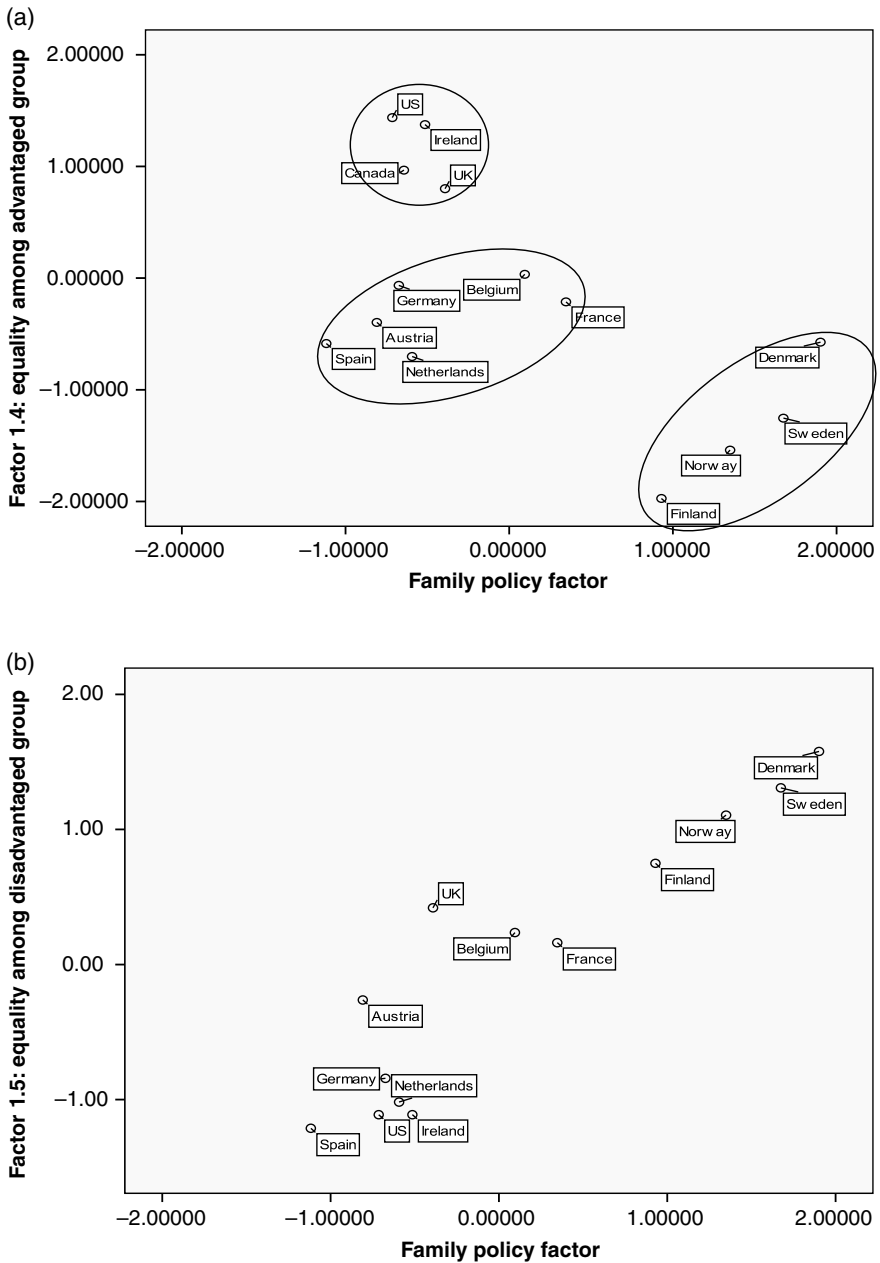Figure 2. (a) Gender inequality pattern by family policy factor, advantaged; (b) Gender inequality pattern by family policy factor, disadvantaged.

highly rewarded positions tend to score lower on the family policy factor. Beyond the linear correlation, all the countries fall perfectly into the three familiar welfare regimes: the four Scandinavian countries rank at the bottom of the equality factor and at the top

of the family policy factor; all four liberal countries are situated opposite on the two axes; and the other six countries, all conservative, are in the middle of the axes.

While the four Scandinavian countries exhibit the least egalitarian pattern with regard to the factor concerning advantaged groups, they demonstrate the most egalitarian pattern in regard to patterns pertaining to less advantaged groups. Figure 2b illustrates the very strong correlation (0.923) between the two. The Scandinavian countries, which have the most gender-egalitarian pattern (i.e., negative loading on indicators of inequality) and generous family policies, rank highest on both factors. Spain, the United States, and Ireland, with opposite characteristics, rank at the bottom on both.

The opposite location of countries in the two figures illustrates that their expressions of gender inequality are class-dependent. Moreover, their opposite relations to the family policy factor imply that the two expressions of inequality are in tension with one another, as is indeed shown by the negative and significant correlations between the two factors themselves (-0.562).

Conclusions

In this paper, I have shown that multiple indicators of gender in/equality converge in a meaningful way to create distinct patterns of gender inequality whose implications for women differ according to class. By applying factor analysis to a large number of gender in/equality indicators, I highlighted the tradeoffs between them and tested their relations to family policy indicators. Three important messages emerge from the analysis. First, when different aspects of gender in/equality are simultaneously analyzed, two distinctive in/equality patterns emerge, each of which advances a different tradeoff between women's economic activity and their occupational attainments. Second, the two patterns of gender inequality pertain to the economic position of women of different classes. And third, the different patterns of gender inequality are oppositely related to the scope and levels of family policy.

The tradeoff between participation and occupational attainments is not unrecognized in the extensive literature on family policies and gender inequality. A large number of studies have shown that supportive family policies, often termed reconciliation policies, indeed reconcile the tension between paid and unpaid work and increase women's labor market activity. At the same time, more recent studies have highlighted the perverse effect of family policies on women's labor market attainments. So while the effect of family policy on each dimension of gender inequality has been addressed, most studies have concentrated on the individual dimension and have, therefore, concluded that some contexts are more egalitarian than others, depending on the dimension studied. By highlighting the tradeoffs between the different aspects of gender inequality, the present paper emphasizes the relations between them and addresses their connection to family policy packages.

The second aim of the paper, namely, to devote attention to class divisions among women, is not common in this field of study (for exceptions see: Mandel & Shalev, 2009; O'Connor, Orloff, & Shaver, 1999; Shalev, 2008). Comparative studies on welfare states and gender primarily highlight the universal tension between work and family; that is, the elements that unite, rather than divide, women. The findings of this study clearly indicate the importance of class sensitivity. When indicators are divided into two major groups – dimensions of gender inequality that are more

relevant to disadvantaged women and those that are more relevant to advantaged women – it becomes evident that their cross-country distributions are not only in tension with one another but are also oppositely related to family policy packages. Countries characterized by generous family policies, such as the Scandinavian countries, address gender equality among disadvantaged groups but demonstrate an unequal pattern of gender inequality on indicators related to advantaged groups. By contrast, countries that tend to advance equality on parameters related to advantaged groups (the United States and Ireland in particular) perform very poorly on parameters of gender inequality that pertain to disadvantaged groups.

The mechanisms underlying these tradeoffs, as mentioned in previous studies, relate to the intended and unintended consequences of family policies. In a nutshell, as seen in Table 1, the family policy factor loads very highly on public employment, public services, length of maternity leave, and childcare provision. While all of the above are expected, and indeed found, to support women's and mothers' paid employment, long maternity leaves and public employment were found to limit the occupational and earnings attainments of women, particularly of advantaged women. The lower earnings ceiling in the public sector prevents highly skilled women from attaining wages that are equal to comparable senior positions in the private sector (e.g., Gornick & Jacobs, 1998; Hansen, 1997). Employment protections that allow long absenteeism from paid employment (such as long maternity leaves) increase employers' motivation to practice statistical discrimination against women in recruitment to attractive jobs (Albrecht et al., 1999; Hansen, 1997; Mandel & Semyonov, 2006; Ruhm, 1998). These market-based mechanisms are entirely different from those that operate in the political arena, which explains the impressive representation of women in the parliaments of developed welfare states, a result of the effective quota system in the Scandinavian countries (Raaum, 2005).

On the other hand, because reconciliation policies and the convenient working conditions in the public sector particularly affect participation among disadvantaged women, they contribute to increasing their economic dependency and reducing poverty rates. But in doing so, they also contribute to lowering the selectivity of the female work force, which results, again, in lower aggregate economic achievements of women in well-developed welfare states. Thus, the two opposite reflections of inequality – high participation rates and low occupational and earnings attainments – are opposite implications of the same policies. The same is true for the implications of these factors for the economic situation of advantaged and disadvantaged women.

In Mandel (2009), I argued that the tradeoffs between the different dimensions of gender inequality are not randomly generated, but are in fact the products of the dominant gender role ideology as well as of welfare state interventions. In this study, I was able not only to give it empirical support with updated data, but also to reveal the costs and benefits of family policies to different groups of women. The variations among countries in the family policy factor are closely aligned with the nature of welfare state regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Within the social democratic regime, in which women's employment is ideologically and politically encouraged, limiting the occupational and economic attainments of advantaged women may seem a fair price to pay for advancing equality on a universal basis. Much less legitimacy is given to this price within the meritocratic system of the liberal regime.[4] Thus, Figures 2a and 2b that correlate the location of countries on the family policy factor with gender inequality outcomes of advantaged and disadvantaged women, actually show

the expected. They show that gender in/equality patterns have close affinity to welfare state interventions and even intentions. This line of thinking leads us to reconsider the 'welfare state paradox,' since the paradoxical effect of the welfare state on gender inequality is revealed when a distinct dimension of inequality is highlighted or when class is disregarded. However, when several indicators are analyzed together, or when the indicators are differentiated according to the group they benefit, the relationships between state interventions and gendered outcomes are in fact in line with the intentions of the respective state ideology.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. For Canada and Spain – *Role of Government,* 2006*;* for Italy – *Social Networks II*, 2001.
2. The final two indicators refer to single parents, rather than mothers. Nevertheless, most single parents are mothers, and the correlation between the two across countries is very high.
3. The strongest negative correlations are between women's representation in the parliament and women's representation in managerial and supervisory positions ($r = -0.60$ and $r = -0.53$, respectively).
4. For a more comprehensive discussion of the ideological and political sources of the different tradeoffs of gender inequality, see Mandel (2009).

Notes on contributor

Hadas Mandel is a Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel Aviv University. Her research focuses on cross-country variations in gender inequality and their relationship to class inequality and the role of the welfare state. Selected publications on the topic of family policy and gender inequality have appeared in the *American Journal of Sociology, American Sociological Review, Social Forces,* and *The British Journal of Sociology.* Her current research project deals with the role of gender in the determination of wage inequality between occupations from a longitudinal perspective.

References

Albrecht, J.W., Edin, P.A., Sundstrom, M., & Vroman, S.B. (1999). Career interruptions and subsequent earnings: A reexamination using Swedish data. *Journal of Human Resources*, *34*(2), 294–311.
Bianchi, S.M., Casper, L.M., & Peltola, P.K. (1999). A cross-national look at married women's earnings dependency. *Gender Issues*, *17*(3), 3–33.
Daly, M. (2000). A fine balance: Women's labor market participation in international comparison. In F.W. Scharpf & V.A. Schmidt (Eds.), *Welfare and work in the open economy* (pp. 467–510). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Esping-Andersen, G. (1999). *Social foundations of postindustrial economies*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
Estevez-Abe, M. (2005). Gender bias in skills and social policies: The varieties of capitalism perspective on sex segregation. *Social Politics*, *12*(2), 180–215.
Estevez-Abe, M. (2006). Gendering the varieties of capitalism – A study of occupational segregation by sex in advanced industrial societies. *World Politics*, *59*(1), 142–175.

Fraser, N. (1994). After the family wage-gender equity and the welfare-state. *Political Theory*, 22(4), 591–618.

Gornick, J.C., & Jacobs, J.A. (1998). Gender, the welfare state, and public employment: A comparative study of seven industrialized countries. *American Sociological Review*, 63(5), 688–710.

Gornick, J.C., Meyers, M.K., & Ross, K.E. (1997). Supporting the employment of mothers: Policy variation across fourteen welfare states. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 7(1), 45–70.

Gornick, J.C., Meyers, M.K., & Ross, K.E. (1998). Public policies and the employment of mothers: A cross-national study. *Social Science Quarterly*, 79(1), 35–54.

Hair, J.F., Anderson, R.E., Tatham, R.L., & Black, W.C. (1992). *Multivariate data analysis* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Macmillan.

Hansen, M.-N. (1995). Sex segregation in the Norwegian labor market. The impact of sector differences in the effect of family responsibilities on salary. *Tidsskrift for Samfunnsforskning*, 36(2), 147–177.

Hansen, M.-N. (1997). The Scandinavian welfare state model: The impact of the public sector on segregation and gender equality. *Work Employment and Society*, 11(1), 83–99.

Hernes, H.M. (1987). *Welfare state and woman power: Essays in state feminism*. Oslo: Norwegian University Press.

Hobson, B. (1990). No exit, no voice: Women's economic dependency and the welfare state. *Acta Sociologica*, 33(3), 235–250.

Iversen, T. (2005). *Capitalism, democracy, and welfare: The changing nature of production, elections, and social protection in modern capitalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kamerman, S.B. (2001). Early childhood education and care: International perspectives. Testimony prepared for the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pension. New York, NY: ICFP. Retrieved from http://www.childpolicyintl.org/ecectables/sbksenatetestimony.pdf

Kenworthy, L., & Malami, M. (1999). Gender inequality in political representation: A worldwide comparative analysis. *Social Forces*, 78(1), 235–268.

Korpi, W. (2000). Faces of inequality: Gender, class, and patterns of inequalities in different types of welfare states. *Social Politics*, 7(2), 127–191.

Mandel, H. (2009). Configurations of gender inequality: The consequences of ideology and public policy. *British Journal of Sociology*, 60(4), 693–719.

Mandel, H. (forthcoming). Winners and losers: The impact of welfare policies on gender inequality across classes. *European Sociological Review*. doi:10.1093/esr/jcq061

Mandel, H., & Semyonov, M. (2005). Family policies, wage structures, and gender gaps: Sources of earnings inequality in 20 countries. *American Sociological Review*, 70(6), 949–967.

Mandel, H., & Semyonov, M. (2006). A welfare state paradox: State interventions and women's employment opportunities in 22 countries. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(6), 1910–1949.

Mandel, H., & Shalev, M. (2009). Gender, class and varieties of capitalism. *Social Politics*, 16(2), 1–21.

Misra, J., Budig, M.J., & Moller, S. (2007). Reconciliation policies and the effects of motherhood on employment, earnings and poverty. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, 9(2), 135–155.

O'Connor, J.S. (1996). From women in the welfare state to gendering welfare state regimes. *Current Sociology*, 44(2), 1–124.

O'Connor, J.S., Orloff, A.S., & Shaver, S. (1999). *States, markets, families: Gender, liberalism, and social policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Raaum, N.C. (2005). Gender equality and political representation: A Nordic comparison. *West European Politics*, 28(4), 872–897.

Ruhm, C.J. (1998). The economic consequences of parental leave mandates: Lessons from Europe. *The Quarterly Journal of Labor Economics*, 113, 285–317.

Shalev, M. (2008). Class divisions among women. *Politics & Society*, 36(3), 421–444.

Wright, E.-O., Baxter, J., & Birkelund, G.-E. (1995). The gender gap in workplace authority: A cross-national study. *American Sociological Review*, 60(3), 407–435.

Appendix 1. Description and data sources of all indicators of family policy and gender inequality

#	Variable name	Description	Reference
Family policy indicators			
1.	Childcare facilities for children under-age three	Proportion of young children (0–3) using formal childcare arrangements. In Canada, the data covers ages 0–5; in the UK, 0–4	OECD Employment Outlook. June 2001. Table 4.7. ● Data includes both public and private provisions and covers four types of childcare arrangements: group care, residential care, child-minders, and paid care providers at home. Primary schools are not included
2.	Length of paid maternity leave (in weeks)	Length of paid maternity leave (in weeks) ● Data for most countries is from the Global Gender Gap Report ● Data for Australia, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, and the United States is taken from Kamerman, Sheila B. 2000	Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson, Saadia Zahidi. 2009. The Global Gender Gap Report. World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland Kamerman, Sheila B. 2000. "Parental Leave Policies: An Essential Ingredient in Early Childhood Education and Care Policies." Social Policy Report. Giving Child and Youth Development Knowledge Away. Volume XIV(2). Srcd.org
3.	Public sector employment	Employment in the limited public sector (= central or federal government + regional or state government + local government + municipalities) as a percentage of total employment	Measuring Public Employment in OECD countries: Sources, Methods and Results. OECD, 1997. Table II.4. PUMA estimates for public employment as a percentage of total employment, p. 11
4.	Service sector employment	Social services employment as percentage of total employment in 1998. Includes employment in the following sectors: government proper (civil or military), health services, education services, miscellaneous	OECD Employment Outlook. June 2000. Table 3.C.1. Evolution of the Share of Service Employment, p. 124

Appendix 1 (*Continued*)

#	Variable name	Description	Reference
5.	Public spending* on family benefits in tax measures	Public spending on family benefits in tax measures, as a percentage of GDP in 2005	OECD Family Database. OECD-Social Policy Division-Directorate of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs. PF1: Public spending on family benefits. www.oecd.org/els/ social/family/database
6.	Public spending* on family benefits in cash transfers	Public spending on family benefits in cash transfers, as a percentage of GDP in 2005	
7.	Public spending* on family benefits in public services	Public spending on family benefits in public services, as a percentage of GDP in 2005	

Gender inequality indicators

#	Variable name	Description	Reference
1.	Percentage of women in the bottom wage quintile	Among workers with positive earnings, aged 25–64	ISSP
2.	Percentage of women in the bottom wage tertile	Among workers with positive earnings, aged 25–64	ISSP
3.	Women's representation in unskilled occupations	Percentage of women/ percentage of men	ISSP
4.	Poverty rate among single parents	Poverty thresholds are set at 50% of the median income of the entire population	OECD Family Database. 2008. Chart CO8.3. Poverty rates by household type, mid-2000s
5.	Poverty rate among non-working single parents		
6.	Employment rate among single mothers		The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth and Family Policies at Columbia University. Table 1.21. http://www.childpolicyintl. org/
7.	Employment rate among mothers		
8	Gender wage gaps among low earners	Wage ratio by household wage quintile: lowest quintile	Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Database. http://www. lisproject.org (Gender Key Figures. Table 6). Annual Earnings: Female/ Male Earnings Ratios. Individuals with positive earnings last year aged 20–54
9.	Gender wage gaps among low educated workers	Wage gap according to low education level: ISCED levels 1 and 2 (from no education to lower secondary education and initial vocational education)	
10.	Labor force participation ratio	Labor force participation ratio: women/men	Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson, Saadia Zahidi. 2009. The Global Gender Gap Report. World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland
11.	Women's representation in the Parliament	Parliament members ratio: women/men	
12.	Women's representation in ministerial positions	Minister-level position ratio: women/men	

Appendix 1 (*Continued*)

#	Variable name	Description	Reference
13.	Women's representation in managerial occupations	Ratio of percentage of women/ percentage of men	ISSP
14.	Women's representation in supervisory positions		ISSP
15.	Women's representation in professional occupations		ISSP
16.	Percentage of women in top wage quintile	Among workers with positive earnings, aged 25–64	ISSP
17.	Percentage of women in the top wage tertile	Among workers with positive earnings, aged 25–64	ISSP

*Public support accounted here concerns only public support that is exclusively for families (e.g., child payments and allowances, parental leave benefits, and childcare support).