

Introduction

Until the mid-1970s conceptions and studies of the welfare state largely revolved around a generic notion with little emphasis on types of welfare state. However, within the span of a few years, three works (Titmuss 1974, Mishra 1977, Furniss and Tilton 1977) containing the first efforts at constructing typologies of welfare provision initiated a trend of underlining the importance of welfare state variations. Although exceptions exist, comparative studies of welfare states and social policies have scarcely touched upon the issue of the consequences of different welfare states and social policies for women. As in many areas of social inquiry, the gender dimension has been conspicuously missing in mainstream typologies of welfare states and comparative analyses. These studies tell us little about the impact of the welfare state on women and men or the differences in impact, and they have largely ignored the disparities in welfare provision between the sexes.

On the other hand, feminist scholarship adopting a critical perspective has dealt extensively with women and social policy and underscored gender inequalities in the public provision of welfare (e.g. Lewis 1983, Baldock and Cass 1983, Ungerson 1985, Nelson 1984, Glendinning and Millar 1987, 1992, Gordon 1990). However, these studies have been set in the specific context of one country and have inadvertently reinforced a generic view of both the state and the welfare state. This tendency was also strengthened by a major current in feminist theory which views the state as an epiphenomenon of patriarchy, thus ruling out both significant variations between specific states and the possibility of variations that might be beneficial to women. Furthermore, the specific contexts of these policy studies were overwhelmingly the – English speaking countries. The concentration on the experiences of these countries led to the assumption that they were representative, and feminists dealing with other countries often adopted these assumptions in their analyses.

Gradually, however, feminists began to consider the implications of different state formations for women and to draw on the experiences of a variety of countries (Sassoon 1987, Hernes 1987, Dominelli 1991, Langan

2 Gender, equality, and welfare states

and Ostner 1991, Lewis and Ostner 1991, 1995, Lewis 1992a, Sainsbury 1994. Cf. Randall 1982, Ruggie 1984). Similarly, comparativists have started to refer to the family, women, and gender (e.g. Esping-Andersen 1990, Schmidt 1993, Ginsburg 1992, Kolberg 1991). Despite these signs of convergence between mainstream research on welfare state variations and feminist analysis, there is a dearth of systematic comparisons to illuminate the possible implications of different welfare states for women. Thus an underlying theoretical aim of this study is, first, to confront these two bodies of literature in their analyses of the welfare state in an effort to reveal the shortcomings of each and, second, to combine their insights in order to transcend their limitations.

The main empirical concern of this book is to examine the impact of welfare states on women by focusing on variations. Put in the simplest of terms the question is: what differences do welfare state variations make for women? In exploring this question it is important to examine countries that represent a broad array of variations – and especially to move beyond comparisons of the English-speaking countries. Accordingly, the analysis here deals with the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden and the Netherlands whose welfare states, as we shall see, differ in significant ways.

It is important to include countries which have similarities as well as differences in order to identify the source of inequalities. The UK and the Scandinavian countries, for example, are often bracketed together because of their greater emphasis on universalism and social citizenship compared to the welfare states on the continent. Universalism and social citizenship are manifested in unified programs covering the entire population, with considerable funding through taxation. On the other hand, Mary Ruggie in her book *The State and Working Women* challenges the image of commonality between the British and Swedish welfare states with respect to how women fare. In her analysis, she focuses on state–society relationships as the crucial factor in determining positive outcomes for women. In addition to this difference and other possible variations between the two welfare states, however, it is necessary to unpack the notions of universalism and social citizenship and to compare what they mean in theory and practice in the two countries. This task is all the more necessary since these concepts are intimately associated with the post-World War II British welfare state, and our understanding of them is heavily influenced by British experience and welfare state thinking.

The selection of the Netherlands has been primarily predicated by the desire to include a welfare state of the continental variety. In addition, the “pillarization” of Dutch society – its organization into separate segments based on religious or political beliefs – although in the process of eroding, and the pivotal role of a Catholic party as consistently a party of govern-

ment, set the Netherlands apart from the other countries. At the same time it is also viewed as sharing features of the Scandinavian welfare states, especially in having an ambitious level of welfare provision, as evidenced in heavy social expenditure. In analyses using a variety of quantitative indicators, the Netherlands and Scandinavia generally rank among the top countries (Wilensky 1975, 1976, Castles 1978, Heidenheimer et al. 1983, 1990, Therborn 1989, Esping-Andersen 1990). Intuitively, one might think that large-scale public involvement in welfare provision would automatically benefit women more than minimal intercessions. Yet as this book unfolds, it will become clear that this is not necessarily the case.

On several counts, the United States deviates significantly from the other three countries. Major social policy programs, such as sickness benefits, national medical insurance covering the entire population, and family allowances are non-existent, and social spending lags behind that of many nations. Further contrasts include the stronger role of the market in social provision through private insurance and employer sponsored schemes, along with the diversity of programs and benefit levels produced by a federal system.

Before proceeding to outline the broad contours of this book, two additional comments are in order. First, the comparative thrust of the analysis here differs from the more conventional approach of country by country descriptions. Instead the focal point is welfare state variations, and the comparisons are organized around dimensions of variation. Second, in assessing cross-national policy variations and their effects, one common procedure has been the “profile” approach based on model or typical recipients (Bolderson 1988). This approach emphasizes the nature of legislative provisions and examines their effects for model or hypothetical recipients, such as the average single or married production worker (OECD 1984b, Palme 1990a, b, Wennemo 1994, Korpi and Palme, forthcoming) or family types (Hecllo and Cockburn 1974, Heidenheimer et al. 1975, Adams and Winston 1980, Kahn and Kamerman 1983, Bradshaw et al. 1993). Although useful in demonstrating the possible differing consequences of dissimilar policy constructions, this approach is marred in two ways. By utilizing model recipients with assumed characteristics rather than real beneficiaries, the approach produces an analysis of how social programs could or should operate but not necessarily how they actually function (see Shaver and Bradshaw 1993). An additional difficulty is that the hypothetical characteristics of the model beneficiaries may not be very representative of recipient populations, and in comparative research these characteristics can vary a great deal across countries and over time.¹ To avoid these difficulties, the analysis in this book as far as possible is based on real recipients and the actual distribution of benefits. It primarily employs data from official

4 Gender, equality, and welfare states

national statistics, special surveys both national and international, for example the Luxemburg Income Study, and international compilations of statistics from the OECD and the European Communities.

The structure of the book

The first chapter of this book provides the reader with an overview of the main features of social provision in the four countries. It maps out the major similarities and differences between the four welfare states and clarifies their distinctive aspects. The key dimensions of variation used to analyze the four countries are borrowed from the mainstream literature on types of welfare state and models of social policy. However, since most of this literature on welfare state variations has paid little attention to gender, chapter 1 offers few insights as to dissimilar outcomes for women and men or what sorts of variations are important for women.

Chapter 2 seeks to rectify this defect of mainstream analysis of welfare states. It begins by examining the contributions of feminist scholarship on the welfare state and suggests an alternative framework of analysis which is gender relevant. As in chapter 1 the emphasis is on dimensions of variations but in this instance they are gleaned from feminist literature. Drawing upon feminist criticisms of mainstream research, a number of dimensions of variations are identified. As a heuristic device, these dimensions are presented as contrasting ideal types: the male breadwinner and individual models of social policy. Rather than attempt to build the gender dimension into existing mainstream typologies, the strategy behind this framework has been to highlight gender separately. By isolating dimensions of variation related to gender it is possible to examine the interaction between these dimensions and the welfare state variations designated as important by mainstream analysis. The alternative strategy of merging feminist and mainstream perspectives into ideal types or policy regimes makes it more difficult to illuminate the effects of each perspective.

In the next three chapters the focus of analysis shifts to policy variations and their impact on women. An underlying theme tying the chapters together is women's bases of entitlement. An important element of this book's synthesis of mainstream and feminist analysis is to address a broader spectrum of principles of entitlement than either perspective has done, and to discuss the implications for women's and men's social rights. I argue that the bases of entitlement are decisive in determining whether welfare state policies reinforce women's dependency or enhance their autonomy. The criteria for evaluating women's social rights are whether they afford a socially acceptable standard of living independently of family relationships.

Chapter 3 centers on women's social rights as wives – or women's entitle-

ments via their husbands' rights. At issue in this chapter is the extent and manner in which the male breadwinner model has been reflected in the legislation of the four countries. In other words, to what degree has the breadwinner model been a welfare state variation? Chapter 4 concentrates on women's entitlements as mothers and caregivers – and the importance of the principle of care in eroding the principle of maintenance. It documents how benefits based on motherhood and the principle of care can alter the boundary between public and private responsibility setting in motion a new dynamic of interdependence between the private and public spheres. Chapter 5 looks at women's entitlements as workers. During the past three decades women have entered into the labor market in unprecedented numbers. To what extent has their labor market participation been translated into entitlements altering their social rights? In particular, have rights conferred by labor market status enhanced women's autonomy in family relationships?

The next two chapters summarize women's incorporation as beneficiaries of social policies and compare their entitlements to those of men. If the analysis were to focus on women, as in the previous three chapters, we could only comment on the differences between women in the various countries, but not necessarily on dissimilarities in gender inequalities across welfare states. For example, women may fare better in one welfare state than in another but men may also fare better in that particular welfare state so that extent of inequalities between the sexes is similar or even greater than in the other welfare state.

Chapters 6 and 7 examine welfare states as systems of stratification and redistribution. Our central concern is the degree of inequality between women and men in social provision and distributional outcomes. In investigating these issues, Chapter 6 analyzes women's and men's access to social benefits, their utilization rates, and the importance of the bases of entitlement in patterning gender stratification. Chapter 7 turns to gender differences in benefit levels and redistributive outcomes of welfare states. These two chapters also allow us to establish the degree of gender inequalities across the four countries.

The final chapters of the book focus on welfare state restructuring during recent decades, and I use the models of social policy presented earlier to plot change over time. Taking 1970 as a benchmark, chapter 8 discusses gender equality reforms and their effects in altering women's individual entitlements and gender differentiation in social rights. This chapter offers a cross-national balance sheet of the achievements and shortcomings of reforms in order to suggest what works and what doesn't and why. It also indicates the extent to which the individual model of social policy has replaced the breadwinner model in the four countries in the mid-1990s.

6 Gender, equality, and welfare states

Chapter 9 deals with welfare state retrenchment, comparing policy responses during the 1980s and 1990s. Sections of the analysis in the earlier chapters utilize data from around 1980 – a period which many observers regard as a turning point in welfare state development. Although cuts were introduced during the 1970s, social legislation for the decade as a whole extended entitlements and improved benefits in the four countries. By the early 1980s, however, many governments had called for a major overhaul of social provision in the belief that the welfare state was the problem – not the solution. Chapter 9 considers the nature of retrenchment, the extent of restructuring, and how these policy changes have affected women's and men's entitlements since 1980.

In summary, a theoretical aim, an empirical goal, and a normative purpose have guided the writing of this book. The theoretical aim is to add to our understanding of types of welfare states and to reconceptualize the dimensions of variation used to analyze welfare states by explicitly incorporating gender. This task consists of identifying gender relevant dimensions of variation and analyzing their interaction with welfare state variations designated as important by mainstream research. In effect, this project calls for a synthesis of the insights of feminist and mainstream thinking on welfare states. The empirical goal is to chart the major welfare state variations and to systematically compare policies and their impact on women and men. The prescriptive objective is to increase our knowledge of how policy mechanisms exclude and incorporate women so that constructive proposals can be made in order to secure greater equality between women and men. Central to this objective is a cross-national evaluation of proposed remedies *to shed light on which gender equality reforms work and which do not.*

Cambridge University Press
0521565790 - Gender, Equality, and Welfare States
Diane Sainsbury
Excerpt
[More information](#)

Part I

Dimensions of variation

1 Mainstream welfare state variations

During the past two decades mainstream scholarship on the welfare state has been characterized by a growing interest in comparing welfare states and social policies in an effort to distinguish between types of welfare state and to identify key dimensions of variation. This chapter addresses the issue of which dimensions of variation have been central to the comparative analysis of welfare states and social policy. Initially it looks at a number of important discussions on welfare state typologies and models of social policy in order to establish how dimensions of variation have been defined, and to flesh out the pros and cons of various approaches. My purpose is to construct a framework for comparison which is subsequently applied to the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Sweden. This comparison provides an initial understanding of the similarities, the range of differences, and the distinctive features of social provision in the four countries. It also sets in sharp relief the limitations of mainstream analysis of welfare state variations, which fails to shed much light on our major questions of investigation: what differences do welfare state variations make for women? And how similar or dissimilar is the impact of welfare state policies on women and men in the four countries?

Welfare state typologies and dimensions of variation

Four approaches have figured prominently in the mainstream discussion on types of welfare state and welfare state variations. The first examines specific countries with the purpose of describing their distinctive features (e.g. Furniss and Tilton 1977, Rainwater et al. 1986, Esping-Andersen and Korpi 1987, Davidson 1989). The second approach highlights major differences through the construction of analytical models based on two contrasting ideal types (Mishra 1977, 1984, Korpi 1980). The third approach utilizes two axes of variation in devising welfare state typologies (Jones 1985, Therborn and Roebroek 1986, Mishra 1990, Pierson 1991). The fourth approach relies on the clustering of attributes in determining welfare state variations (e.g. Kohl 1982) and more recently in distinguishing welfare

10 Dimensions of variation

state regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990, Castles and Mitchell 1990, 1992, 1993, Mitchell 1991, Siaroff 1994).

More specifically, the first approach starts with a particular country or set of countries and seeks to pinpoint the distinctive features of the welfare state/s in question. These distinctive features are then described as a particular type of welfare state, sometimes in general terms. Using this approach, Norman Furniss and Timothy Tilton, for example, outline three types: the positive state, the social security state, and the social welfare state. They construct these types by distinguishing between various forms of state intervention for different purposes. In particular, Furniss and Tilton emphasize the aims and goals of intervention, along with who benefits from a particular form of state intervention.

Several problematical aspects permeate the models, however. The first is that the dimensions of variation underlying the three types remain implicit. Nor is there any assurance that the defining properties of one particular type constitute a variable or dimension of variation pertaining to all types. Conversely, this approach's emphasis on the most salient distinctive features can easily obscure the fact that the same features exist in other welfare states but are less prominent. A final difficulty is the issue of broader applicability. As distinct from the ideal types of the second approach, which are essentially logico-analytical constructs, these models are basically inductive and extracted from the experiences of three specific countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, and Sweden respectively. How useful are they for understanding welfare states in other advanced industrial countries, say, the Netherlands, France, Italy, or Germany? Can the key features of the Dutch welfare state be analyzed with the aid of these models or must a fourth model be devised?

Basic to the second approach of model building is the use of polar ideal types. The distinction between residual and institutional welfare provision has been especially important in the construction of contrasting ideal types, although other distinctions have also been utilized (e.g. Mishra 1984). The residual type assumes that the family and market are the "natural" channels of welfare, and that only when these are malfunctioning should people rely on public welfare structures; and this reliance should be temporary and for emergencies only. By contrast, in the institutional type public welfare structures are an integral part of society, providing an organized system of social services on a regular and legitimate basis to aid individuals and groups to attain satisfying standards of life and health (Wilensky and Lebeaux 1958: 138–40). Building on this distinction, Richard Titmuss sketched the rough outlines of a typology of welfare provision involving three models of social policy: the residual model, the industrial achievement-performance model, and the institu-

tional redistributive model. The major task of the residual welfare model is remedial but temporary aid because of the failure of other channels of welfare provision – the market and the family. In the case of the industrial achievement model the function is to provide a minimum standard of social security, and public provision of welfare largely complements the market economy. As indicated by its name the task of the third model is redistribution; and redistribution focuses on “command-over-resources through time” in order to achieve greater equality (Titmuss 1974: 30–1). Subsequently the residual–institutional distinction has been used to construct contrasting polar models, adding several new dimensions of variation (Mishra 1977, Korpi 1980). Among the dimensions included have been the range of statutory services and benefits, the level of social spending, the extent of coverage, benefit levels, the dominant type of program, the type of financing, the degree of social control, the ideology and agents of provision.

Models based on polar ideal types are useful in clarifying important distinctions, but a weakness of such models is that they limit the framework of analysis to two categories conceived as opposites. There are many instances when it may prove counterproductive or misleading to classify phenomena on the basis of only two categories (Sainsbury 1991, 1993a). For example, the key distinctions informing the models of Furniss and Tilton – the goals and aims of different forms of state intervention advantaging particular groups – are difficult to imagine as polar ideal types without serious oversimplifications. The diversity of the goals and aims of state intervention, the variety of its forms, and the wide range of potential beneficiaries make it necessary to weigh the advantages of formulating clear-cut distinctions against the drawbacks of conceptualizing complex phenomena in dualistic terms.

The third approach constructs typologies on the basis of two underlying axes of variation yielding four types of welfare state. Catherine Jones, for example, devises a typology where one axis consists of the level of spending and the other of the type of social policy (1985: 79–82). The second axis is a continuum with one end corresponding to the industrial achievement-performance of social policy and the other end to the institutional model. In other words, one version of this sort of typology uses roughly the same key concepts as the second approach but ends up with four types of welfare states instead of two (cf. Hadenius 1987). Another version of this sort of typology, suggested by Göran Therborn, introduces a new dimension of variation – policies to combat unemployment or the commitment to full employment. An axis distinguishing the degree of institutionalized full employment policies is combined with an axis of the degree of social security commitment as reflected in public spending (Therborn and