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Family-Sensitive Policy: Broadening the Conceptual Lens for Evaluating Social Protection

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Abstract

The changing patterns of social relations in modern times have weakened the bonds of family life and the capacity of this institution to perform its functions essential to human development. Conventional analyses of the impact of family policies tend to focus on the extent to which these measures help to reconcile work and family life, advance gender equality, boost fertility rates and provide financial supports for families. This paper makes a case for broadening the analytic perspective to include the impact of policies on family functioning. This family-sensitive analytic lens focuses on outcomes that strengthen the bonds of family life and the capacity to perform the basic functions of procreation, socialization of the young, care for dependent members, emotional companionship and mutual support over the life course. The family-sensitive lens encourages policymakers to consider alternative consequences of social programs and normative issues regarding their impact on family life.

Keywords Gender equality · Divorce · Solidarity · Marriage · Family impact · Social protection

This article makes a case for expanding the conventional perspectives on the design and impact of family policies, which are typically focused on issues such as gender equality, labor force participation of family members, income protection and child development. The objective here is to formulate an alternative conceptual lens through which to analyze and evaluate family policies, one that emphasizes the impact of social benefits on family stability and cohesion over the life course. The justifications for this objective stem not only from the importance of strong family ties as the institutional foundation for human development, but also from the unsettling changes in the character of family life in modern times.

As an institution that serves the basic social functions of procreation, socialization, nurturing of the young, social-emotional gratification and care for dependent members, and mutual support, the family is often referred to as the basic building block of society. It is the primary seedbed for the transmission of human values and a vital source of social cohesion and mutual support mediating between the individual and the state. Since the mid-twentieth century, social,

economic, and technological developments have disrupted the established patterns of family life in many regions throughout the world, weakening the bonds and undermining the capacity to perform the essential functions of this social institution. The changing patterns of family life include the mounting rates of divorce, single parenthood and cohabitation, a rising number of elderly people living alone, and perhaps most notably the declining participation in bearing and rearing children, (Coontz 2005; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2012; Ochiai 1996; Ochiai and Molony 2008; Hakim 2000; Mason and Ekman 2017). Traditional cultural values and social norms of parental behavior are in flux, as is the customary gender division of labor in household production. Fewer people are getting married. Couples who do marry are doing so later in life, splitting up more frequently, having fewer children, and living longer than ever before. All of these developments have significant policy-related implications for social protection systems of modern welfare states. In its most extreme form, these changes have been characterized as the “de-institutionalization” of family life, exemplified in individualization, delayed parenthood, increasing rates of cohabitation, divorce and single-parent households (Lundqvist and Ostner 2017; Cherlin 2004). Beaujot and Ravanera (2008, p.78) note that “the second demographic transition has been linked to secularization and the growing importance of individual autonomy. This includes a weakening of the norms against divorce, premarital sex, cohabitation and voluntary childlessness.”

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Fraying Bonds of Family Life: Empirical Trends

In advanced industrialized welfare states of Europe, North America and parts of Asia (particularly Japan, Republic of Korea, Taiwan and Singapore), marriage rates have fallen precipitously. In the United States, between 1980 and 2012, the percent of women ages 40 to 44 who had never been married climbed from 4.8 percent to 13.8 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 1981, 2013). Further, remarriage rates (marriages after divorce or death of a spouse) between 1990 and 2011 declined by 40 percent, from about 50 per 1,000 previously married to about 29.4 per 1,000 (Brown and Lin 2013). In Korea, the proportion of married household heads declined from 79.6 percent in 1990 to 66.6 percent in 2010 (Yu-Kyung Kim 2016). In Hong Kong, the percent of ever-married women aged 40 to 44 fell from 97.3 percent in 1981 to 83.5 percent in 2006; in Japan it dropped from 95.1 percent in 1985 to 82.6 percent in 2010; and in Brazil, it plummeted 25 percent from 1980 to 2010 (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2012). As illustrated in Table 1, similar declines in ever-married rates for women ages 40 to 44 have occurred across Western Europe.

In many countries, declining marriage rates have been accompanied by a rising tide of cohabitation. The number of U.S. adults in cohabiting relationships climbed 29 percent between 2007 and 2016 (Stepler 2017). Cohabitation rates in large parts of Europe tend to be higher than in the United States. Between 1995 and 2010, the rate of cohabitation in France rose from 13.6 percent to 24.4 percent, in Germany from 8.2 percent to 12.8 percent, in the Netherlands from 13.1 percent to 20 percent, in Sweden from 23 percent to 25 percent, and from 10.1 to 15.5 percent in the United Kingdom (Popenoe 2008; OECD 2013). In 2010, over 40 percent of births in France, Norway, and Sweden were to women in cohabiting relationships, compared to 25 percent in the United States. (Perelli-Harris and Gassen 2012; National Center for Marriage and Family Research 2012). In France, the normative shift away from the traditional marriage commitment is clearly manifest in the public's acceptance of cohabitation among well-known political leaders. For example, Segolene Royal, the French Socialist Party's 2007 presidential candidate, and François Hollande, the party's leader, lived

together for 25 years; and then Defense Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie was in a long-term cohabitation with a member of the National Assembly.

Research findings indicate that the rising rate of cohabitation increases instability in the childrearing functions of family life. In almost every country, children born to cohabitating couples are more likely to have their parents split up by age 12 than those born into married families, regardless of the mother's educational level (Social Trends Institute 2017; Mokomane 2017). With the advent of modern welfare states in most of the advanced industrial societies, families are no longer units of economic production where survival depends on a sexual division of labor and relationships are bonded by an instrumental response to economic necessity. In this context, family relationships increasingly serve expressive functions – nurturing, affection and emotional gratification. As family has become less of a unit of economic production needed for survival and more a venue for the individuals' emotional satisfaction, the ties of family relations have become increasingly vulnerable to the fulfillment of emotional expectations, which has diminished the stability of family life (Beaujot and Ravanera 2008).

Along with the declining rates of marriage, fertility rates in many countries have dropped to an historic low, absent war, plague or famine. Indeed, the family's performance of the essential functions of procreation and care for its members has been diminishing throughout the world. As shown in Fig. 1, since 1960 the fertility rate worldwide has plunged by about 50 percent, from 5 to 2.5 births per woman. More recently, between 1990 and 2015 the worldwide total fertility rate (TFR) has declined by 33 percent. Indeed, over the last 25 years the TFR has fallen to a level that is well below the replacement rate of 2.1 in many upper-middle-income and high-income countries in Europe, East Asia and North America.

At the same time that family size has contracted due to the declining fertility rate, life-expectancy rates have been rising throughout the world. Since 1960, the average life expectancy rate worldwide has climbed from 53 years to 72 years. As shown in Table 2, this increase varies among regions, ranging from a high life expectancy of 82 years in the European area to a low of 60 years in Sub-Saharan Africa.

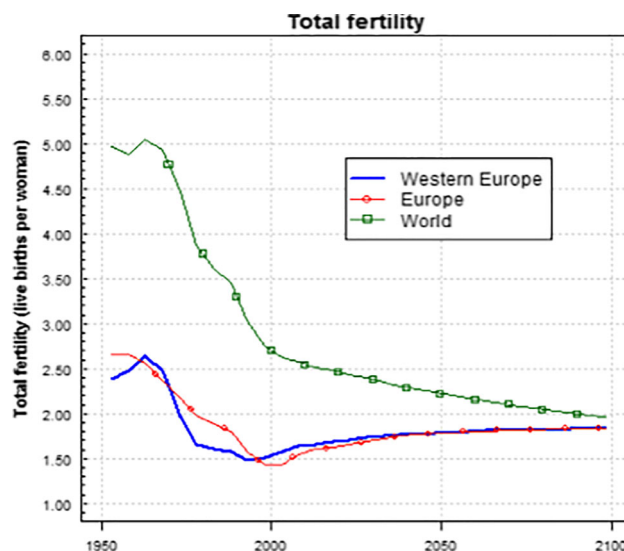
These demographic trends are generating an increasing challenge to both the family's and the state's capacity to care for elderly dependents. With fewer children being born as parents are living longer, the old-age dependency ratio is rapidly rising. This ratio represents an indicator of the social and financial burden of elderly dependents on the working-age population and on their family members. Over the next 35 years, the number of people 65 years and older as a proportion of the working-age population (15–64 years of age) is expected to climb from 13 to 25 percent worldwide, a relative increase of 92 percent. As shown in Table 3, this substantial

Table 1 Declining rates of marriage in European countries

• Austria	91.8% in 1981 to 79.5% in 2011
• Denmark	94.3% in 1985 to 78.2% in 2011
• France	92.5% in 1985 to 72.1% in 2009
• Germany	93.6% in 1990 to 75.9% in 2011
• Norway	93.9% in 1986 to 72.2% in 2010
• United Kingdom	94.4% in 1981 to 78% in 2009

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2012

Fig. 1 Declining fertility. Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision* <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Graphs/DemographicProfiles/>



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017). *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision* <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Graphs/DemographicProfiles/>

increase is projected for almost every region, except for sub-Saharan Africa, where the elderly dependency ratio is expected to remain low and relatively stable, due largely to the region's high fertility rate and relatively low life expectancy. In Western Europe, it is estimated that by 2050 the number of elderly will amount to over 50 percent of the working-age population.

This demographic transition poses an immense challenge to the family's traditional duties for the care of its members, as there will be fewer children available to exercise familial responsibility for the personal care of elderly parents and grandparents. The climbing dependency ratio also creates intense

fiscal pressures on public pensions needed to support a growing elderly population. As the proportion of the working population diminishes, there are fewer people contributing to the pay-as-you-go defined benefit pension scheme and more retired elderly people collecting their pensions.

Many of the advanced industrialized countries with mature social security systems simply did not anticipate the remarkable increase in life expectancy since the second half of the twentieth century. When Otto von Bismarck introduced the first state-sponsored social security program in 1889, life expectancy in Germany was only 45 years of age, while retirement was at age 65. When the Social Security Act of 1935 was passed in the United States, the average life expectancy of

Table 2 Increasing life expectancy worldwide

Life expectancy	1960	2015
World	53	72
East Asia & Pacific	49	75
Euro area	69	82
Latin America & Caribbean	56	75
North America	70	79
Middle East & North Africa	47	73
South Asia	42	68
Sub-Saharan Africa	40	60
High income	68	81
Middle income	48	71
Low income	39	62

Source: World Bank Data Extract World Development Indicators updated 2017

Table 3 Rising old age dependency ratio worldwide

Elderly dependency ratio	2015	2050
World	13	25
Western Europe	31	51
Latin America and Caribbean	12	30
North Africa	8	17
North America	22	36
East Asia	15	42
Western Asia	8	23
South East Asia	9	26
Sub-Saharan Africa	6	8

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision*, New York, 2013. Vol 1, Comprehensive Tables

61.7 years was three years below the standard age of retirement. By 2015, however, life expectancy in the United States had climbed to 79 years. Although the higher rates of infant mortality in 1935 accounted for some of this 17-year difference in life expectancy, the percent of the male population over 18 years old that survived to age 65 in 2015 was almost double the adult survival rate in 1935 (Steuerle and Bakija 1994). As the dependency ratio continues to climb, the U.S. Social Security Trust Fund's Board of Trustees estimates that providing benefits under the current formula will result in a deficit of \$9.4 trillion over the next 75 years (OASDI Trustees Report 2015). Similar fiscal burdens are currently weighing upon the public budgets of many other advanced industrialized welfare states that provide substantial public old-age pensions. To ease the burgeoning costs of public pensions, 17 European countries raised the statutory age of retirement, most often for women, toward the close of the twentieth century (Devereux 2001).

Conventional Family Policy: Does it Reinforce the Bonds?

Family policies represent the welfare state's efforts to mitigate modern demands on family life. The conventional perception of these policies is framed, for the most part, by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) measure of public spending on family benefits. This measure incorporates a broad package of policies providing cash, in-kind and tax benefits that exclusively aid families and children (OECD 2017). Cash benefits include provisions such as children's allowances, income supports for periods of parental leave, payments to parents for home care of children, and marriage bonuses; in-kind benefits involve public child care services, early education, and family services in center-based facilities as well as home visiting; tax expenditures consist of financial supports that operate through child care tax credits and tax deductions for children.

Among the various objectives of these family policies, those frequently cited include facilitating a balance between work and family life; advancing gender equality; and providing income protection during care-related breaks in employment. Analyzing trends in family policy developments from 1990 to 2010 in 14 countries representing Esping-Anderson's (Esping-Andersen 1990) well-known welfare state regimes, Kang (2019) found a general convergence across the countries characterized as liberal, conservative and social democratic regimes in regard to increasing support for work/family reconciliation and gender equality objectives. The trend in support of family income protection was not as clear, with a modest decline in conservative countries compared to an increase among liberal welfare states, while support for this objective in the social democratic regimes remained stable.

The family-oriented policies that support these objectives are also viewed as measures that will enhance family life and in the process shore up fertility and marriage rates.

Thus, for example, in 2005 the Korean government initiated the Basic Plans on Low Birth Rates in Aging Society in response to the country's low fertility rate. Under this plan, a wide range of family-friendly benefits was made available to assist with childbirth and child rearing, which included support for child care costs, national public child care facilities, full day care services, priority for national rental housing, exemption of vehicle purchase tax, national happiness cards providing health care discounts, medical costs for fertility treatment, paternity leave, and others (Ministry for Health, Welfare, and Family Affairs 2010; Miller 2019; Cho n.d.). As illustrated in Fig. 1, the Korean government's public spending on a vast package of family benefits as a percent of GDP climbed ten-fold between 2000 and 2017. Despite a significant increase in spending on family benefits, the effort was largely unsuccessful in stemming the decline of the Korean fertility rate, which fell steadily over this period, reaching an all-time low of 0.95 in 2018.

The spending trends shown in Fig. 2 raise a serious question about the potential impact of the conventional package of family policy benefits on childbearing. In Korea, fertility declined as spending increased. Meanwhile, the United States, which spent the lowest percent on family benefits, has a higher fertility rate than the other four countries as well as the average of OECD countries. The fertility rate in Norway has been on the decline since 2009 (falling to 1.5 in 2018, its lowest level in history), despite having the highest level of spending as a percent of GDP, which has been increasing since 2012. Hungary, which also spends a relatively high percent of its GDP on family policy, had a very low fertility rate of 1.4 in 2018. Upping the ante, Prime Minister Viktor Orban's 2019 State of the Nation address decreed a seven-point family protection plan, which included a \$9,000 subsidy for the purchase of a seven-seat car for families with three children and a \$34,500 interest-free loan to women under 40 who were getting married for the first time. This loan would be forgiven if the woman and her husband had three children (Orban 2019).

To date, the overall impact on fertility and marriage rates of conventional family policy measures has been ambiguous. In regard to the larger European experience, Joelle Sleebos's analysis of 42 multivariate studies of family-friendly policies found the evidence inconclusive and contradictory (Sleebos 2003). In East Asia, both the modest tax break for newborns in Hong Kong and the more comprehensive package of family policies in Singapore have been in place for many years. Despite the major differences in the levels of support for marriage and childbearing, these countries have almost equally low fertility rates of below 1.4 (Gietel-Basten forthcoming). These indecisive results are a reminder of the history of children's allowances in France, initiated under the Family Code

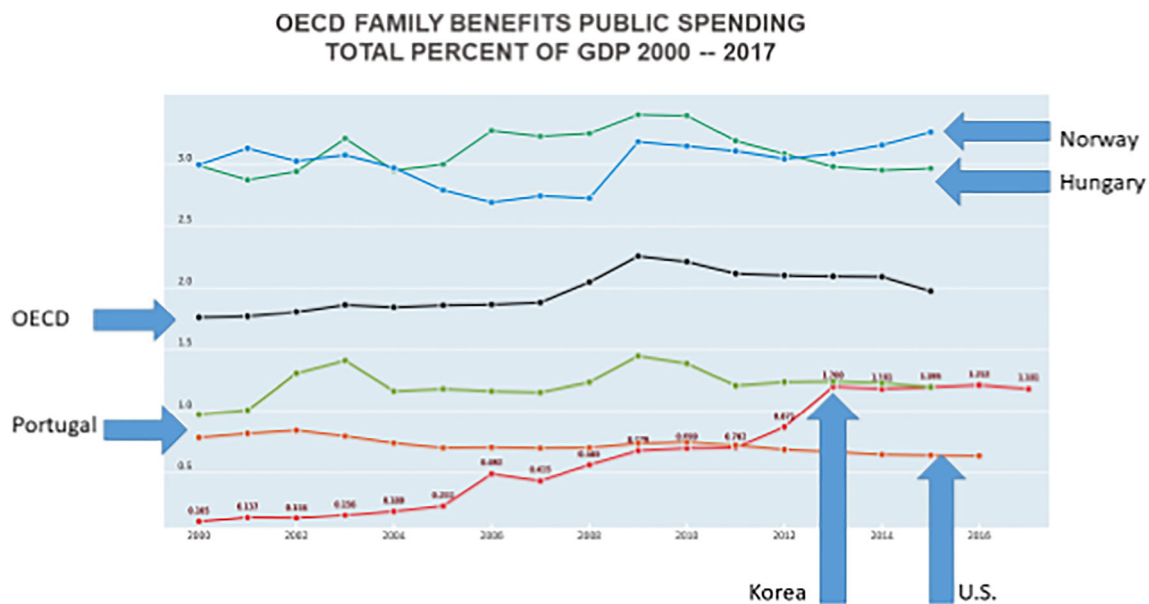


Fig. 2 OECD family benefits public spending total percent of GDP, 2000–2017

of 1939. These allowances were designed with explicit pronatalist objectives. And indeed, the French birth rate increased considerably in the decades after World War II. However, the birth rate in the United States—which had no children’s allowance—also rose dramatically during the same period, while the birthrate in Sweden declined despite its children’s allowance system (Schorr 1965).

One of the reasons suggested for the inconclusive results of family policy is that most of the expenditures on the conventional package of family benefits are designed to harmonize work and family life, making it easier for both parents to participate in the labor force. These benefits involve early education and child care, maternity and parental leave, child care tax credits and family benefits; they emphasize objectives related to advancing gender equality, dual earner employment and economic productivity (Lohmann et al. 2009). Though policies to balance work and family life are often referred to as “family-friendly,” some policy analysts observe that “market friendly” is a more apt label (Gilbert 2008). As Jane Lewis explains, family policy in the European Union “has been explicitly linked to the promotion of women’s employment in order to further the economic growth and competition agenda” (Lewis 2006, p.390). It has also been argued that these “family-friendly” policies actually encourage what Esping-Andersen (1999) has identified as “defamilialization”: That is, so called family-friendly policies promote the shift of family household labor to paid employment in the commercial sector, which in turn requires that the performance of care, nurturing, and other family functions be outsourced to the market and state. As a result, the state and the market end up assuming some of the core functions of family life.

Family-Sensitive Policy: Alternative Outcomes and Unanticipated Consequences

The social impacts closely associated with the conventional view of family policies are concerned with facilitating gender equality and dual-earner labor force participation, allowing individuals economic independence and increasing the material well-being of families. These are certainly worthy objectives. But the pursuit of employment, gender equality and material well-being do not directly translate into a stable, wholesome family life. In addition to employment, material well-being and gender equality, social welfare policies are evaluated according to a range of outcomes illustrated in Fig. 3, which typically include concerns about poverty, education, access to health care, economic inequality, social inclusion and the like. The conceptualization of family-sensitive policy offers an alternative perspective focusing on outcomes that strengthen the bonds of family life and the capacity to perform the essential functions of procreation, socialization of the young, care for dependent members, emotional companionship and mutual support over the life course.

The analytic lens of family-sensitive policy draws attention to alternative impacts of social benefits, which may involve incompatible outcomes. Consider, for example, the policy of offering parents of young children either the opportunity to use subsidized public child care, or to receive a cash payment equivalent to the public child care subsidy as a notional salary for providing care to their own children at home. Although several European countries such as Austria, France, Norway and Finland offer the choice of cash-for-care benefits or public day care, the payment for home care has been a topic of heated debate – as seen in Sweden, where the cash-for-care policy

Fig. 3 Alternative perspective for analysis of social policy



was abolished in 2016 (Giuliani, G. & Duvander, A. 2017). Those opposed to this policy perceive cash for home care as keeping mothers out of the labor force and creating a large gap in their resumes, which would decrease future employment opportunities and undermine the objective of gender equality. (Erlandsson 2017; Sipila et al. 2010). Seen through the analytic lens of increasing labor force participation, for example, the provision of publicly subsidized day care services is preferable in that it promotes a higher level of employment among parents with young children than the publicly subsidized home care allowance. Similarly, from the perspective of gender equality the impact of subsidized out-of-home day care appears to provide women more equal opportunity for labor force participation than the subsidized home care payment (since mothers would be more likely than fathers to use the home care allowance). In contrast, however, viewed through the analytic lens of strengthening the intergenerational bonds of family life, the impact of providing parents the choice between public day care and home care subsidy is seen as affording those who prefer to invest their time and effort in the care, nurturing and socialization of their children the same opportunity as those who would rather be employed in the paid work of the formal economy. That work in the formal economy, of course, includes caring for other people's children by paid employees of public day care centers, which are disproportionately staffed by women.

The family-sensitive policy lens brings to light underlying tensions and normative issues about what constitute desirable arrangements of family life and the role of the state in assuming family functions. The case of cash for care benefits underlines the tension between parental (mainly maternal) time invested in the socialization and nurturing of young children in the home versus the hours required to advance gender equality in the marketplace through full-time employment outside the home. It also raises the issue of how much responsibility the state

should assume for the early care and socialization of children. The design of family-sensitive policy is challenging in part because there are limits to what governments in democratic societies can do to affect individual values and behaviors that would stabilize and reinforce the family unit. There is also the realization that while social policies can support some important objectives (such as reducing poverty), they may have unanticipated consequences for stable family relationships (especially marriages, which create the strongest bonds and formal obligations). Thus, for example, the family-sensitive lens draws our attention to the financial disincentives of means-tested social benefits for marriage, particularly in the advanced industrial welfare states. An early analysis of economic disincentives to marriage in the United States estimated that if a low-income single mother were to marry a low-income partner, the loss of means-tested welfare benefits could reduce their combined income by as much as 30 percent (Steuerle 1999). More recent and detailed analyses, which include the impact of both taxes and means-tested benefits, reveal greater complexity in the incentive structure. That is, factoring in both means-tested benefits and taxes, marriage can result in either financial penalties or bonuses for cohabitating partners with children, depending on their levels of income and how earnings are split between them (Maag and Acs 2015; Besharov and Gilbert 2015). While financial costs and benefits of means-tested programs may inhibit or encourage marriage, there are other social welfare transfers designed specifically to promote marriage, such as special housing allowances, cash bonuses, and subsidized wedding venues. The impacts of these various programs remain uncertain.

The tensions between the objectives of family-sensitive policy and other policies designed to alleviate poverty are not limited to means-tested benefits. Currently, for example, there is mounting interest in the provision of a universal basic income to reduce poverty, with pilot programs undertaken in a

few countries (although Finland's experiment was recently closed). Several experiments with basic income programs have taken place over the years, starting in the mid-1970s with the U.S. program known as the Seattle and Denver Income Maintenance Experiments (SIME/DIME). At that time, SIME/DIME was arguably the largest and most carefully controlled income maintenance experiment in history. The experiment involved 4,706 families, of which 44 percent were randomly assigned to the control group with remaining families divided into experimental groups, each receiving guaranteed annual income going as high as \$5,600 (an amount equivalent to more than \$30,000 in 2017, when adjusted for inflation).

Although the SIME/DIME grants reduced poverty among the recipient families, there were competing hypotheses regarding the potential effects on family life. On the one hand, since financial stress is a major factor for increasing the risk of divorce, access to reliable financial aid could help to stabilize family life (Cutwright 1971; Andersen 1978). On the other hand, providing mothers an assured source of support outside of marriage could serve to reduce the economic incentives to get or stay married, particularly in an unhappy union (Goode 1982). The research findings showed that the rate of marital dissolution for experimental families was approximately twice that of control group families (Hannan et al. 1977). There were some anomalies amid these startling results, and although the findings were highly suggestive of the short-term consequences of this program, its long-term effects on marital stability remain unknown (Munnell 1987). It is conceivable that after the initial round of divorces, the remaining pool of married couples and those who remarried would experience lower divorce rates than the current national level of 16 per 1000 married women. Also, it is reasonable to argue that if the grants allowed women to exit unhappy marriages, the outcomes were not all that undesirable. Indeed, if some of these women were in abusive relationships, the financial means to exit must count as a beneficial outcome. Still, from the analytic perspective of family-sensitive policy, the immediate results did not reinforce the bonds of family life, which poses the question: is there a way to design the basic income benefit that might inhibit its potential to destabilize marriage?

As these examples illustrate, the conceptual lens of family-sensitive policy encourages policymakers to think about alternative impacts of social programs. Viewing social policies from this analytic perspective raises questions about their impact on the institution of family life, such as:

- To what extent do social supports for marriage such as housing for newlyweds, interest-free loans for dowries (in Middle Eastern countries such as Qatar) and marriage bonuses impact the formation of stable families?
- What is the impact of policies and programs designed to help parents balance work and family life on childbearing and the intergenerational bonds of family life?

- How can social policies be designed to facilitate adult children caring for elderly parents and to support grandparents in caring roles for their grandchildren?
- What is the impact of home-visiting and mother-child home-educational programs on parental capacity for nurturing, caring and socialization of their children?
- In pursuit of gender equality, to what extent should social protection benefits promote the shift of household labor to the market, in the course of which the performance of care, nurturing, and other family functions are outsourced to the market and state?
- In pursuit of individual freedom and autonomy, to what degree should the state allocate social benefits that relieve parents of their responsibilities to provide care, nurturing, socialization and mutual support in family life?
- To what extent do social policies generate incentives and disincentives for the formation of stable, cohesive families?

In addressing questions such as these, a key conceptual issue involves the operational definition of a stable, cohesive family. Measures of family solidarity and social cohesion are less well developed than the various empirical impact measures related to alternative perspectives on social policy which focus on poverty, economic equality, gender equality, labor force participation, health care access, child development and the like. While stability can be roughly estimated by the length of relationships, and divorce rates may be taken as indicators of weak bonds or instability, these one-dimensional indicators convey a shallow sense of social cohesion and solidarity. Seeking criteria that capture some more essential indicators of family solidarity, Beaujot and Ravanera (2008) suggest an operational measure based on the giving and receiving of emotional support, the amount of time spent with family, and the degree of functional exchange among members.

Policy Implications: Authorizing Impact Family Reports

The conceptual framework for family-sensitive policy offers an alternative lens through which to assess social protection measures. It is a lens that highlights the importance of parents' formal commitments to family life and of the essential bonds between parents and children, which are forged in the home, not in the commercial market or the public day care center. Unlike other analytic frameworks on social protection which focus on designing and assessing the effects of policy measures on particular problems such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, educational achievement, and health, the family-sensitive lens is concerned with the impact of social policies on the more general institution of family, which involves spousal and intergenerational interactions over the life course.

This paper opened with the observation that the family is often referred to as the basic building block of society. In seeking to strengthen the stability and functioning of this institution, the introduction of the family-sensitive policy framework has significant implications for the development and reform of social protection policy. Just as policymakers require the preparation of Environmental Impact Reports to insure a sustainable physical environment necessary for survival, an argument can be made for the authorization of Family Impact Reports to insure the strength of an institution essential to the well-being of our social environment.

As a policymaking tool, Environmental Impact Reports analyze potentially detrimental effects of proposed physical developments, identify possible ways to alleviate those effects, and formulate reasonable alternatives to the proposed developments. In a similar vein, Family Impact Reports would analyze proposed social protection measures and reforms, focusing on their consequences for the stability and solidarity of family life. Family Impact Reports would serve as an ex-ante evaluation of social protection policy proposals, assessing their relevance to the institution of family life and potential consequences, positive and negative, for the performance of its essential functions. In analyzing the potential consequences of proposed social policies, the Family Impact Report would specify the research questions, address the operational measures and explicate the normative issues related to this analysis, laying the foundation for an ex-post impact evaluation of the policy assessing its actual consequences. Through this process, Family Impact Reports would heighten policymakers' awareness and stimulate their thinking about the ways public measures can be designed to strengthen the bonds of family life.

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