

11. Twenty years of social policy research on gender

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to understand and discuss the development of social policy research on gender. It therefore avoids reflecting on more complex issues, such as understanding the gendered character of social policy research or discussing the gender bias in social policy research. Nonetheless, arbitrary decisions have to be made.

A first decision concerns academic boundaries. In their introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy* on policymaking from a gender equality perspective, Lombardo et al. (2016) include multiple academic disciplines. Similarly, research on social policy as represented in ESPAnet is inspired by a broad range of disciplines, the more because it is only a recognized academic sub-discipline in some countries, mostly the United Kingdom, the United States, and Finland. ESPAnet is a multidisciplinary network of scholars, hence this chapter reflects this multidisciplinary character of social policy research on gender.

Second, the editors of this volume define social policy according to Béland (2010: 9), as ‘an institutionalized response to social and economic problems’. However, neither Béland nor any other social policy scholar assumes social and economic problems as given. Consequently, a main social policy research topic concerns the construction, prioritization, or neglect of specific social and economic problems. This implies that social policy research looks at both whether gender inequality has been defined as a social and economic problem, and if so, which institutional remedies have been offered.

Third, a related question is whether intersectionality of social policy has become a main issue in the past decades through the acknowledgement that gender is a heterogeneous category. Gender presents itself in many shapes and sub-groups; class, ethnicity, religion, and descent sub-divides as well as coincides with gender.

Fourth, the boundaries of social policy and research on social policy are permeable. Some scholars tend to assume socio-economic problems as income, social security, and employment as the core of social policy research. Although the domain of care had already entered the research agenda in the 1970s (see Chapter 2, this volume), it is often approached from an instrumental socio-economic view to stimulate women's employment (see also Chapter 3, this volume). From a gender perspective, this demarcation is too limited as social policies also construct and influence gender relations in the fields of care, health, sexuality, education, housing, and migration.

Fifth, social policy research on gender does not per definition take a feminist perspective. Clasen and Siegel (2007) plead for defining the outcome of social policies as a starting point of research. What is, or aims to be the result or effect of a social policy reform, regulation, or intervention? Did the policy reform contribute to that aim, to what extent, and why? From a feminist perspective, the answer can only be 'more gender equality'. Presumably, not all social policy research on gender presupposes that aim; one can – against the advice of Clasen and Siegel – ignore gender equality as an outcome, or just analyse gender differences in attitudes, employment, the division of household chores, or the use of childcare services without wondering how it contributes to gender equality.

In sum, in this overview chapter I will discuss social policy research on gender during the timespan 2000–2020. Understanding social policy research as a multidisciplinary academic field, the focus will be on the question of how gender inequality has been defined, as a social and economic problem or otherwise, how it is framed, what causes it, what policy responses are implemented, and what outcomes it generates. Acknowledging that gender is a heterogeneous category, the chapter will also look at intersectionality. Finally, I will go beyond Clasen and Siegel's outcome criterion – defined here as gender equality – to see if and how gender is present in social policy research that does not, per definition, take that outcome for granted.

FROM THE WOMBS OF GIANTESSES

Social policy research on gender is indebted to a long intellectual and political feminist tradition. Over 50 years ago, a second wave of feminist scholarship started to continue the work of scholars whose analyses of women's political underrepresentation, exploitation, and misrecognition had challenged the male-dominated status quo since the nineteenth century. Second-wave feminist scholars explored systemic forms of oppression by theorizing capitalist and patriarchal systems, and their interdependence. Feminist political economists calculated the unpaid reproduction costs of workers and children as a benefit for capitalism, resulting in a debate on claims for a housewife wage

or outsourcing care work. Feminist anthropologists and historians analysed the split between the public and the private domains, while scholars in the humanities focused on the imprisoning of the female body and psyche, the pitfalls of celebrating motherhood, the absence of women in policymaking, and the lack of attention to women's contribution to science, production, and art. The common denominator of these second-wave studies is bringing women back in – into society, the academic field, and into politics – by simultaneously pointing at their social, economic, political, and cultural relevance and contesting women's marginalized position.

These ancestors have inspired feminist social policy scholars that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Instead of exploring systemic forms of oppression, this generation aimed for a more precise analysis of current mechanisms impeding gender inequality. They still questioned the capitalist patriarchal exploitation of female productive and reproductive work, but now focused on more detailed analyses of social policies producing gender (in)equality in the labour market, on differences and similarities between social policies on gender across different welfare states, and on which (political) parties, institutions, laws, and regulations are involved. Likewise, questioning the imprisoning of the female body and motherhood asked for research on access to health care, on dominant medical institutions and their vision on reproduction, on sex education and prostitution policy. Challenging male political dominance required studying the process of policymaking, thus looking more precisely to masculine power processes, old boys' networks, and the quasi-gender neutrality of politically inspired policy reforms. The Titmuss (1968) questions for analysing social policy¹ entered the studies on gender equality and, with that, social policy research on gender developed.

The renewed orientation to social policy research grew in the 1980s when women in liberal as well as social democratic welfare states entered the labour market, immediately putting the issue of gender equality and care on the social policy research agenda (Balbo, 1987; Leira et al., 2005). In Europe, this renewed social policy approach gained even more strength because the European Union (EU) made gender equality in the labour market one of its core values, immediately followed by a neoliberal spirit when the Berlin Wall came down. The 1990s then revived the 'Wollstonecraft dilemma': women might claim gender equality via the neoliberal spirit of individual economic independence but will do so under conditions that never reach full citizenship, or might claim to be different and take reproductive responsibilities, but these activities will always remain undervalued and underpaid (Pateman, 1989). Policy reforms aimed at encouraging women's employment. Welfare reforms redefined women's position in social security and care, and an awareness of constructed differences between women in various countries emerged. The list of social policy research on gender during the 1980s and 1990s is too

extensive to summarize here, but key studies include the path-breaking work on the complexity of care policies and how these define not only women's position but also their feelings (Ungerson, 1990), the straightforward analyses of women's marginalized position on the labour market (Sainsbury, 1994) due to their reproductive work (Folbre, 1994), and Fraser's (1994) articulation of moral and systemic shortcomings of gender regimes. Driven by the intention to understand current and specific social policies on gender, feminist scholars started to explore welfare regimes and citizenship from a gender perspective, from various angles (e.g., Hobson, 1993; Lewis, 1993; Orloff, 1993; Knijn & Kremer, 1997; Lister, 1997; Siim, 2000), to which Esping-Andersen (1999) reacted by presenting the Scandinavian ideal of the outsourcing of care. The question I try to answer in the following sections relates to the work of these pioneers; new insights from the last 20 years in social policy research on gender, and what deeper insights they offer regarding the aims formulated in the introduction.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is selective given time and space constraints. The enormous richness of English-language books and articles on social policy research on gender imposes selectivity. I do not claim to have read all publications or be on top of all recent research. Rather, this chapter relies on an analysis of English-language journal articles (no books) from the past 20 years, focused on a selection of three journals from the wide range of journals publishing on social policy research.² Given the aim of the chapter, I have selected three very different journals, assuming they together represent commonalities and particularities of the field: the *Journal of European Social Policy* (JESP), publishing mainly on (cross-)national European responses to social problems; *Critical Social Policy* (CSP), with a more constructionist than positivist approach, combining a British and global scope; and *Social Politics* (SP), with an explicit gender focus along with historical analyses of politics and policymaking. Together, these three journals published 456 articles with regard to social policy research on gender between 2000 and 2020; 15 to 30 articles annually. I classified all articles into four categories that occasionally overlap. Categorizations were based initially on the abstract, and where necessary, the entire article. Throughout this process, categories were redefined, and articles were moved from one category to another. The final four categories are (1) work and income; (2) care and reproduction; (3) (comparative) welfare regimes and gender policy; and (4) sexual rights, identities, and intersectionality (see Table 11.1 for an overview).

Table 11.1 Articles on social policy on gender in CSP, JESP and SP (2000–2020)

Year	Work and income	Care/reproduction	Regimes/gender policy	Sexual rights/identity/intersectionality
2000/14	4	5	2	1
2001/28	9	7	9	1
2002/25	7	7	7	4
2003/12	0	4	1	6
2004/25	2	6	6	9
2005/23	4	5	9	3
2006/28	2	15	2	8
2007/21	7	4	5	4
2008/23	2	7	7	6
2009/27	4	3	12	4
2010/23	8	4	2	8
2011/21	3	5	9	1
2012/24	5	8	3	6
2013/15	2	5		6
2014/25	6	6	3	7
2015/19	8	2	8	1
2016/22	7	1	6	7
2017/33	5	10	6	9
2018/13	3	4	3	2
2019/25	7	15	1	2
2020/23	5	4	6	6
Total/456	99	133	117	107

SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH ON GENDER 2000–2020

In the process of categorizing the articles,³ I have also made two additional decisions on what social policy research on gender implies. First, I have excluded articles that focus on households or families that do not refer to gender relations. Second, articles that only measure differences between men and women as dependent variables without reflecting on its gendered meaning are excluded because analysing social policy research on gender is the objective of this chapter.

Care and Reproduction

Research on care (see also Chapter 2, this volume) and reproduction makes up a significant proportion of the social policy research on gender in *JESP*, *CSP*, and *SP* – respectively 46, 33, and 54 articles. Care for elderly or disabled persons gets less attention than childcare, the latter encompassing availability and accessibility of public and private childcare facilities, parental leaves, and cash-for-care schemes. Gender inequality mostly concerns parents' task divisions and migrant care workers' needs; it is less salient in studies on grand-parental care, childcare workers, nannies, and other care workers. Publications on care and gender often take an instrumentalist view on adequate, meaning affordable, accessible, and good-quality public care provisions as conditional for gender equality by contributing to reconciliation of work and family for both genders. Comments on this instrumentalist view come from two sides. On the one hand, as Jane Lewis (2006) states, in referring to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) review of work and family reconciliation policies (Vol. 4) in 13 OECD countries, care policies have a wide range of aims. They may be 'supporting parents in fulfilling their aspirations in terms of fertility; to promote the educational, social and cognitive development of children; to increase female employment; to help to eradicate poverty' (Lewis, 2006: 390). Care policies perform diverse political interests and result in a variety of policies depending on what aim is prioritized. 'Most importantly, these policy aims may be at odds with one another' (Lewis, 2006: 390). On the other hand, the instrumentalist approach to care and gender is incomplete in understanding care as a valuable activity in itself, as a complicated emotional and often hierarchical relation between gendered individuals and as an ethical and moral process of giving and taking. Hence, a series of articles goes beyond the instrumentalist approach to deconstruct the relationship between gender and care, to analyse the gendered framing of care or to dive into the complicated relationship between caregivers and care receivers.

Indeed, the wide-ranging care and gender-related policy agenda is reflected in a variety of studies on all the topics mentioned by Lewis. Research on early childhood education and care and/or parental leaves, for instance, studies whether and under which conditions it contributes to gender equality via women's employment (Morgan & Zippel, 2003; Duvander et al., 2010; Ray et al., 2010; Altintas & Sullivan, 2017; see also Chapter 3, this volume). Other articles articulate that competing policy aims regarding gender and care remain unsolved. Neither neoliberal ideas about market efficiency in childcare nor conservative motherhood ideologies combine well with the aim to eradicate poverty by stimulating mothers' employment and to increase fertility, not to speak of gender equality (Castles, 2003; Bernardi, 2005; Heinen &

Wator, 2006; Kershaw 2006; Avdeyeva, 2011; Geisler & Kreyenfeld, 2011; Lopreite & Macdonald, 2013; Oliver & Mätzke, 2014; Flynn, 2017; Hondarlis, 2017; Akkan, 2018; Hoppania, 2018; Szelewa, 2019; Hufkens et al., 2020). Consequently, only when political ideologies on care and gender equality are congruent, resulting in accessible, affordable, quality, and continuity of care *and* well-paid care work or adequate care leaves for both genders can some gender equality effects be reached.

Social policy research on gender related to care and reproduction also focuses on alternative care configurations: grandparents (i.e., ‘maternal inter-generational care’) (Souralová, 2019), female migrant care workers, guest parents, nannies, and au-pairs. Cultural preferences or motherhood ideals influence the choice for which care substitutes are hired but each of these alternatives passes the social costs to employees or their unpaid or underpaid substitutes (Kremer, 2006; Búriková, 2019). Most alternatives are problematic. For instance, while grandparents do not mind engaging in childcare in addition to sufficient public care, they tend to abstain from intensive care if public care does not suffice (Igel & Szydlik, 2011). Cash-for-care policies, in contrast, can encourage the willingness and the ability to care (Land, 2002) but, in the absence of public care provisions, such policies bring forward migrant care work, an unacknowledged ‘wicked issue’ falling between or, in contrast, integrating the policy fields of migration, care, and employment (Shutes & Chiatti, 2012; Williams & Brennan, 2012; Da Roit & Weicht, 2013). Michel and Peng (2012) call it a ‘demand and denial’ type of work that fills the gaps left by welfare states’ failed efforts to provide satisfactory support for a gender equity-based reconciliation of work and family policy. Having only macropositive effects for the receiving countries – no public investments in care workers’ training, protection, and reproduction – its negative effects are evident. Sending countries – and the care replacers back home – may benefit from the remittances sent to them but they mainly suffer from a care drain. Migrant care workers themselves are overrepresented in precarious jobs in the lower, unprotected, and unattractive sectors of the paid care economy (Lightman, 2019). An overall conclusion is that migrant care work engenders inequality between women who use the service to combine work and care and those who offer the care, and between sending and receiving countries. Moreover, it does not solve gender inequality because men remain out of the picture (Lutz & Palenga-Möllnbeck, 2012; Boccagni, 2013; Estévez-Abe & Hobson, 2015).

As an alternative to the instrumentalist approach, feminist theorists on care and gender reframed care as a civic virtue, a valuable activity, or a relational moral imperative. CSP offers a forum for this constructionist approach that is inspired by the ethics-of-care approach (Tronto, 1993). It puts wellbeing, capabilities, and people’s work/life needs centre stage (Williams, 2001). In the

same line of thinking, Henderson and Forbat (2002) plead for incorporating in care policy the notion of care as emotional labour in intimate and personal relationships that is not experienced as care ‘work’ per se and exists in interdependent reciprocal giving and taking. Taking such a perspective, Dahl (2009) argues that in the context of New Public Governance, different understandings of care intersect, meaning that home helpers are interpreters instead of passive applicants of municipal guidelines. They resign, negotiate, and protest depending on different views of good care. Alternatively, ethics of care inspire scholars to critically evaluate social (development) policies that interpret care as a familialist, gender-neutral, and instrumental resource for economic production, be it in the United Kingdom or South Africa (Sevenhuijsen, 2000; Sevenhuijsen et al., 2003). Gender equality in this strand of social policy research is mainly understood as the upgrading of the inherent value of reproduction for mankind and society to be accomplished by social policies that stimulate a gender-equal sharing of care work, affordable and good-quality care facilities, and well-paid care jobs. In fact, these studies accentuate that care is misinterpreted in a masculine-dominated economic system.

WELFARE REGIMES AND GENDER POLICY

The second main gender-related issue in these three journals is on welfare regimes’ gender and family policy. To avoid overlap with the previous paragraph, this heading includes articles explicitly centred on welfare regime differences and similarities. Such articles unavoidably include care policies. Articles in which care is central are included above, and those focused on broader welfare regime policy analyses in which care policies are of minor importance are included here. These studies analyse reconciling work and family life, familialist policies, and welfare reforms impacting gender equality. SP has published 78 articles on this issue, JESP 33, and CSP only six. A preliminary conclusion could be that CSP is more focused on national, regional, and local understandings of gender policies while SP and JESP publish more on comparing (supra-)national tendencies.

Inspired by Esping-Andersen’s comparative welfare regime analysis (1990), studies on gender policy initially researched Western European welfare states and the United States. That tendency continued from 2000 onwards while gradually studies on Central and Eastern European countries in the process of reform after the fall of the Soviet Union joined in (Pascall & Manning, 2000; Van der Molen & Novikova, 2005; Gerber 2011; Javornik, 2014; Leschke & Jepsen, 2014; Dobrotić & Blum, 2020; Van Winkle, 2020) as well as studies on Turkey (Seckinelgin, 2006), Israel (Ajzenstadt & Gal, 2001), East Asian (Gottfried & O’Reilly, 2002; Estévez-Abe, 2005; Everett, 2009; Estévez-Abe & Naldini, 2016; Estévez-Abe et al., 2016; León et al., 2016; Saraceno, 2016;

Shire & Nemoto, 2020) and South American countries (Peng, 2001; Gottfried & O'Reilly, 2002; Griffith & Gates, 2002; Mills, 2006; Glass & Fodor 2007; Saxonberg & Szelewa, 2007; Teplova, 2007; Molyneux, 2012; Staab, 2012; Estévez-Abe & Naldini, 2016; Estévez-Abe et al., 2016; León et al., 2016; Saraceno, 2016; Rodríguez Gustá et al., 2017; Nagels, 2018; Shire & Nemoto, 2020).

Besides large-scale comparisons based on international datasets looking for factors explaining gender (in)equality, theoretical debates concern core concepts of familism as an indicator of welfare regimes' gender equality and Varieties of Capitalism (VOC). The usual suspects in large-scale comparative welfare regime studies on gender are institutionalized family policy models influencing variations in gender role attitudes (Sjöberg, 2004) and policies reducing gender – and class – inequalities (Korpi, 2000). More recently, the economic crises and labour market trends of flexibilization and precariousness affect the earning capacities of both men and women as well as gender equality, also depending on the availability of gender-sensitive parental leave schemes (Dotti Sani, 2017; Dobrotić & Blum, 2020). Comparative research on gender equality in European member states has been further stimulated because of the EU's explicit aim to mainstream gender equality. For this purpose, various versions of a gender equality index have been proposed, such as the one based on Fraser's (1994) universal breadwinner model (Plantenga et al., 2009), in reaction to which Permanyer (2015) argues that the finally agreed upon GEI-index (2013) is unfair to underperforming countries if their achievements to reach gender equality are not embedded in their overall performance. Nonetheless, disagreement on what should be the outcome of gender equality policies (the Clasen and Siegel problem, see the introduction to this chapter) persists. Von Wahl (2005), for instance, claims that because the EU's gender policy only aims for equal access to employment, thus being non-redistributive and regulatory, this supra-national level has been able to force member states to develop a nominally gender-equal playing field. Document-based research, however, critically comments on the direction the EU's gender equality policy has taken since the 1990s. The one-sided focus on the labour market and subsequent degendering of 'family policies' according to these scholars: (a) undermines the original feminist potential of reaching gender equality; (b) takes labour market needs as its main criterion; (c) is too vague in its purposes, presented as a harmonious process thus denying power relations and male privileges to be overcome; and (d) frames core issues like domestic violence as being outside the scope of gender equality (Stratigaki, 2004; Walby, 2004; Verloo, 2005; Lombardo & Meier, 2008). The social investment approach offers an alternative to this neoliberal perspective on gender equality (Morel et al., 2012; Van Kersbergen & Hemerijck, 2012). It assumes the state as investor on behalf of the citizenship rights of the poor and the powerless by investing

in the future of children via childcare, education, and anti-poverty measures. Jenson (2009) fears, however, that this approach neglects gender equality by favouring children's interests above those of adult women. Attitudinal research by Busemeyer and Neimanns (2017) shows that among the population, different beneficiary groups compete for such investments, for instance single parents versus the unemployed. Bothfeld and Rouault (2015) signal that this competition is not only imaginary. Social reforms in the name of social investments show a trade-off between the redistributive and investive aspects of social policy, in particular at the cost of families. Effects for gender equality are not clear, however.

The VOC research on gender, initiated by Estévez-Abe (2005, 2009; see also Soskice, 2005) further challenges the scope and influence of policy reforms on gender equality by embedding these in the political economy literature on occupational segregation in either coordinated or liberal market economies. Comparative research shows a trade-off between institutionalized labour protection, occupational gender stratification, and families' income security; a prisoner's dilemma because in liberal market economies solving one issue (gender stratification) unavoidably will be at the cost of another (institutionalized labour protection). In response, McCall and Orloff (2005) and Mandel and Shalev (2009) state that the VOC literature is unable to resolve that dilemma due to a functionalist approach that does not consider politics, ideology, or the history of institutional formation. Moreover, they argue that research on VOC firstly needs to understand intersectionality of class and gender, meaning that different forms of capitalism have different implications for women – and men – in different class positions; class is not only a male issue and higher-educated women might perform well in liberal market economies just because of the lower costs and protection of lower-class and/or migrant women (see Rubery, 2009). Secondly, the VOC literature often neglects the particularities of conservative continental European welfare states that, until recently, avoided policies that supported mothers' employment (by way of paid leaves) and did not assist in integrating paid and unpaid work by offering decent public-sector jobs. Finally, Kleider (2015) shows that skill specificity, the VOC's main claim, is less important for women's employment than policies actively promoting female employment and the absence of social policies that slow down female employment.

Thus, while research dives deeper into the (preferred) outcome of gender policies as well as the complexities of the relationship between political economies and social policies, a core conceptual problem remains 'familialism' and policy reforms that intend to (de)familialize care work.⁴ Introduced to critically assess Esping-Andersen's decommodification concept in comparative welfare regime research (Esping-Andersen, 1990) from a gender perspective, it adds women's economic independence and the redivision of care work

within the family as conceptual tools (Orloff, 1993; Lister 1994; McLaughlin & Glendinning, 1994). Defamilialization, however, quickly became framed in the EU and its member states, and mainstream social policy research (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Korpi, 2000), as conditional for labour market policy by ‘freeing women from care’, as if outsourcing family care does not imply that other women will do the job. Lohmann and Zagel (2015), in summarizing theoretical debates on the familialization-defamilialization duality, conclude that feminist scholars instead agree that gender equality implies seeing gender and generational care relations as part of family policies, and understanding care as a reciprocal process between individuals and between the state, the market and the family. As Saraceno and Keck (2010) show, gender equality via defamilialization can fail through state support for familial (feminized) care, or due to a lack of state provisions.

SEXUAL RIGHTS/IDENTITY/INTERSECTIONALITY

A third major research topic concerns the complex issue of gender policies related to sexual rights and gendered identities. Touching upon a late-coming area of institutionalized gender equality policies, these studies focus on the politicized relation between sex and gender identities, body politics, and gender-based violence policy as well as the upcoming theoretical intersectionality approach. SP has published 50 articles on this issue and CSP 55. Interestingly, JESP hardly commits itself to this issue with only two publications. In contrast to the often presumed responsibility of the welfare state and the (labour) market for family and work reconciliation as a means for gender equality, recognition of sexual violence, let alone body diversity and its consequences as a policy domain, came rather late. It was only in 2002 that an updated version of the EU’s Directive on Equal Treatment (1976) defined sexual harassment as sex discrimination as the result of transnational advocacy networks (Zippel, 2004). Even while it only contained soft law, its effects were instantaneous in national legislation across different Central and Eastern European countries accessing the EU (Krizsan & Popa, 2010). One stream of research in this area accentuates state responsibility for sexual violence either directly, by targeting indigenous and poor women such as in Peru (Boesten, 2012) and India (Chantler et al., 2018), or indirectly, by diminishing support for abused women or violence against LGBTI persons and organizations representing them. Cuts in support systems (social assistance, housing, social services, etc.) due to neoliberal ‘self-sufficiency’ (Morrow et al., 2004; Daley, 2006; Ishkanian, 2014) or social-conservative ‘family-centred’ ideologies (Phillips, 2006) and a lack of adequate policing (McGhee, 2003) have devastating effects as do social services offering victims only criminalization or exit options instead of preventative policies (Paterson, 2009, 2010; Phipps, 2010).

Another stream analyses why and how sexual violence uneasily relates to cultural diversity at each governance level. A critical discourse analysis of EU anti-violence policy by Montoya and Rolandsen Agustín (2013) points to the risk of externalization of sexual violence by its culturalization. Emphasizing a minority cultural conception of gender-based violence and articulating it as an external policy aim, as the Commission does, defines this violence as an ‘outsider’ problem of ‘others’ within EU member states and of countries outside the EU. Such an articulation hides majority populations’ ‘common’ forms of domestic gender-based violence and fuels a racially problematic rhetoric with a quasi-feminist approach. At the local level, this culturalist or even racist prejudice prevents social services, health care, or asylum organizations from offering adequate support for battered women (Ahlberg et al., 2004; Burman et al., 2004; Canning, 2013; Giannou & Ioakimidis, 2019).

Self-complacency on gender equality, however, does not suit core EU member states or other liberal democratic welfare states as various studies on discrimination of sexual diversity and conduct-based, identity-based, and relationship-based rights claim (Richardson, 2000; Harder, 2007; Smith, 2010; Rawsthorne, 2012). Public opinion and active religious organizations (Siegel, 2020) stand in the way as does the inability to deal with all kinds of non-binary identities in legal and social procedures (Kuhar et al., 2017; Monro & Van Der Ros, 2017). Moreover, the absence of explicit central government policy on sexual diversity makes such rights very dependent on local political, cultural, historical, and religious contexts (Carabine & Monro, 2004).

Gender equality versus inequality is no longer the main issue in social policy research on gender. The first decades of the twenty-first century increasingly relate to the dichotomy of difference versus sameness, the grounds of exclusion and inclusion depending on policies of othering and sameness based on identities. One theoretical approach suggested by Montoya and Rolandsen Agustín (2013) is to apply an intersectional approach that has already proven its analytical merit at the crossroads of gender, ethnicity, and immigration (see Christie, 2006; Rottmann & Ferree, 2008; Spanger, 2011; Strid et al., 2013; Reisel, 2014). Intersectional policy research focuses on both the individual and institutional levels and covers conflicting interpretations of inequalities among relevant actors. It has the potential to conceptualize differences between groups of women and men as well as contestations emerging from heterogeneity (Rolandsen Agustín & Siim, 2013). In recalling Verloo’s comment on a too simple ‘one-size-fits-all’ EU policy, and the research on it, Lombardo and Rolandsen Agustín (2012) propose a continuous reflection both in policymaking and policy research on all potential intersections without losing sight of the adequacy of potential dimensions in each field, and with a further articulation of the actual effect on the groups at specific intersections or the different ways in which they are or may be affected.

LABOUR, INCOME, AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Effects of gender-based discrimination and policies on gender-based labour market segregation, gendered gaps in income, pensions, and on women's poverty are analysed in 50 articles in SP, 29 in JESP, and 20 in CSP. Leading themes in these first two decades of the twenty-first century are the discursive and actual reconstructions of welfare policies in which gender equality, social welfare, changing labour markets, and neoliberal economic purposes are intertwined. In the context of a massive growth in female labour market participation worldwide (Filgueira & Martínez Franzoni, 2019),⁵ a range of family policies (Ferraggina & Seeleib-Kaiser, 2015) have been introduced as well as work-related reforms (pensions) aimed to individualize incomes (Frericks et al., 2007; Marrier, 2007). Research evidence critically assesses the discursive frame and the outcomes of the Adult Worker Model and the welfare-to-work rhetoric underlying welfare state reconstructions from a gender perspective (Annesley, 2007). Regarding the discursive frame, scholars argue it neglects that women and men act according to moral and relational choices rather than according to pure rational choices, and therefore do not just accept policies enforcing them to leave behind their children in exchange for a marginal job (Duncan & Strell, 2004; Pulkingham et al., 2010). Regarding its outcomes, studies show time after time that given the heterogeneous category 'women', gender equality cannot be reached by a one-size-fits-all approach. Whether it concerns employment policies (Crompton & Le Feuvre, 2000), old-age systems (Gough, 2001; Leitner, 2001; Sefton et al., 2011), benefits for lone mothers (Skevik, 2005; Korteweg, 2006; Dodson, 2007), or minimum income benefits (Duncan & Strell, 2004; Frericks et al., 2020), or 'welfare-to-work' policies (Dean, 2001), the conclusion is that mostly better-educated women with continuous work experience benefit, while family carers, lower-skilled women, domestic workers, lone mothers, and women with a migration background remain either poor or in precarious work conditions (Jaehrling et al., 2015; Morel, 2015; Devitt, 2016; Österle & Bauer, 2016; Jokela, 2019). Scholarly attention therefore shifts towards intersectional analysis integrating gender, ethnicity, and class. In reaction to the EU's Lisbon agenda, Lewis et al. (2008; see also Mutari & Figart, 2001) conclude that preferences, cultures of work and care, the sharing of housework, childcare facilities, and adult working hours vary so much in member states that it does not legitimate one European policy model. Moreover, leave policies in most European countries still use the male breadwinner model as a normative reference point or are more conditional for men (Björnberg, 2002; Ciccio & Verloo, 2012; Sigurdardóttir & Garðarsdóttir, 2018), while destandardization and individualization of women's working hours do not remedy gender inequality (Plantenga, 2002),

nor the still existing wage gap (Evertsson et al., 2009). Aside from falling short in reaching gender equality, Ghysels and Van Lancker (2011) signal risks of implementing the model in a socially selective way, resulting in less redistributive welfare systems. Alternatives are suggested too, such as the Belgian service voucher scheme, of which Raz-Yurovich and Marx (2017) demonstrate positive effects on employment rates of low-skilled and highly skilled women, and the family working time model providing income replacement if both parents work 30 hours per week as proposed by Müller et al. (2018).

Along the road towards gender equality in work and income are many barriers and blockades with obstacles that hinder women in different phases of life, in different households, with different skills and backgrounds, in a wide variety of ways. The policy focus on tempting or enforcing women to join the labour market certainly has improved women's work and income position worldwide. However, the reconstruction of labour markets and welfare regimes along neoliberal lines with more flexibility and precarious work and less security tends to undermine these efforts with severe risks for the most vulnerable women.

CONCLUSION

Is there any relationship between policymaking on gender equality in Europe and forceful attacks on women's sexual and reproductive rights in Europe and elsewhere? Is social policy research on gender meaningful in understanding these parallel and paradox trends? In the end, we can interpret that paradox metaphorically for what Bugra (2014; see also Pateman, 1989; Komter, 1990) sees as the inherent and unsolved problem of a combination of the cultural affirmation of women's difference and the gender-blind economic gender-equality employment approach. Indeed, social policy research on gender shows that, with some exceptions, care work remains defined as *women's* obstacle to employment to be solved by undervalued and underpaid other *women*. This affirmation of gender difference goes hand in hand with welfare regime reforms that both promote and assume gender equality. With bounded hands, women face benefit cutbacks, flexibilization of labour markets, privatization of public services, and individualized taxes and pensions. 'In other words, the old tension between equality and difference initially highlighted in Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792/1978) remains with us' (Bugra, 2014: 150). Future social policy research on gender might take inspiration from that dilemma remembering that equality and difference are not opposites: 'The opposite of equality is inequality. To posit it as difference disguises the relations of subordination, hierarchy and consequent disadvantage and injustice, which underlie the dichotomy, and serves to distort the policy choices open to us' (Lister, 2003: 98). Given that dilemma,

future social policy research would be served by following Fraser's (1994) proposal to approach welfare regimes from five distinct normative principles: (1) anti-poverty (including anti-exploitation and income equality); (2) leisure time equality; (3) equality of respect; (4) anti-marginalization; and finally (5) anti-androcentrism. Indeed, a lot of work needs to be done.

NOTES

1. What is the nature of entitlement, who is entitled and under what conditions, and what methods are employed in the determination of access, utilization, allocation, and payment?
2. I offer my sincere apologies to the editors, authors, and readers of the following journals for being unable to include their social policy research on gender: *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *Feminist Review*, *Gender and Society*, *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, *Journal of Social Policy*, *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy*, *Social Policy*, and *Administration, Social Policy and Politics*.
3. References to articles in the three journals are not listed in the reference list. These can be found in the selected journals CSP, JESP, and SP volumes 2000–2020 as well as in a thematic list of references provided in the supplemental material to this chapter at <https://www.e-elgar.com/textbooks/yerkes>.
4. Also labelled as (de)familization.
5. With the exception of some post-socialist European countries (Avlijaš, 2020).

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