Socializing Caregiving: Social Services, Women's Employment, and Overall Economic Success

Summer Caraway

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SOCIALIZING CAREGIVING: SOCIAL SERVICES, WOMEN’S EMPLOYMENT, AND OVERALL ECONOMIC SUCCESS

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By Summer Caraway

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion Of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies Croft Institute for International Studies Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College The University of Mississippi

University, Mississippi
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Reader: Dr. Gang Guo
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To begin, I would like to thank Dr. Joshua First, whose guidance and support were invaluable throughout the writing of this thesis. I would also like to extend my thanks to my readers, Dr. William Schenck and Dr. Gang Guo, whose feedback and assistance provided instrumental help.

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ABSTRACT

Despite general advancements in the status of women in recent decades, women still experience unequal access to the workforce in most countries, in part due to their caregiving responsibilities. This thesis analyzes the effects of different social services on women’s employment in all developed OECD countries, as well as the effect of women’s employment on the economy in these same countries. Then this thesis examines pro-female-employment policies in case studies on Ireland, France, and Sweden to determine the most effective means of promoting women’s employment.
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INTRODUCTION

Over time and within different cultures, the status of women has varied greatly, though in almost all circumstances it was generally below that of men. The widespread belief that women and men deserve equal treatment, even under the law, is still a relatively new development birthed primarily by the suffragette movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries along with the second-wave feminism of the 1960s-80s. Today, the world is experiencing a third-wave of feminism, and like its predecessors, this movement is certainly considered divisive. Feminism and feminist policies remain hotly debated topics, with one of the most oft-discussed topics being whether or not there is still a need for feminism in our modern world, with some believing that equality between the sexes has already been achieved.

Economic equality is one of the major topics of the day, with the wage gap between men and women frequently being a topic of debate and discussion. One factor that majorly impacts differences in earnings between men and women is the employment gap – a discrepancy between not only the rates at which men and women work but also between the quality of their respective employment. In most countries, women still work at a lower rate than men and are employed part-time at a much higher rate as well. This is often attributed to the fact that women have caregiving obligations to fulfill, leaving them unable to pursue full-time employment or any employment at all.

During the period of second-wave feminism, there was a push both from rights activist groups and even from progressive economists for countries to implement programs that would allow a greater number of women to enter into the workforce, specifically by creating and implementing programs that removed some of the financial
burden and time requirements associated with caregiving. How effective are these programs, and do they still continue to have a positive impact on women’s employment to this day? Most importantly, is there still room for improve to further close the gender gap?

Research Question and Hypothesis

My thesis seeks to examine firstly the relationship between governmental programs and social services such as maternity leave, elderly care, and familial care and female employment, and secondly the relationship between female employment and the overall success of an economy. Many women feel forced to choose between their roles as mothers and/or caregivers to the elderly and their careers due to the high costs associated with hiring external caregivers. While there were many studies of this kind in the 1990s after the push for feminist policy that occurred in the 1980s, there is a lack of examination as to whether these policies continue to have such an impact on female employment years after women’s emancipation from the home. My thesis seeks to examine if countries are still receiving a “return on investment” so to speak when they choose to invest in social programs that encourage women’s employment.

I will examine if factors such as expenditure on children, expenditure on the elderly, and state-mandated maternity leave continue to affect the rate of female employment as compared to that of male employment. Then I will assess if countries with more equalized rates of female and male employment demonstrate better functioning economies, primarily by comparing real GDP growth rates. My hypothesis is that nations with programs to eliminate or ameliorate factors that commonly bar women from entering the workforce will have a higher rate of female employment, and that
countries with a higher rate of female employment will demonstrate more successful economies. I believe that this research is important because social expectations that women are meant to be caregivers — and the often-high costs of hiring alternative caregivers — can be such a limiting factor for women who wish to pursue careers. Therefore, I believe that it is important to demonstrate that a country can benefit from ameliorating these costs, thereby allowing more women to enter into the workforce.

The second chapter of my thesis will be a case study of three different countries, each representing one of the three major welfare regimes: liberal, corporatist, and social-democratic. This chapter aims to examine more specific factors and their impact on women’s employment as well as other indicators of women’s’ work-life balance. This includes metrics such as hours spent in formal childcare, reasons for part-time employment, reasons for labor market inactivity, and pension systems.

**Literature Review**

Esping-Andersen, Gallie, Hemerijck, and Myles argue that greater employment of women leads to higher achieving economies and that, therefore, welfare states should adopt a “life course perspective” in implementing programs to care for the young and the elderly, as women are often the ones who must forgo working to care for these groups. This is the basic theory that provides the foundation for the two research questions of this thesis.

Esping-Andersen, known for his decommodification theory, also discusses de-familialization as the factor by which women are able to become “commodified.”

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According to Esping-Andersen, a “de-familializing regime is one which seeks to unburden the household and diminish individuals' welfare dependence on kinship”\(^2\) which also serves to decrease the amount of time that women must devote to unpaid care work. He also found that familialism is counter-productive to both family formation and the labor supply, resulting in low fertility rates, lower household incomes, and higher poverty risks. He concludes that “above all, familialism has become the Achilles' heel of the welfare state itself” because “lower levels of paid female employment mean also a smaller tax base; and low fertility now threatens the basic financial viability of welfare states in the future.”\(^3\)

Several other researchers have discussed the positive effect that supporting women’s employment has on the economy. A May 1999 paper published by the World Bank entitled “Gender Inequality, Income, and Growth: Are Good Times Good for Women?” succinctly summarizes its findings in the following manner:

>These systematic patterns in gender differentials suggest that low investment in women is not an efficient economic choice, and we can show that gender inequality in education is bad for economic growth. Thus, societies that have a preference for not investing in girls pay a price for it in terms of slower growth and reduced income.\(^4\)

Though they are not looking at gender roles, they are examining gender inequality which is often associated with societies in which women are expected to play a more traditional role.

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\(^3\) Gösta Esping-Andersen, *Social Foundations of Post-Industrial Economies*, 70.

role. The metrics that they used to judge the level of gender equality were as follows: access to and achievement in education (particularly in secondary education); measures of female empowerment, including the percentage of women in parliament and the year that women gained the right to vote; improvements in health according to gender-specific life expectancies; and indicators of legal and economic equality for women in both marriage and society. They found all measures of gender equality to share a positive correlation with per capita income.  

Another study by Stephan Klasen and Francesca Lamanna found that “gender gaps in education and employment considerably reduce economic growth.” They based their theory on that fact that while gender inequality in education is likely to have a direct impact on economic growth, “gender inequality may also affect economic growth through its effects on investment rates, overall population, growth, and growth in the working-age population.” Their overall conclusion was that discrimination toward women in both education and employment is both harmful to the women in question and also imposes a cost on the entire society, even using the phrase “the challenge of increasing the economic growth of a country is…to a considerable extent linked to the role played by women in the society.”

A study by Agénor and Canuto similarly found that gender policies would eventually produce beneficial economic results, but only in the long-run, meaning that poor countries may struggle to fund this type of projects that have such a slow rate of

5 Ibid., 4-5.
7 Ibid., 103.
8 Klasen and Lamanna, 117.
return on investments.\(^9\) Galor and Weil asserted that there exists a “positive feedback loop [that] generates a demographic transition: a rapid decline in fertility accompanied by accelerated output growth.”\(^10\) Essentially, an increase in capital per worker results in an increase in women's relative wages. Likewise, an increase in women's relative wages reduces fertility rates which in turn raises the level of capital per worker.

In “Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship: The Comparative Analysis of Gender Relations and Welfare States,” Ann Shola Orloff discusses how much of the research and theoretical work surrounding welfare has failed to adequately account for gender differences and relations within welfare states. Within this article, she develops a modified framework based upon that used by power resource analysts for analyzing variations between states’ social provision that accounts for gender. She also suggests two new dimensions for analysis: “access to paid work” and “women's capacity to form and maintain autonomous households.” My thesis focuses upon the dimension of “access to paid work,” a “potentially emancipatory” factor for women in that it “provides independence and enhanced leverage within marriage and the patriarchal family.”\(^11\) A woman’s economic dependence within a marriage creates a potentially harmful power dynamic, therefore “access to paid work and to the services that make employment a viable option for mothers (or other caretakers)” is an incredibly important dimension of the welfare state which is often overlooked by mainstream comparative researchers.\(^12\)

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\(^12\) Ibid.
In “Welfare Regimes, Family- Supportive Policies, and Women’s Employment along the Life- Course,” authors Stier, Lewin-Epstein, and Braun perform a cross-national analysis of women’s employment patterns during their child-rearing years and the consequences of these patterns on their earnings later in life. They identified “five meaningful employment patterns: continuous full-time employment, shift from part-time to full-time, continuous part-time employment, a shift from no employment to part-time employment, and continuous nonemployment.” While they did not find the relationship between employment-supportive policies and employment patterns to be “straight-forward,” they did find that countries with less-supportive policies seemed to promote a greater heterogeneity between women’s employment patterns (with women often either in continuous full-time employment or continuous nonemployment) while those with more-supportive policies showcased a greater homogeneity (most women worked part-time when they were raising children or shifted during their life from one form of employment to another). They also found that “when employment policies are aimed to encourage mothers’ participation in paid employment, low costs or even no costs are associated with deviations from continuous full-time employment,” but in countries with less support for women’s employment, there are often penalties associated with interruptions in workforce participation or transitioning to long-term part-time

employment. This seems to indicate that employment supportive policies are in fact offering women the freedom to choose their employment patterns due to a greater sense of security and a lower risk of penalty.

Anton Hemerijck refers to the ability to reconcile women’s desires to both build a career and form a family as the “litmus test for future welfare state success.” According to him, in order to pass this “litmus” test and ensure the future health of the welfare state, affordable childcare is an absolutely necessary dimension of social policy. *We Need a New Welfare State* claims that the “financial viability of the welfare state in the twenty-first century depends critically on both the revenues generated by high levels of women’s labor force participation, on the one hand, and their willingness to reproduce the next generation, on the other.” The danger of not socializing familial care is that women will be forced to choose between motherhood and a career. As an increasing number of women desire emancipation from the home and their own level of financial independence, this could lead to decreasing birth rates and demographic aging. A birth rate below population replacement levels endangers the entirety of the welfare state – particularly pensions and healthcare – because the financial burden on those who are of working age will continue to increase to the point of unsustainability.

An important factor in determining a woman’s perceived ability to reconcile motherhood and employment is the presence of maternity and parental leave policies,

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17 Esping-Andersen et al. 160
though the actual benefit of these policies is debated. There are two primary, and opposing, schools of thought surrounding maternity leave and female employment. The first is that maternity leave legislation leads to a decrease in women’s employment and/or wages because employers become increasingly hesitant to hire women as these requirements lead to a potential increase in the costs to employ women, particularly women in their prime childbearing years. For example, Robert P. Murphy argues that government mandated maternity leave (particularly paid maternity leave) will reduce hiring opportunities and wages for women, and that companies should instead be able to adopt these policies voluntarily. It is his belief that most companies will be willing to adopt some form of parental leave if it makes them more attractive to well-qualified prospective employees. His argument is more based upon assumptions of how companies will react to maternity policies than concrete evidence and examples of how most companies have reacted in the past.19

The second belief is that maternity leave legislation leads to an increase in women’s employment, at least partially because women perceive themselves as being better able to balance motherhood and a career and thus enter the workforce at a higher rate. This belief appears to be supported by more scholarly literature and research than the former. Therefore, this thesis favors this theory, and thus believes that an increase in maternity leave will correlate with an increase in female employment. Christopher J. Ruhm found in his 1998 study on the economic consequences of parental leave mandates within Europe that “rights to paid leave are found to raise the percentage of women employed, with a substantial effect observed for even short durations of guaranteed work

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absence.”\textsuperscript{20} At this time of this study, all Western European countries required three
months of paid maternity benefits at minimum.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Methodology}

The countries that I have examined are the countries within the 36 OECD Council
member countries which are classified by the United Nations as developed countries.
Only developed countries have been assessed as developing countries often show higher
GDP growth rates, which could interfere with the validity of correlations. Therefore, I
will be examining 32 countries in total as Chile, Israel, Turkey, and Mexico have been
excluded. The variety of countries present in this council allowed for a more
representative sample of nations, while their membership will insure a greater availability
and consistency of data. The chronology of this data was determined simply by the
greatest overlapping range between the different variables studied that fell within the
years I was seeking to examine.

My independent variables to determine if nations with programs to eliminate or
ameliorate factors that commonly bar women from entering the workforce will have a
higher rate of female employment are length of paid maternity and parental leave to
mothers in weeks, total public expenditure on families as a percent of GDP, and pension
expenditure. The dependent variable for this question will be the difference between men
and women’s employment,\textsuperscript{22} and the control variables for this question are level of
development\textsuperscript{23} and total public social expenditure as a percent of GDP.

\textsuperscript{20} Christopher J. Ruhm, “The Economic Consequences of Parental Leave Mandates: Lessons from Europe,”
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Employment here being defined as the employment to population ratio for those aged 15 to 64.
\textsuperscript{23} As assigned by the United Nations.
My independent variable to answer the question of whether countries with more equalized rates of female and male employment demonstrate better functioning economies is the difference between men and women’s employment\textsuperscript{24} and my dependent variable will be annual GDP growth rates. This question seeks to answer whether countries receive a return on investment, so to speak, when they implement programs that allow women greater access to the workforce, but in no way do the results of this specific analysis impact the results pertaining to the question of whether certain social programs impact women’s employment. This data will simply determine if there is an economic incentive to support women’s employment, in addition to the pre-existing moral motives and social benefits.

\textsuperscript{24} Same definition of employment as above.
CHAPTER I: CROSS-NATIONAL QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Despite major advancements in the past century, and even within the past few decades, women’s employment still famously lags behind that of men, both in the form of a gender employment gap and a gender pay gap. The second-wave feminism of the 1960s-80s led to both an increase of women in the workplace, and in many countries, an increased demand for social services which affected women’s access to employment. The positive effects of these social services on women’s employment in the time immediately following their implementation has already been well-documented, but the question remains of whether or not we could still go further in order to continue to close this employment gap. Of course, there is an intrinsic social value in reducing these two gaps, but is there also an economic incentive which could promote governmental action? Do nations with programs to eliminate or ameliorate factors that still commonly bar women from entering the workforce demonstrate a higher rate of female employment? And do countries with a higher rate of female employment demonstrate more successful economies?

Though there are a multitude of factors that may hinder women’s entrance into the workforce – such as sexism, less access to higher education, etc. – the factors that this thesis aims to examine relate specifically to women’s roles as caregivers. As previously mentioned in the introduction, many women feel forced to choose between their roles as mothers and/or caregivers to the elderly and their careers due to the time demands that accompany these roles, the high costs associated with hiring external caregivers, etc. The variables chosen for this cross-national analysis reflect programs – such as state-mandated maternity leave, expenditure on families, and expenditure on the elderly – that
can mitigate the pressures placed on women to forgo employment in order to perform a
caregiving role. Whether or not these social programs have an indirect impact on
economic growth can be seen by examining the relationship between the gender
employment gap and the GDP growth rate. Because I wish to examine whether or not
these programs show an ongoing “return-on-investment,” the oldest data examined will
be from 1990, but the bulk of the data will come from 2000 onward.

The countries whose data I will be examining will be those of the 36 OECD
Council member countries which are classified by the United Nations as developed
countries. Therefore, the countries that I will be examining are as follows: Australia,
Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France,
Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Latvia,
Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the
Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the
United States – 32 countries in total. Chile, Israel, Turkey, and Mexico are not included
as they are considered economies in transition. The use of developed countries within the
OECD provides a consistent body of data pertaining to social programs, women’s
employment, and economic growth while avoiding any confounding variables related to
economic growth. Economies in transition introduce too many confounding variables for
multiple reasons. First of all, since growth rates are typically higher in economies in
transition, including these countries could potentially influence the correlation between
the employment gap and economic growth, which is used as a metric for economic
success within this thesis. Level of development is also often an indicator of social
progress, meaning that economies in transition are much more likely to implement fewer
policies which increase women’s access to the workforce, thereby causing them to have a wider employment gap. Therefore, due to factors for which it is challenging to control, this wider employment gap combined with a higher economic growth rate would return the opposite of the hypothesized result.

Social Services and Women’s Employment

I begin by examining the relationship between my independent variables – social programs such as the length of paid maternity and parental leave to mothers in weeks, total public expenditure on families as a percent of GDP, and total public expenditure in cash benefits to old age and survivors as a percentage of GDP – and the dependent variable – the difference between the male employment to population ratio and the female employment to population ratio. The control variables for this question are total public social expenditure as a percent of GDP and level of development as assigned by the United Nations.

The first independent variable is the length of paid maternity and parental leave to mothers in weeks. This variable was chosen to represent a social institution which allows women to pursue motherhood without feeling as though their careers are at stake. The next independent variable – total public expenditure on families as a percent of GDP – was selected to represent a social program that decreases the pressure on women to choose between motherhood and the labor force. While it seems plausible that public expenditure on families would lessen the need for women to work, therefore decreasing the number of women in the workforce, I hypothesize that the number of women in the workforce will increase with rising public expenditure on families. The data for this variable includes tax breaks for families, cash benefits, and family services. While tax
breaks and cash benefits such as child allowances might decrease the financial need for a mother to work, public family services – which include “the direct financing or subsidisation of childcare and early childhood education facilities, public childcare support through earmarked payments to parents, … and public spending on family services, including centre-based facilities and home help services for families in need” – are likely to allow women the freedom to enter the workforce.\textsuperscript{25}

Total public expenditure in cash benefits to old age and survivors as a percentage of GDP was chosen as the final independent variable to answer this research question. This variable was chosen to represent a social service that lessens the burden upon women to act as caregivers to the elderly. For those classified under “old age,” this data includes expenditure on pensions, early retirement pensions, and home-help/residential services while for those classified as survivors, expenditure includes pensions and any assistance with funeral payments. My hypothesis is that an increase in this form of public expenditure will lead to an increase in female employment, mostly because home-help services remove some of the burden on women to be caregivers for their elderly family but also because increased pensions allow for the elderly to have greater financial independence. In the United States, where women account for almost three-quarters of informal caregivers,\textsuperscript{26} McLanahan and Monson discovered that caregiving both lowered a woman’s chances for employment and the number of hours women who were employed


were able to work. Therefore, it is plausible that there will not be a particularly large correlation between public expenditure in cash benefits to the elderly and women’s employment because many caregivers choose to enter part-time employment instead of exiting the workforce completely.

Both the separate and cumulative effects of each of these variables on the dependent variable (i.e., the difference between the male employment to population ratio and the female employment to population ratio in those aged 15 to 64) must be determined. The employment to population ratio was chosen for analysis as employment and unemployment rates typically only account for the “labor force,” meaning those who are either currently actively employed, who are on leave with a position to which they will return (such as those on maternity or sick leave) or who are actively seeking employment. Therefore, those who are unemployed and not seeking employment are unaccounted for. It stands to reason that in a country with low levels of employment supportive policies for women, many women would not be actively seeking out work, possibly because they would be unable to fulfill a dual role as a caregiver and an employee. The difference between the male and female rates is used as opposed to the overall female rate to control for differences between countries in the general employment rate, which can be caused by a multitude of economic factors not related to the purview of this thesis.

The relationship between each independent variable and the employment gap is examined separately below before the cumulative effect of these programs is displayed.

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Each relationship is displayed graphically, and the R-squared values from each analysis are given as well. The R-squared values can range from -1.0 to 1.0, with values closer to either extreme indicating a stronger relationship. The P-values, which indicate whether the correlation between two variables can be considered statistically significant, are indicated on the table for each independent variable, with a P-value less than 0.05 being considered statistically significant for the purposes of this study.

Each of the following graphs demonstrates the relationships and correlations between my independent variables and the female employment gap. There are three graphs for each independent variable. The first shows all developed OECD countries for which data was available all together on one graph, with each country being coded a different color. The second graph contains exactly the same data points as the first, but the data for each country is not differentiated. This allows for the observation of general trends over a cross-national time series. The final graph contains only the data for the countries who are members of the European Union, excluding Greece. Greece was not included simply because it is often a notable outlier among other EU data, possibly due to its volatile economy and unstable government. The goal of these final graphs is to view trends within the EU, so due to the fact that some of these graphs include data from the 90s and early 2000s, all countries from the 2004 enlargement were not included. The countries added in the year 1995 were included, however, due to the fact that if a graph includes any data from before this year, it is solely from 1990. These sets of graphs each cover a different range of years, according to the availability of and overlap between the data pertaining to each variable. The years covered by each will be noted separately for each set of graphs.
An important thought to bear in mind regarding the following graphs is that low R-square values do not necessarily equate to a negligible correlation within this study. The female employment gap is an issue which is affected by so many different factors simultaneously, meaning that the odds of a perfect correlation are incredibly low. The goal is to determine if the trends do in fact move together in the expected directions, which are as follows: a negative correlation between length of maternity leave and the female employment gap, a negative correlation between expenditure on families and the female employment gap, and a negative correlation between expenditure on the elderly and the female employment gap. These findings would be considered in line with my hypothesis.
Maternity Leave

Figure 1: Maternity Leave v. The Female Employment Gap – By Country


Figure 2: Maternity Leave v. The Female Employment Gap – Aggregate Data\textsuperscript{30, 31}

Figure 3: Maternity Leave v. The Female Employment Gap – Pre-2004 European Union, excluding Greece\textsuperscript{32,33}

\textsuperscript{30} “Length of paid maternity and parental leave available to mothers in weeks.” OECD.

\textsuperscript{31} “Employment/population ratio, by sex and age group.” OECD.

\textsuperscript{32} “Length of paid maternity and parental leave available to mothers in weeks.” OECD.

\textsuperscript{33} “Employment/population ratio, by sex and age group.” OECD.
**Table 1-1: The Effects of Maternity Leave on the Employment Gap between Men and Women**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>R-squared Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternity Leave — OECD Countries</td>
<td>0.018***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity Leave — Pre-2004 EU</td>
<td>0.183***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***: p<0.01

Figures 1, 2, and 3 depict the relationship between the length of paid maternity and parental leave to mothers in weeks and the difference between the male and female employment/population ratio. All graphs contain statistically significant correlations according to their P-values. The years covered are 2000, 2005-2016, though there are missing values for several countries, as can readily be seen in Figure 1. It is also notable in Figure 1 that the countries with the most generous maternity leave policies appear to be mostly Eastern Europe and that the majority of those with the least supportive policies are not European. These two observations can at least partially account for the substantial difference between the R-squared values for the OECD aggregate data graph and the EU aggregate data graph, a difference of over 0.16. This indicates that more generous maternity leave policies are a greater predictor of women’s employment within the pre-2004 European Union than without.

I theorize that the increase in this relationship is due largely to the absence of Hungary, Estonia, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic in the second graph. All four of these countries had very long and generous maternity leave policies, yet their employment gap is not particularly low, especially when compared with the Nordic countries who also offer generous leave but frequently demonstrate an employment gap less than 5%.
Expenditure on Families

Figure 4: Public Expenditure on Families v. The Female Employment Gap – By Country\textsuperscript{34,35}

\textsuperscript{34} “Total public social expenditure on families as a % of GDP,” \textit{OECD}. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

\textsuperscript{35} “Employment/population ratio, by sex and age group.” \textit{OECD}.
Figure 5: Public Expenditure on Families v. The Female Employment Gap – Aggregate Data[^36][^37]

![Graph showing the relationship between public expenditure on families and the female employment gap.]

\[ y = -2.2029x + 16.487 \]
\[ R^2 = 0.153 \]

Figure 6: Public Expenditure on Families v. The Female Employment Gap – Pre-2004 European Union, excluding Greece[^38][^39]

![Graph showing the relationship between public expenditure on families and the female employment gap.]

\[ y = -1.8289x + 15.639 \]
\[ R^2 = 0.10271 \]

[^36]: “Total public social expenditure on families as a % of GDP.” *OECD.*
[^37]: “Employment/population ratio, by sex and age group.” *OECD.*
[^38]: “Total public social expenditure on families as a % of GDP.” *OECD.*
[^39]: “Employment/population ratio, by sex and age group.” *OECD.*
Table 1-2: The Effects of Expenditure on Family on the Employment Gap between Men and Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>R-squared Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure on Families — OECD Countries</td>
<td>0.153***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure on Families — Pre-2004 EU</td>
<td>0.103***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***: p<0.01

Figures 4, 5, and 6 depict the relationship between total public expenditure on families as a percent of GDP and the difference between the male and female employment/population ratio. The years covered are 2005, 2007, 2009-2013, with a few gaps caused by a lack of data within certain countries on family expenditure, primarily in 2005 and 2007. These graphs do not depict the countries of Greece, Latvia, and Lithuania as there was no available data for total public expenditure on families for these countries. These graphs demonstrate the opposite reaction to the removal of non-EU countries, with the R-squared value decreasing by over 0.05 between Figures 5 and 6. This indicates that there is less of a connection between expenditure on families and the employment gap in the countries who were members of the EU before 2004 than in the developed countries of the OECD. This is certainly less extreme than the difference between the r-squared values in the previous set of graphs, but it is still a discrepancy that is worth consideration.

Perhaps this difference can be explained by differences in childcare between the two groups. In a comparative study of 30 European countries, the European Commission found that “the presence of a child has a small impact on male employment, but affects female employment rather heavily, especially in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and
Slovakia.⁴⁰ This might be due to the fact that those countries are among the most likely to not utilize formal childcare arrangements. In Slovakia, Lithuania, Austria, the Czech Republic and Poland, only 5% or less of children aged 0 to 2 are in formal childcare arrangements.⁴¹ Of these five countries, only Austria would be included in Figure 6. Many of the countries studied who demonstrated a low usage of formal childcare scored higher on other forms of childcare, such as using home-based caretakers (such as babysitters and nannies) or family/friends who acted as caretakers with notable exceptions being Latvia, Malta, Slovakia, Lithuania and the Czech Republic, who all scored below 25% for both formal and informal arrangements. Four of these five countries would have been eliminated between Figure 5 and Figure 6. In countries where formal childcare arrangements are already highly used, public expenditure on families might not demonstrate as large of an effect on women’s employment.

In general, this data does indicate at least a small connection between family expenditure and women’s employment. I believe that had there been OECD cross-national data on public childcare expenditure specifically there would exist a much greater negative correlation between that and the employment gap.

⁴¹ Ibid.
Expenditure on Old Age and Survivors

Figure 7: Public Expenditure on Old Age and Survivors v. The Female Employment Gap – By Country\textsuperscript{42,43}

\textsuperscript{42} “Public expenditure on old-age and survivors cash benefits, in % GDP.” \textit{OECD}. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

\textsuperscript{43} “Employment/population ratio, by sex and age group.” \textit{OECD}.
Figure 8: Public Expenditure on Old Age and Survivors v. The Female Employment Gap – Aggregate Data$^{44,45}$

![Graph showing correlation between public expenditure on old age and survivors and the female employment gap.](image)

\[ y = 0.1253x + 12.372 \]
\[ R^2 = 0.00257 \]

Figure 9: Public Expenditure on Old Age and Survivors v. The Female Employment Gap – Pre-2004 European Union, excluding Greece$^{46,47}$

![Graph showing correlation between public expenditure on old age and survivors and the female employment gap for pre-2004 EU excluding Greece.](image)

\[ y = -0.1165x + 15.183 \]
\[ R^2 = 0.00174 \]

$^{44}$ “Public expenditure on old-age and survivors cash benefits, in % GDP.” OECD.

$^{45}$ “Employment/population ratio, by sex and age group.” OECD.

$^{46}$ “Public expenditure on old-age and survivors cash benefits, in % GDP.” OECD.

$^{47}$ “Employment/population ratio, by sex and age group.” OECD.
Table 1-3: The Effects of Expenditure on the Elderly on the Employment Gap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>R-squared Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure on Elderly — OECD Countries</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure on Elderly — Pre-2004 EU</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***: p<0.01

Figures 7, 8, and 9 depict the relationship between total public expenditure in cash benefits to old age and survivors as a percentage of GDP and the difference between the male and female employment/population ratio. The years covered are 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2016, with surprisingly few gaps in available data.

These graphs do seem to show a rather negligible amount of correlation as well as P-values which render them statistically negligible, an occurrence for which I posit a few possible theories. The first is that increased spending on the elderly might result from an increasingly old population, which often occurs due to a declining birth rate. Birth rates might be declining in these countries if they lack social programs that assist mothers because more women are choosing employment over having a large family or motherhood in general. If this was true, then there would be a positive correlation between expenditure on the elderly and female employment.

The second is that increased spending on the elderly might result from an increasing number of families being unwilling to care for their elderly relatives, therefore leaving them dependent on the state and requiring the government to socialize the cost of this care. Of course, it is equally plausible that increased spending on the elderly might have led to less of a need for familial caregiving. Nevertheless, there is precedent for a lack of correlation between these two variables. In a study that took place four years after that of McLanahan and Monson, Moen, Robison, and Fields found that caregiving did not
affect women’s labor force participation because women were more likely to stop acting as caregivers than to leave the workforce.\textsuperscript{48} As social norms have changed, it is no longer as common for elderly relatives to move in with family when they become unable to care for themselves. According to the World Health Organization, the number of nursing and elderly home beds rose by over 200,000 in both Germany and France between 1999 and 2011.\textsuperscript{49} While some families might shoulder the costs for these facilities, elderly persons who have no one to fund these living situations might account for a rise in expenditure on the elderly without necessarily simultaneously freeing women from a caregiving role.

Table 1-4: Hypothesis 1 Regression Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variables</th>
<th>Coefficient estimate</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Coefficient estimate</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Coefficient estimate</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Coefficient estimate</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>14.129***</td>
<td>(0.876)</td>
<td>19.433***</td>
<td>(1.601)</td>
<td>19.117***</td>
<td>(1.889)</td>
<td>26.277***</td>
<td>(2.044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matern</td>
<td>-0.025**</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>-0.024**</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FamExp</td>
<td>-2.712***</td>
<td>(0.598)</td>
<td>-2.725***</td>
<td>(0.603)</td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td>(0.804)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OldAgeBene</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.435***</td>
<td>(0.279)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TotSocExp</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.223***</td>
<td>(0.213)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-square</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.204</td>
<td>0.205</td>
<td>0.415</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***: p<0.01

Finally, the data must be considered simultaneously using linear regression to see how social programs overall impact women’s employment. All variables other than Expenditure on Families possess regression coefficients that are considered statistically


\textsuperscript{49} “Number of nursing and elderly home beds,” \textit{European Health Information Gateway}, Copenhagen: World Health Organization: Division of Information, Evidence, Research and Innovation.
significant. Controlling for all other variables, a one unit increase in EmployGap is associated with a 0.024 unit decrease in Matern, a 1.435 unit increase in OldAgeBene, and a 1.223 unit decrease in TotSocExp. Overall, the regression equation for the effects of social services on women’s employment is the following:

\[
\text{EmployGap} = 26.277 - 0.024 \times \text{Matern} + 0.805 \times \text{FamExp} + 1.435 \times \text{OldAgeBene} - 1.223 \times \text{TotSocExp}
\]

The variables that are present in this equation are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of paid maternity and parental leave available to mothers in weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FamExp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total public social expenditure on families as a % of GDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OldAgeBene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total public expenditure in cash benefits to old age and survivors as a % of GDP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EmployGap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The difference between the employment/population ratio for males 15 to 64 and the employment/population ratio for females 15 to 64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TotSocExp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total public social expenditure as a % of GDP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to my hypothesis, this equation should read something akin to

\[
\text{EmployGap} = \beta_0 - \beta_1 \times \text{Matern} - \beta_2 \times \text{FamExp} - \beta_3 \times \text{OldAgeBene} - \beta_4 \times \text{TotSocExp}
\]

because I hypothesized that all variables would have a negative correlation with the employment gap. Obviously, only maternity leave and total social expenditure followed this expectation.
Women’s Employment and Economic Performance

My secondary research question asks if there is an economic incentive for governments to implement social services which allow women greater access to employment. The independent variable used to answer this question is the same as the dependent variable above: the difference between the male employment to population ratio and the female employment to population ratio. The dependent variable that was chosen to judge economic performance was the real GDP growth rate of each country from 1990 to 2015. This variable was chosen because it is frequently used as a metric to determine a country’s economic performance. My hypothesis is that the gap between male and female employment will show a negative correlation with a country’s GDP growth rate.
Figure 10: The Female Employment Gap v. GDP Growth Rate – By Country

50 “Employment/population ratio, by sex and age group.” OECD.
Figure 11: The Female Employment Gap v. GDP Growth Rate – Aggregate Data\textsuperscript{52,53}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure11}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textbf{The Female Employment Gap v. GDP Growth Rate – Aggregate Data}
\end{center}

$y = 0.0421x + 2.7626$

$R^2 = 0.0142$

Figure 12: The Female Employment Gap v. GDP Growth Rate – Pre-2004 European Union, excluding Greece\textsuperscript{54,55}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure12}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textbf{The Female Employment Gap v. GDP Growth Rate – Pre-2004 European Union, excluding Greece}
\end{center}

$y = 0.0708x + 1.9989$

$R^2 = 0.1115$

\textsuperscript{52} “Employment/population ratio, by sex and age group.” \textit{OECD}.

\textsuperscript{53} “Gross domestic product (GDP), 2019 archive : GDP, volume – annual growth rates in percentage, 2019 archive.” \textit{OECD}.

\textsuperscript{54} “Employment/population ratio, by sex and age group.” \textit{OECD}.

\textsuperscript{55} “Gross domestic product (GDP), 2019 archive : GDP, volume – annual growth rates in percentage, 2019 archive.” \textit{OECD}.
Table 1-5: The Effects of the Employment Gap on Economic Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>R-squared Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment Gap — OECD Countries</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Gap — Pre-2004 EU</td>
<td>0.112***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***: p<0.01

Figures 10, 11, and 12 depict the relationship between the difference between the male and female employment/population ratio. The years covered are 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015, with only a few data gaps only existing in 1990 and 1995 in some of the countries which were not yet OECD members (such as Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia).

The r-squared value goes up nearly an entire 0.1 percent between Figures 11 and 12, and the P-value for the data in Figure 11 is 0.114 while it is 0.002 for Figure 12, a large difference that indicates only the data in Figure 12 can be considered statistically significant. I believe this discrepancy between OECD results and pre-2004 European Union results can be explained by a few factors. First of all, when making the graph for Figure 12, I omitted the data for Ireland from 2015. During this year, Ireland had an unprecedented growth rate of 25.16, largely due to a heavy inflow of Foreign Direct Investment. This means that for this year Ireland’s growth rate was due much more to external factors than to internal factors. Therefore, Ireland 2015 is an outlier with the potential of skewing the data. The removal of this outlier allows for a more accurate and representative correlation. Secondly, the countries which have been in the EU the longest are typically also the European countries which have been considered “developed” for the longest time as well. This makes them much more likely to have lower GDP growth rates.
than countries such as those in Eastern Europe. They are also more likely to have had relatively stable grow rates during the years present in these graphs.

Regarding the fact that in Figure 12, the R-squared value is still relatively low at 0.112, one must consider the number of other factors that affect a country’s GDP growth and bear in mind that there is unlikely to be a particularly high correlation between any one variable and GDP growth due to all of these compounding variables. These compounding variables have been addressed by performing linear regression with a number of controls including the following: gross domestic expenditure on Research and Development, Gross Capital Formation, and the total employment to population ratio for those aged 15 to 64.

*Table 1-6: Hypothesis 2 Regression Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variables</th>
<th>Coefficient estimate</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Coefficient estimate</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Coefficient estimate</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Coefficient estimate</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.790***</td>
<td>(0.597)</td>
<td>2.705</td>
<td>(3.203)</td>
<td>0.680</td>
<td>(3.528)</td>
<td>-4.171</td>
<td>(3.419)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EmployGap</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>(0.047)</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>(0.050)</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>(0.047)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empl2PopALL</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>(0.053)</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>(0.049)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExpRDoiGD P</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.516</td>
<td>(0.408)</td>
<td>-0.473</td>
<td>(0.376)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCapForm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.307***</td>
<td>(0.068)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-square</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***: p<0.01

For all OECD countries overall, only the effect of Gross Capital Development on GDP Growth Rate is considered statistically significant. Controlling for all other variables, a one unit increase in GDPGrow is associated with a 0.307 unit increase in
GCapForm. No other variable’s regression coefficient possesses a low enough P-value to be considered statistically significant.

Accounting for all controls, the regression equation for the effects of women’s employment on GDP growth is the following:

\[
GDP\text{Grow} = -4.171 - 0.008*\text{EmployGap} + 0.021*\text{Empl2PopALL} - 0.473*\text{ExpRDofGDP} + 0.307*\text{GCapForm}
\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EmployGap</td>
<td>The difference between the employment/population ratio for males 15 to 64 and the employment/population ratio for females 15 to 64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP\text{Grow}</td>
<td>Real GDP Growth Rate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Variables</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ExpRDofGDP</td>
<td>Gross domestic expenditure on Research and Development as a % of GDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCapForm</td>
<td>Gross Capital Formation which includes expenditure on economies fixed assets + net changes in inventory levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empl2PopALL</td>
<td>The total employment/population ratio for males and females aged 15 to 64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Had it followed my hypothesis exactly, this equation would have looked something like \( GDP\text{Grow} = \beta_0 - \beta_1*\text{EmployGap} + \beta_2*\text{Empl2PopALL} + \beta_3*\text{ExpRDofGDP} + \beta_4*\text{GCapForm} \) because I believed that my independent variable would show a negative correlation and my control variables would all demonstrate positive correlations. Therefore, the actual regression equation mostly matches my expectations, other than the negative effect of expenditure on research and development on GDP Growth Rate.

Overview of Results

This chapter indicates that within the OECD, social programs can impact women’s employment, and an investment in women’s employment can positively impact the economy. For many of the variables examined, though, the strongest correlations can
be seen when only data from the pre-2004 European Union is used. This could easily be due to the fact that examining just these countries indirectly controls for a number of factors as the countries in this group are more likely to be socially, economically, and politically similar than all of the countries within the OECD. The next chapter will look at a series of three country case studies, all of which were members of the EU before 2004 to continue to control for some of these possible confounding variables, and will take a closer look at the specifics of social programs that affect women’s access to the workforce and the quality of work that they can pursue.
CHAPTER II: WELFARE REGIME CASE STUDIES

The following chapter will be more closely examining social programs in place that improve women’s access to employment in three countries: Sweden, Ireland, and France. Each of these countries represents a different welfare regime as classified by sociologist Esping-Andersen. Data used for cross-national comparison was primarily obtained from Eurostat and the European Institute for Gender Equality’s Gender Equality Index. Specifics relating to the programs in place are described in order to highlight what the most effective programs might entail. The aim of these case studies is to illustrate three common approaches to implementing social services, specifically to implementing social services that ameliorate or prevent factors that commonly bar women from pursuing employment, and to demonstrate which of these approaches is most effective.

Types of Welfare States

In *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Esping-Andersen classifies welfare states into three categories: liberal regimes, corporatist regimes, and social democratic regimes. For each of these regimes, he lists commonly associated qualities and practices as well as the overall perception of and driving-force behind their countries’ welfare states. For this chapter, I am analyzing one OECD member country that is an example of each regime in order to illustrate the effect of different welfare states – considering their different emphases and attitudes – on women’s employment. These countries must also be members of the European Union prior to 2004 to ensure that they have consistently been in relatively similar levels of development throughout the years included in this time series.
The “liberal” welfare state is marked by “means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers, or modest social-insurance plans,” and its benefits “cater mainly to a clientele of low-income, usually working class, state dependents.” In these countries, welfare is usually still stigmatized, meaning that entitlement rules are strict and benefits are usually modest. Instead, the state encourages the market either by only guaranteeing a minimum or subsidizing private welfare schemes. Examples of this regime include the United States, Canada, Australia, and Ireland.

The “corporatist” welfare state, often referred to by others as conservative regimes, is known for promoting a preservation of status differentials by attaching rights to class and status. The state mostly takes over from the market as a welfare provider, leaving private insurance and occupational fringe benefits with a marginal role. However, because of the commitment of these regimes to upholding class differences, their redistributive impact is often negligible. Historically, these regimes were often heavily influenced by the Church, which led to them also being committed to preserving more traditional family structures. Therefore, “social insurance typically excludes non-working wives, and family benefits encourage motherhood.” Also, “day care, and similar family services are conspicuously underdeveloped… [which] serves to emphasize that the state will only interfere when the family’s capacity to service its members is exhausted.” Examples include France, Austria, Germany, and Italy.

57 Esping-Andersen, Three Worlds, 26-27.
58 Esping-Andersen, Three Worlds, 27.
59 Ibid.
The third and final regime is the “social democratic” welfare state, which includes what are typically known as the Scandinavian countries, such as Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. This regime earned its name because “social democracy was clearly the dominant force behind social reform,” with these countries pursuing a welfare state that promoted a higher standard for equality rather than an equality based on minimal needs as was the case with the other regimes. Most importantly, though – as far as relevance to this topic – is that this model “preemptively socializes the costs of familyhood” by taking a more direct responsibility for caring for children, the elderly, and the disabled. According to Esping-Andersen, they are “committed to a heavy social-service burden… to allow women to choose work rather than the household.”

The countries which I have chosen to examine are Ireland (liberal regime), France (corporatist), and Sweden (social democratic). These countries were chosen based on an examination of the Gender Equality Index, a tool for judging the progress in decreasing gender gap within the EU developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality. The index gives each country a score between 0 and 100 in categories including power, health, knowledge, time, money, and work. The 2019 index was especially pertinent due to its stated thematic focus on work-life balance as a measure of gender equality. Sweden was chosen due to the fact that it was ranked first by the European Institute for Gender Equality in the 2019 Gender Equality Index – in fact it has been ranked first since the index was created in 2005. In the 2019 index, France was ranked third, the highest

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60 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
ranking achieved by a corporatist regime, while Ireland was ranked seventh overall.63 Therefore, France was chosen as the highest ranking corporatist regime, and Ireland was chosen as the highest ranking liberal regime within the European Union.64 Each of these countries possesses their own unique history related to family-supportive and feminist policies which must be examined in order to contextualize where each country is currently positioned in these rankings.

Ireland

Ireland has a history of being behind other similarly developed nations when it comes to female employment supportive policies. In the early 1930s, a “marriage bar” was put in place in Ireland, preventing married women from working in the public sector. This law was not abolished until 1973, the year that Ireland joined the European Union.65 While a marriage bar was not unique to Ireland, it was lifted later than those of other similarly-developed countries, indicating that Ireland remained behind the times when it came to feminist policy.

Ireland has begun to make progress, though, in its general efforts towards gender equality. At the time of the first publication of the Gender Equality Index in 2005, Ireland was ranked below the overall Europe Union score. As of 2019, however, Ireland occupies a rank five places higher than the EU, with its overall score increasing by 9.4 over the course of those fourteen years. For comparison, higher-ranked countries such as Denmark and Sweden showcase score increases of 2.9 and 4.8, respectively. Ireland’s greatest area of growth was within the power category, where their score increased by 21.3 points.

64 The United Kingdom was not considered as it is technically no longer a member of the EU.
65 Pamela Duncan, “Women at Work: 40 years of change” The Irish Times, 8 June 2013.
This can be partially credited to the introduction of a 30% legislative candidate quota in 2012. Such an increase in the share of women represented in legislative assemblies allows for women’s issues to occupy a place of importance, likely leading to more policies aimed at addressing problems that exclusively or disproportionately affect women. Thus, theoretically, one could expect to see an accelerated increase in Ireland’s performance in all categories below from 2012 onwards.

**France**

Between the first publication of the Gender Equality Index in 2005 and the most recent publication in 2019, France has improved their ranking by four places, now occupying third place behind Sweden and Denmark. Like Ireland, their progress in the “power” category is particularly notable, with their score increasing between 2005 and 2019 from 43.6 to 78.3. This 34.7-point jump can be somewhat explained by France’s introduction of a 50% legislative quota in 2000 which requires 50/50 representation of each sex for political parties’ candidate lists in most elections.66 This was the first compulsory gender parity provision at 50 percent in the world, and while there has been some pushback, this law has increased the share of women legislators over the last 20 years.67 More recent amendments to the electoral code now require voters in each canton of a department to elect both a male and a female member to departmental councils, thereby producing an exact parity between the sexes. As previously mentioned, legislative equality is an important factor in the promotion of legislation relating to women’s issues.

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67 “Gender Quotas Database.”
Sweden

In 2014, recently elected social democratic Prime Minister Stefan Löfven stated his intent to make Sweden the world’s “first feminist government.” On Sweden’s official website, the Swedish government today still proudly declares itself to be “a feminist government,” and they define the Swedish principle of gender equality as being “that everyone, regardless of gender, has the right to work and support themselves, to balance career and family life, and to live without the fear of abuse or violence.”

But even before their declaration of commitment to feminist policies, Sweden has long been a leader in Europe concerning women’s rights. For example, in 1974 Sweden became the first country to allow parents to split what had previously just been termed “maternity leave.” In 1938, Sweden legalized contraception while it was not legalized in France and Ireland until 1967 and 1979, respectively. In this case of Ireland, this was a highly limited legalization, only allowing for contraception of all kinds to be dispersed by a pharmacist upon presentation of a prescription written by a doctor. It is clear that Sweden’s declaration as the world’s “first feminist government” was not a moment of radical change, but rather a continuation and expansion of social policy that had long been in place. In *Changing Welfare States*, Anton Hemerijck went so far as to state that “a strong and gender-neutral work ethic has always been a bastion of Scandinavian social democracy.”

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68 “Sweden and Gender Equality,” sweden.se (Swedish Institute, April 10, 2019).
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
Quality of Women’s Employment

Women’s equal access to employment cannot simply be determined by comparing the male and female employment rates, as quality of employment cannot be revealed by this data. One of the most important factors in determining quality of employment is whether a person is engaged in part-time or full-time work. Many women involuntarily work part-time, meaning that part-time employment is not a choice that they made based upon preference, but rather due to necessity. Women in countries without programs in place to ameliorate factors that commonly bar women from entering the workforce, particularly care-giving responsibilities, might find themselves unable to reconcile their familial obligations with a full-time career. The solution for many of these women who either wish to work or who cannot afford to be unemployed is to engage in part-time work. Being forced into part-time work has many negative repercussions for women as “part-time jobs are often of lower quality with lower hourly wages, provide poorer training and career opportunities, and, in the long run, reduce pension entitlements.”74 While part-time work in general has been increasing in Europe since 2007,75 it still remains a heavily gendered occurrence. In 2018, part-time employment as a percentage of the total employment for men in the European Union was at 8.7% while for women it was 31.3%.76

75 Vaalavuo.
76 “Part-time employment as percentage of the total employment, by sex, age and citizenship.” Eurostat. Luxembourg-Kirchberg: Statistical Office of the European Communities.
The figure above illustrates the full-time equivalent employment rate for women in France, Ireland, and Sweden. The full-time equivalent employment rate is calculated by comparing the average number of hours worked by an individual to the average number of hours worked by a full-time employee. A full-time worker would count as one FTE, while a part-time worker is assigned a proportional number based on the number of hours that they work. The usage of this unit of measure therefore allows for comparison that accounts for vast variations in part-time employment.

Variations in part-time employment can provide a glimpse into whether part-time employment is a necessity for the women of a certain country, such as those in which the cost of un-socialized childcare is too high for women to justify a full-time job, or an emancipatory factor that gives women the freedom to pursue employment on their own.

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78 “Full-time equivalent (FTE),” OECD Statistical Glossary.
terms by allowing them the flexibility to better divide their time between work and familial obligations. Ideally, women (and men) would have the flexibility to schedule the exact number of hours that they believe they can work while still fulfilling caregiving obligations, rather than having to outright choose between a 20-hour job or a 40-hour job, especially considering that part-time work is often associated with lower pay and a lack of benefits. This is particularly true in countries with liberal welfare regimes such as Ireland where many of the benefits associated with full-time work (retirement funding, health insurance, etc.) are socialized to a lesser degree than in countries with social-democratic and corporatist welfare regimes.

This graph covers 2005, 2010, 2012, 2015, and 2017 because these were the years for which data was available through the Gender Equality Index. While France and Ireland have remained close to one another and experienced little change since 2005, Sweden has demonstrated both a consistently higher rate and steady growth over the years. This is a particularly interesting finding when considering Figure 13 in conjunction with Figure 14 below.
Figure 14 shows the part-time employment rates of women in France, Ireland, and Sweden. These rates show part-time employment as a percentage of the total employment in each country for people between the ages of 25 and 54. The age group 25 to 54 was chosen due to two factors – 1) the more commonly used age group of 15 to 64 is likely to be skewed since so many teenagers and young adult enter part-time work while in school and 2) this age group more closely aligns with prime childbearing and childrearing years. The years represented in this graph are all the years for which there was available data.

Figure 14 contrasts with the expectations potentially created by Figure 13, as Figure 13 shows the greatest female full-time equivalent employment rate in Sweden, and yet Figure 14 shows the highest female part-time employment rate in Sweden. This

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79 “Part-time employment as percentage of the total employment, by sex, age and citizenship.” Eurostat. Luxembourg-Kirchberg: Statistical Office of the European Communities.
highlights the fact that within certain societies part-time employment is not necessarily indicative of women being pushed into part-time work to balance their career with familial obligation, but rather a greater degree of flexibility within their career, a factor that will be further discussed below in the section on women’s employment in Sweden.
Figure 15: Percentage of Females Who Work Part-Time Due to Caregiving by Country

Figure 16: Percentage of Males Who Work Part-Time Due to Caregiving by Country


Figures 15 and 16 contrast the percentage of males and females who self-identified their main reason for part-time employment as the need to look after children or incapacitated adults. Despite variations, overall a similar percentage of women appear to choose to work part-time due to caregiving responsibilities in each of the three counties. Between 2006 and 2018, on average 28.9% of women in Ireland, 34.5% of women in France, and 27.4% of women in Sweden identified looking after children or incapacitated adults as their main reason for working part-time. While women do consistently show a much higher rate of choosing to work part-time due to caregiving responsibilities, both Ireland and Sweden demonstrate increasing rates of men choosing to work part-time in order to be caregivers, while in France the percentage has remained steadily between 6.6 and 8.8.
Figure 17: Inactive Female Population as a Percentage of Total Female Population by Country\textsuperscript{82}

![Inactive Female Population as a Percentage of Total Female Population](image)

Figure 18: Female Inactive Population Due to Caregiving by Country\textsuperscript{83}

![Inactive Population Due to Caregiving (Females)](image)

\textsuperscript{82} “Inactive population due to caring responsibilities by sex.” Eurostat, Luxembourg-Kirchberg: Statistical Office of the European Communities.

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
*Figure 17* shows the inactive female population as a percent of the total female population ages 20 to 64 while *Figure 18* shows the percentage of the inactive female population ages 20 to 64 who identified caregiving as the main reason they are not actively seeking employment. Members of this group would be considered neither employed nor unemployed, but rather outside of the labor force. Therefore, members of this group would not have figured into the employment rates in *Figure 14* nor the full-time equivalent employment rates in *Figure 13*.

The major jump that can be observed in Ireland could be due to a change in sampling that occurred between 2011 and 2012. Ireland introduced a new sample into the Labor Force Survey (on which this data is based) following the 2011 census. The similar, though less extreme, leap that occurred in French data can also be attributed to a change in research methods. Beginning in 2009, an “old” sample, which was based upon the 1999 population census, was gradually replaced by a “new” sample that was selected from tax registers. The “old” sample was fully replaced by the fourth quarter of 2011. Therefore, from 2012 onwards, this graph makes an interesting contrast with *Figure 15*, as a significantly larger percentage of women in France and especially in Ireland appear to choose to simply not work at all due to caregiving responsibilities than those in Sweden.

While the graphs above show that Ireland still has progress to make concerning gender equality in employment, they also reveal that Ireland has been steadily improving in this area over the years as they have experienced the greatest decrease in their inactive

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85 Labour force survey in the EU,” 22.
female population out of these three countries. Much in the same way, though, that
countries that start with a lower GDP often demonstrate higher growth rates, countries
like Ireland who have historically been behind other countries in female employment
quality and equality are more likely to demonstrate faster progress than other countries
with a much smaller gap to fill.

As can be seen in the figures above, trends in women’s employment in France
tend to represent the middle ground between those of Ireland and Sweden. But in almost
all of the categories present above, France remains quite stable over the years, seeming to
indicate a lack of steady, discernible progress. This lack of progress is further echoed by
the fact that between 2005 and 2019 France’s gender equality index score has only
increased by 1.9 points while the scores of Ireland and Sweden have improved by 4.4 and
4.3 points, respectively.86

As previously mentioned, the graphs above concerning part-time women’s
employment show data that seems to defy the expectations that family-supportive
policies will lead to a lower part-time employment rate. Figure 14 shows that Sweden has
the highest part-time employment rate for women out of these three countries, yet Figure
13 shows Sweden to have a significantly higher full-time equivalent employment for
women than both France and Ireland. This would seem to insinuate that on average
Swedish women who work part-time work more hours than their Irish and French
counterparts. According to Figure 17, Sweden also has a significantly smaller inactive
female population than France and Ireland, and of that population, few women credit
caregiving as the reason for their inactivity.

86 “Gender Equality Index.”
Sweden’s higher female part-time employment rate can be credited to the fact that they have made flexible working hours the norm in an effort to encourage work-life balance. In 2019, 43.8% of Swedish women and 38.3% of Swedish men reported that they were able to adapt their working hours within set limits, in contrast with 19% of women and 18.7% of men in the EU. And while 57.3% of women and 54% of men in the EU overall stated that their working hours were set by their company with no possibility for changes, only 34.6% of Swedish women and 34% of Swedish men reported the same. 87

Childcare

The following graphs compare the hours that children within specific age groups spend in formal childcare in Ireland, France, and Sweden. Formal childcare arrangements include the following: pre-school education, compulsory education, center-based childcare services outside of school hours, and daycare center-based childcare. Therefore, this data does not account for direct arrangements between parents and caretakers such as nannies, babysitters, or relatives.

Figure 19: Children Under 3 in 0 Weekly Hours of Childcare by Country

Figure 20: Children Under 3 in 30+ Weekly Hours of Childcare by Country


89 Ibid.
Figure 21: Children 3 to School Aged in 0 Weekly Hours of Childcare by Country

![Graph showing the percent of children 3 to compulsory school age in 0 weekly hours of formal childcare or education by country for France, Ireland, and Sweden from 2005 to 2018.]

Figure 22: Children 3 to School Aged in 30+ Weekly Hours of Childcare by Country

![Graph showing the percent of children 3 to compulsory school age in 30+ weekly hours of formal childcare or education by country for France, Ireland, and Sweden from 2005 to 2018.]

90 “Formal child care by duration and age group.”
91 Ibid.
Figures 19 and 20 show data for children under the age of three, while Figures 21 and 22 show data from children from age three to the minimum compulsory school age, which is six years of age in all three countries. Figures 19 and 21 show children in zero weekly hours of formal childcare while Figures 20 and 22 show children in 30 or more weekly hours of formal childcare to demonstrate two extreme ends of the childcare spectrum. Also, theoretically, parents would likely need to be able to place their children in 30 or more weekly hours of childcare in order to be able to work full-time jobs.

Each of these countries remains relatively reliably where one would predict it to be in relation to the others due to its type of welfare regime, particularly when looking at children in 30 or more hours of formal childcare per week. The graph that shows the least apparent division by country is Figure 21, which looks at children from age three to the compulsory school age in zero weekly hours of formal childcare. This is likely due to the fact that in all three countries, the age at which parents have the right to enroll children in early childhood education/care services is either three or younger, meaning that parents in these countries have the option of placing their child in formal childcare without incurring costs beginning at this age.  

93 Ibid.
Figure 23: Children Under 3 in Zero Weekly Hours of Childcare v. Employment Gap

Figure 24: Children 3 to School Age in 0 Weekly Hours of Childcare v. Employment Gap

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94 “Formal child care by duration and age group.”

95 Ibid.
Figure 25: Children Under 3 in 30+ Weekly Hours of Childcare v. Employment Gap

Children Younger than 3 in 30+ hrs of Childcare v. the Employment Gap

\[ y = -0.3018x + 15.73 \]
\[ R^2 = 0.67693 \]

Figure 26: Children 3 to School Age in 30+ Weekly Hours of Childcare v. Employment Gap

Children Aged 3 to School Age in 30+ hrs of Childcare v. the Employment Gap

\[ y = -0.1606x + 16.189 \]
\[ R^2 = 0.67655 \]

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96 “Formal child care by duration and age group.”
97 Ibid.
Table 2-1: The Effects of Formal Childcare on the Employment Gap between Men and Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>R-squared Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children Under 3 in Zero Weekly Hours</td>
<td>0.684***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children 3 to School Age in 0 Weekly Hours</td>
<td>0.319***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children Under 3 in 30+ Weekly Hours</td>
<td>0.677***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children 3 to School Age in 30+ Weekly Hours</td>
<td>0.677***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***: p<0.01

Figures 23, 24, 25, and 26 compare the hours that children within specific age groups spend in formal childcare in each country and the difference between male and female employment rates in those same countries. Figures 23 and 24 show a comparison for children under three and children three to six respectively who are enrolled in zero hours of formal childcare weekly. Figures 25 and 26 show a comparison between the female employment gap and childcare for children of those same respective age groups who are enrolled in 30+ weekly hours of childcare.

In Figure 23, there is a relatively strong positive correlation between a higher employment gap and a higher percentage of children under 3 in zero weekly hours of formal childcare. This correlation is less strong in Figure 24, which concerns children aged three to six, likely due to the aforementioned fact that children in each of these countries have a right to enroll in formal childcare or education beginning at the latest at the age of three. This very factor is likely the reason that the range for the percentage of children in this age group enrolled in zero weekly hours across all countries’ data was 19.5, while for children in the younger age group the range of the data was 46.

In both Figures 25 and 26, a relatively strong negative correlation can be seen between the difference between male and female employment rates and the percentage of
children in 30+ weekly hours of childcare for both age groups, with each showing over a 67% correlation. The range of the data for children aged three to six in 30+ weekly hours of formal childcare – 64.6 – is much greater than that of similarly aged children in zero weekly hours. This indicates a greater variation in behaviors cross-nationally, and likely points to the fact that in some countries part-time childcare averaging anywhere between 1 and 29 hours per week is the most common route.

As can be seen in Figures 19, 20, 21, and 22 above, young Irish children spend much less time in formal childcare than those in France and Sweden. The European Commission’s 2018 Report on equality between men and women in the EU found that in Ireland “childcare-related net costs represent 33% of disposable income for a couple with children with median earnings.” This means that in Ireland there is a huge financial disincentive for mothers with children to return to work – particularly full-time work – after having a child. If the increase in household income will not offset the cost of childcare, it would be considered financially inefficient for both members of a couple to work. This is more likely to impact women, as the median pay for women in Ireland has consistently been below that of men since Eurostat data for median income became available in 2008.

In the past, French children had the right to 24 hours of childcare per week beginning at the age of three. As of September 2019, all French children are now required by law to go to school full-time beginning at this same age. The fact that only part-time care is guaranteed can explain why Figure 15 shows a high rate of French women who

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work part-time due to caregiving responsibilities, though this percentage has been decreasing over time.\textsuperscript{100}

The state partially funds principle childcare services in France, meaning that the cost of childcare in France lies somewhere between that in Ireland and Sweden as expected due to their regime types. The government is currently seeking to increase the number of places available in crèches, early childcare facilities that are famously overburdened, particularly in large cities. By 2022, the French government is aiming to create 30,000 new spots in crèches.\textsuperscript{101}

Swedish policy aims to prompt women to pursue both a career and a family, therefore, the government employs generous childcare policies to ensure a high female labor force participation and a steady fertility rate. A majority of Swedish children aged 1 to 5 attend either a private or public preschool. Parents who are either students or employees can send their children to preschool for 40 or more hours a week as needed, and they typically pay a fee between 1 and 3\% of their income. Fees vary depending upon the amount of time the child spends at the pre-school and the municipality in which they live. Swedish municipalities both receive state grants and tax local income to finance these pre-schools.\textsuperscript{102}

There exist other forms of child-care, though public preschools are the most commonly utilized. Public family day care – attended by approximately 12\% of children – caters to a small number of children within the provider’s own home. Private day care

\textsuperscript{101}“Country profiles - France: Policies and progress towards investing in children.”
centers – attended by approximately 13% of children – are run by organizations such as churches, but still receive funding from the municipality and must follow the same curriculum.103

**Elderly Care**

One final -- and often overlooked -- area of caregiving that impacts women’s employment is that of caring for elderly family members. An important factor that determines the dependence of elders upon caregivers is their financial stability, which is often indicated by pensions. There are a wide variety of pension schemes present in Europe, some mostly privately driven and others more publicly funded. Some aim to allow pensioners to all reach a universal basic minimum, others allow them to maintain close to their previous standard of living, and many are a hybrid of these two systems. In countries where there is a lower basic minimum, the elderly are more dependent upon the financial support of working family members. Should these members of the elderly need specific caregiving that they are unable to personally afford, their family members must either pay for this caregiving or provide this caregiving themselves. Therefore, in countries where external elderly caregiving could prove to be a major expense for a family, lower-earning family members -- who are typically female -- might elect to not work or work part-time in order to provide this care.

Ireland’s public pension system pays a flat-rate fee to all who meet minimum contribution conditions. State pension is payable beginning at the age of 66, though this minimum age will increase to 67 in 2021. Full entitlement to state pension is dependent upon the pensioner providing an average of 48 of weeks’ worth of contributions or credits

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103 Westling Allodi, 2.
per year over the course of their working life. Effective March 2018 for those who reached pension age after September 1, 2012, pensioners must have provided 40 years of contributions to collect the full rate. The state pension as of 2019 was set at 243.30 € per week, with an additional 10 € paid to anyone aged 80 or older. There is also a non-contributory means-tested state pension alternatively available from age 66, with a maximum value of 232 € per week. Over half of employees are covered by voluntary occupational pension schemes which a contribution rate typically set at 10%.  

Since 1994, public pension entitlement has not been affected by periods outside of the labor force due to caregiving responsibilities as long as a minimum of 520 weeks of contributions have been paid. As of the introduction of the “total contributions approach” in January 2018, a maximum of 20 out of the 40 years required to receive a full-rate state pension may be spent caring for children up to 12 years old or caring for a dependent adult, such as an elderly family member or a child with a disability.

Currently, the French are entitled to a full-rate public pension if they “fulfill either both a minimum contributory record (41.5 years for people born in 1957, who can retire at the legal age of 62 in 2019) and the minimum legal pension age (62 years for people born in 1957) or to be aged at least 67 (for people born in 1957).” The main public pension scheme seeks to allow the French to somewhat maintain their standard of living after retirement by paying at a rate of 50% for those who worked a full career (currently 41.5 years). This rate is based upon an average of their 25 highest-earning years, and payments cannot exceed 40,524 € annually.  

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105 Ibid.
Sweden’s “national retirement pension consists of a pay-as-you-go notional accounts system and a mandatory funded defined contribution pension and a defined benefit pension-income-tested top-up. Therefore, this system is targeted at maintaining the former living standards (to a point) of pensioners. While earnings-related national pensions can be withdrawn beginning at the age of 62 (as of January 2020), the guarantee pension benefit, which requires three years’ residency, is available beginning at the age of 65. Pension ages are on track to continue increasing to keep up with increasing life expectancy and an aging population, hitting 64 by 2026. The public pension system credits any years in which you have children aged four or below living in your household, with the credit going to the parent with the lowest income.

Figure 27: Pension Expenditure in PPS per Inhabitant

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109 Ibid.
Figure 27 shows a comparison of pension expenditure in France, Ireland, and Sweden using the unit purchasing power standard (PPS) per inhabitant. PPS is a unit of measure that accounts for price level differences between countries, meaning that one PPS unit would buy the exact same type and quantity of goods in each country. Therefore, the use of this unit acts as a control against certain possible confounding variables. In a similar way, measuring expenditure per inhabitant eliminates the possibility that countries with a larger population overall will automatically appear to outspend less populated countries.

This graph demonstrates that the Irish government distributes far less money to pensioners than that of France or Sweden. This is expected as the Irish pension system simply aims to supply a universalistic basic income, often supported by additional pension contributions through a retiree’s former place of employment. While Ireland is in its expected location according to its regime type, Sweden and France appear to be reversed, particularly in more recent years when the gap between the two countries widens.
Table 2-1: The Effects of Formal Childcare on the Employment Gap between Men and Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>R-squared Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pension Expenditure in PPS per inhabitant</td>
<td>0.468***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: p<0.1; **: p<0.05; ***: p<0.01

Figure 28 illustrates the negative correlation between pension expenditure and the employment gap between men and women while Table 2-1 ensures the significance of this correlation. There clearly exists a relationship between the two, a relationship that is even stronger than that between the employment gap and children aged 3 to school age who are in zero weekly hours of formal childcare for which the R-squared value was 0.319. This highlights the fact that elder care cannot be overlooked as a factor that impacts women’s employment.

111 "Pensions." Eurostat.
Overview of Results

In general, each of these countries follows the patterns expected of them based upon their welfare regime. Sweden, the social democratic regime, demonstrates a much greater commitment to feminist policy and enabling women to join the labor force than France or Ireland. France, the corporatist regime, tends to show results somewhere between those of Sweden and Ireland, the liberal regime, though its data is often much closer to that of Sweden than to that of Ireland. Ireland, despite its comparatively worse performance, does seem to be steadily improving in several categories while France frequently remains stagnant. These countries clearly indicate the importance of social programs in allowing caregivers to be active within the labor force. These graphs also do indicate that in general progress has continued to be made within the last 15 to 25 years.
CONCLUSION

Clearly, legislation and welfare that affects caregiving responsibilities also directly affects female employment, especially caregiving related to children as is indicated by the statistically significant correlations between maternity leave and the employment gap as well as between expenditure on families and the employment gap. This is further supported by the case studies, which show that countries like France and Sweden that possess more programs aimed at, in the words of Esping-Andersen, de-familializing, show both smaller employment gaps and generally higher quality of work for women. Sweden, which possesses that policies that best support female employment, demonstrates two qualities that I think are essential in encouraging women’s employment: 1) flexibility in working hours and 2) division of care labor.

The first, flexibility, allows women to work in jobs that are as close to full-time work as they are able to work. For example, some mothers might find it difficult to work in the late afternoons when their children are released from school. In an environment where flexible working hours are encouraged, these mothers might be able to work 32-hour work weeks to allow them to be free before the evening. In an inflexible environment, these mothers might have to choose between working 20 hours part-time or working 40 hours and making other arrangements for their children to be taken home from school.

The second quality, division of care labor, relates to Sweden’s perception of gendered care-giving responsibilities. Care-giving is more equally (though not perfectly equally) divide between mothers and fathers in Sweden, freeing up more of the mother’s time to be able to work outside of the home. Since 2014, Sweden has possessed the
lowest percentage of women who work part-time due to caregiving responsibilities out of these three countries, and consistently throughout all years of available data they have simultaneously possessed the highest percentage of males who work part-time due to caregiving responsibilities. Swedish parental leave policies also encourage men to participate in caregiving by allocating a paternity leave to men on non-transferable, use-it-or-lose-it basis.

Finally, the question as to whether or not a smaller employment gap between men and women improves the economy remains challenging to answer. In the OECD countries overall, there was little correlation and the results were not considered statistically significant. However, when looking at only the countries in the European Union before 2004, there is a correlation that is both statistically significant and relatively high considering the number of factors that impact GDP Growth Rate. Because the countries in the EU before 2004 would be more likely to be a group with similar economic, social, and political history and conditions, the data from these countries could be considered to be better controlled than that from all the developed countries of the OECD. Therefore, it can be assumed that a smaller employment gap could encourage a better performing economy.

Nevertheless, if there was no correlation between women’s employment and economic performance, there would remain any number of factors that indicate the importance of legislation that allows women to pursue work outside of the home. Economically, women being tied to the home, especially women who the state has invested in by paying for their education, is a waste of human capital. Politically, a lower

112 Excluding Greece
rate of women in the workforce could lower tax revenue. And socially and morally, no group should feel barred, even indirectly, from pursuing their ambitions simply on the basis of sex.
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