



"GENDER AND THE WELFARE STATE"

maternalism -a new historical concept?

- [Preface](#)
- [Introduction: Gender & the Welfare State](#)
- [Feminist Interpretation of the Scandinavian Welfare State](#)
- [Feminist Scholars define Maternalism and Maternalist Policy](#)
- [Maternalism as a Historical Concept and its Consequences](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [Bibliography](#)

- [Contents](#)

**A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF CAND.PHILOL.
THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN, NORWAY.
SPRING 1996
EIRINN LARSEN**





Contents

- [Preface](#)
 - [Introduction: Gender & the Welfare State](#)
 - [THEME AND POSING OF PROBLEM](#)
 - [SOURCES](#)
 - [METHOD](#)
 - [THE WELFARE STATE AND THE WELFARE-TRIANGLE](#)
 - [Feminist Interpretation of the Scandinavian Welfare State](#)
 - [WELFARE-STATE RESEARCH IN SCANDINAVIA](#)
 - [WOMEN AND THE WELFARE STATE](#)
 - [FROM OPPRESSION TO POSSIBILITIES](#)
 - [Feminist Scholars define Maternalism and Maternalist Policy](#)
 - [THEDA SKOCPOL DEFINES THE TERM MATERNALIST POLICY AND SETS OFF A DEBATE](#)
 - [DEBATE BETWEEN LINDA GORDON AND THEDA SKOCPOL](#)
 - [SETH KOVEN AND SONYA MICHEL](#)
 - [MOLLY LADD-TAYLOR](#)
 - [ANN TAYLOR ALLEN](#)
 - [CONCLUDING REMARKS](#)
 - [Maternalism as a Historical Concept and its Consequences](#)
 - [THE RELATION BETWEEN MATERNALISM AS A HISTORICAL CONCEPT AND GENDER AS A CATEGORY OF HISTORICAL ANALYSIS](#)
 - [CONSEQUENCES: -DECONSTRUCTION BY CREATING AND REINFORCING NEW/OLD BINARY OPPOSITIONS?](#)
 - [CONCLUDING REMARKS](#)
 - [Conclusion](#)
 - [Bibliography](#)
-





Preface

While everybody seems to agree that theoretical questions have to be further addressed in order to advance in women's history, few scholars are theoretically occupied with the category "gender" in relation to the discipline of history as a whole. Critical examinations of new perspectives in women's history with regard to the field in general, represent a step towards a great challenge for both feminist historians and "traditional" historians: a further incorporation of the gender perspective in history.

By analyzing a theoretical debate on gender and welfare state formation, I hope to shed some light on the relation between women's history and mainstream history. The problematic aspect of women's history as an autonomous field struck me especially during my stay at the University of California at Berkeley. Even though the separation between the two fields was necessary in order to make women visible, it appears that the autonomy of women's history can be an obstruction to further development of gender as a category of historical analysis. In order to argue why we should be concerned with "gender" as an analytical and explanatory concept, we have to look beyond the basic idea that mainstream history and historical theory have been gender blind. Moreover, the major criticism of mainstream history cannot only be that it neglects women, but that it theoretically privileges other categories and conditions in the frameworks employed to explain historical events or processes. By establishing separate Women's Studies departments, Americans have in many respects institutionalized women's history as a supplement to mainstream historical scholarship. This thesis has mainly come about on the basis of my observations and studies at an American university.





Introduction: Gender & the Welfare State

- [THEME AND POSING OF PROBLEM](#)
 - [SOURCES](#)
 - [METHOD](#)
 - [THE WELFARE STATE AND THE WELFARE-TRIANGLE](#)
-

A great deal of feminist research has been conducted recently on the relationship between gender and the welfare state. The expanding scholarly interest in welfare issues has led to an enormous growth of literature, and it appears that the welfare state has become an important new research area for feminist writing in various fields, including history. This increase of attention has, moreover, given birth to an international debate, which especially has taken off in the United States, on gender and the origins of the welfare states.

Even though feminist welfare-state scholarship is diverse in perspectives and theories, a common notion exists that a gender approach requires a *rethinking* of the welfare state and its history. Through giving the category "gender" a high degree of analytic relevance, feminist researchers are now presenting a welfare state history in sharp contrast to earlier representations.^[1] Criticism of established welfare-state research is therefore inherent in the new feminist scholarship.

By highlighting a dimension of the welfare state that is rather unknown to historians in general, feminist welfare-state research represents, as far as I can see, a crucial addition to mainstream scholarship. Feminist inquiry is, moreover, important as a practice in itself because it questions established scholarly applications and consequently works as a critical corrective to "traditional" history. However, until now it seems that mainstream welfare-state research and the feminist scholarship on the welfare state have largely evolved side by side without much cross-fertilization. Feminist interpretations can so far only be seen as important supplements and not as rewritings of the welfare state and its history because, as Joan Scott points out, the category "gender" does not contain enough power to address (and change) existing historical paradigm.^[2] Thus gender studies of the welfare state become only a new topic, a new department of historical investigations. Reasons for this are that feminist scholars establish their knowledge on the same foundation as the scholarship they seek to criticize and challenge, a foundation where meaning is made through implicit or explicit contrasts (binary oppositions)^[3]. Even though some feminist historians have tried to challenge this manner of knowledge production -see for example their criticism of the dichotomy "private/public"- they recreate new binary oppositions which confirm rather than challenge the dichotomous foundations.

In order to shed some light on the process of rethinking and rewriting within American feminist welfare-state research, I intend to analyze the debate that has emerged on gender and welfare state development. An analysis of this material can be used to examine the category "gender" and reveal some of its explanatory power. Simultaneously I hope to reach an understanding of the ways in which American scholars have chosen to use this potential and which consequences these choices have for their argumentation, in relation to each other and in relation to welfare state research in general.

THEME AND POSING OF PROBLEM

While the use of patriarchal theories dominated American feminist welfare-state research in the beginning, we can see a tendency towards an adjustment of such theories in recent years. The major critique of the patriarchal approach came from historians looking at welfare historically, documenting women's political activism and their influence on social policy and the making of welfare systems. From this historical approach emerged the debate on gender and the origins of the welfare states, which is the major theme of my thesis.

Scholars engaged in this dispute are, in general, arguing that "gender" played a major role in the shaping of different welfare systems. Some are, moreover, claiming that women played a distinctive part in the construction of early

welfare policies as promoters of *maternal and child welfare*. Recent investigations by American feminist researchers have shown that women's organizations -mostly white middle-class women's organizations- advocated social welfare based on the notion that women have special interests to defend.[4] This notion shaped a policy of difference rather than a policy of equality within the evolving feminist movement. Furthermore, many of the American scholars also conclude that women's arguments for state intervention and support in "private matters" were based on women's usefulness as mothers. Thus "mothering" became an important trope in the discourse of women's struggle for social and political rights at the turn of the century. This female activity advanced women's interest inside the female sphere, in accordance with the ideal of separate spheres, and made the private political.

In order to explain how women could have played a crucial and distinctive role at a time when policy making and politics in general were dominated by men, some US scholars have begun to use concepts like "maternalist policy" and "maternalism".[5] Nevertheless, maternalism is, from my point of view, a very slippery concept because it is used in very different ways. As the concept of "maternalism" gains currency among scholars of gender and the welfare state, it is important to clarify its meaning. This research paper is intended as a contribution to such a clarification. Who introduced this concept? How is the concept used and with what purpose? What does a maternalist approach to the welfare state actually contain? To what degree can we talk about maternalism as a new historical concept within welfare-state research? And does this project represent a rethinking of earlier assumptions of welfare states and their history?

Hence to understand the connection between gender and the welfare state, it can be helpful to contextualize the debate in relation to feminist scholarship in general. While feminist scholars in Europe have written about gender and social policies for nearly two decades, American researchers have just begun to address the issue of welfare policies. Actually, the Norwegian scholar Helga Hernes and the Danish scholar Birte Siim were among the first to address, in the mid eighties, the relationship between women and the modern welfare state.

Scandinavian feminist research on the welfare state represented by Hernes and Siim will be the major theme in the first Chapter. The focus is on shifts of perspectives and their connection to the ongoing American debate. In Chapter two I turn to the historical dispute on gender and welfare state formation. Because this is a complex discussion, I concentrate on the scholars who are using the concepts "maternalism" and "maternalist policy", directly or more indirectly, in their argumentation. In the third Chapter I intend to discuss and evaluate possible consequences of using "maternalism" as a historical concept.

SOURCES

The scholars who use the concept of "maternalism" or have a maternalist approach to the welfare state are chiefly Americans. US historians I consider to be the most central in the maternalist-debate are: Seth Koven, Sonya Michel, Molly Ladd-Taylor, Linda Gordon, and Ann Taylor Allen. In addition to these, the analysis also includes the sociologist Theda Skocpol.[6] Because their interpretations to some degree also involve European social policies, it seems natural to refer to some European scholars. Jane Lewis, Pat Thane and Gisela Bock have all distinguished themselves as observers and actors in the maternalist debate.[7] These scholars do not use maternalism in their historical explanations, but they are highlighting some of the same issues as their American colleagues.

From the selection of scholars it is obvious that this thesis has to be centered around theoretical questions with point of departure in American history and in American historical tradition. But even though most of the scholars base their argumentation on American historical sources, they have a comparative approach to the material. A comparative and international approach is, in other words, a characteristic feature of the debate.

In order to locate the maternalist debate, I have used international journals and reviews, but also recently published books on the issue. It is obvious that the articles have been the forerunners of many of the books that have been written on the topic during the last five years. While the books are more or less proofs of a scholarly tendency or trend, the journals function as debating forums for new interpretations before a trend or a new perspective is established. Both books and journals provide sources for this work, and it is important to underscore that they are all firsthand sources, collected during my studies at University of California at Berkeley 1994/95. Most of the debate has been conducted in the following journals: *Gender and History*, *Journal of Women's History*, *Journal of American History*, *American Historical Review*, *Studies in American Political Development*, *Signs*, and *Contention*.⁸

METHOD

The introduction of "gender" as a category in history is often credited to Joan Wallach Scott, an American feminist historian who began to theorize around gender and history in the eighties. She defines "gender" as follows:

Gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.[\[9\]](#)

This definition has had a great importance for all the work that has been done recently on the issue of gender and welfare states. Because Scott's definition constitutes a theoretical frame for many women's historians, it is important to clarify some aspects of her work on gender as a category of historical analysis.

When feminist scholars first began to use the grammatical term "gender" in the mid-eighties, they used it as a way of referring to the social organization of relation between the sexes. Arguing that gender is a constitutive element in all social relations, the concept became helpful for those who wanted to stress sexual differences without having to deal with biological determinism. Moreover, the term was offered by those who claimed that women's scholarship would fundamentally transform scholarship across disciplines. From their point of view, the study of women through gender would not only add new subject matters, it would also force a critical re-examination of the premises and standards of existing scholarly work.

According to Scott this had not yet happened in 1988, when she wrote her book *Gender and the Politics of History*. Gender-studies had so far either been descriptive or causal says Scott, and "gender" had been more or less a synonym for "women" without really changing perspective or method. Such studies have asserted that relationships between the sexes are social without saying anything about how they are constructed or work. Even if some historians have been aware of this problem and tried to solve it through employing other theories [\[10\]](#), none seem entirely workable. One of the reasons is that many of these theories define and reinforce woman/man as a universal, self producing opposition.[\[11\]](#) By focusing on fixed differences, feminists will contribute to the kind of thinking they want to oppose. To avoid this problem Scott focuses on the ways in which the meaning of gender has been constructed. When she defines gender as knowledge about sexual differences, she follows Michel Foucault and his emphasis on knowledge as the understanding of human relationships produced by cultures.[\[12\]](#) By defining gender as the knowledge that establishes meanings for particular bodily differences, historians are able to see how meanings vary across cultures, social groups and time, as products of competing discourses. Gender thus becomes an ever changing element of social relationships. Scott's ways of defining and understanding gender will serve as a theoretical point of departure for my analysis.

As a way of approaching the debate I find Scott and her work on poststructuralist theory and feminism inspiring. In the article "Deconstructing equality-versus-difference: or, the uses of poststructuralist theory for feminism"[\[13\]](#) Scott offers a short list of major theoretical points, represented by terms such as: *language* as a meaning constituting system; the Foucaultian *discourse*, which is a historically, socially and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs; *difference* as a constituting element of meaning, because meaning is made through implicit or explicit contrasts; and *deconstruction* as a way to analyze the operations of difference in text, or the ways in which meanings are made to work. By using deconstruction as a method we are able to show that dichotomous terms such as man/woman, private/public or maternalist/paternalist, are not natural but constructed oppositions, constructed for particular purposes in particular contexts. Thus deconstruction will be an important exercise in my attempt to examine the ways in which maternalism works as a historical concept.

THE WELFARE STATE AND THE WELFARE-TRIANGLE

Sir William Beveridge's report *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (1942) has normally been seen as the foundation of the modern welfare state in Britain, while the New Deal and the Social Security Act of 1935 gave the United States a nation-wide social security system in some areas. But welfare policies existed before in both the US and in Europe. The idea of state responsibility and state intervention in private life, dates back to the late nineteenth-early twentieth century and shaped a social welfare system based on social insurances and pensions. These policies were aimed at helping only particular groups of the population. Not until the Second World War did the idea of universal social benefits emerge, mostly within European countries like Germany, France, Britain, and in Scandinavia. Even though the concept "welfare state" is more appropriate for the development of social policies after the Second World War in Europe, it is frequently used to designate welfare policies and welfare systems before

this period in the Western World.

In order to analyze the development of research on the history of the welfare state I find the picture of the "welfare-triangle" by the Norwegian historian Anne-Lise Seip very helpful.[\[14\]](#) Seip says that the welfare state is a product of interaction in a triangle between private actors (private organizations), municipalities, and the central state (government), and that we have to study this interaction to understand the welfare state.

To approach the welfare state with the welfare-triangle in mind indicates a study of relations between different welfare producers, between private and public welfare institutions on both local and national levels. In addition to the public/private and the national/local split emphasized by Seip, I will claim that the dichotomy man/woman also has an analytical relevance in order to highlight the gender dimension of the welfare state. Women were for example to a lesser extent represented in governmental and local institutions in the early twentieth century. Whereas men for long were more or less "universal" within the state, the private organizations comprised both men and women from the start. By identifying the political actors behind the different institutions of the welfare-triangle, we will notice that the changing relations between government, municipalities, and private organizations over time also involve changes in the relationship between men and women (as well as between public and private, national and local).





Feminist Interpretation of the Scandinavian Welfare State

- [WELFARE-STATE RESEARCH IN SCANDINAVIA](#)
 - [WOMEN AND THE WELFARE STATE](#)
 - [FROM OPPRESSION TO POSSIBILITIES](#)
-

WELFARE-STATE RESEARCH IN SCANDINAVIA

The idea of the welfare state has been a collective political concern for all the Scandinavian countries in the post-war period. Social equality and security attained by means of state intervention in all sectors of society, have led to what is normally known as institutional welfare states.^[15] The common concern with welfare has also marked the activity within academia. Welfare-state research has developed as an interdisciplinary research area, shared by sociologists, political scientists and historians.^[16]

Even though it is hard to separate the different fields within welfare-state research, I will try to map out some major trends in the historical scholarship on the issue. My intention is to show that historians' approach to the welfare state has changed and led to a growing interest in the intersection between private and public producers of welfare. However, the interest in the private sphere is still a very recent trend within history. Research on the welfare state has traditionally focused on the state as the primary initiator of welfare and thus neglected welfare production in the private realm. This neglect was one of the complaints in the criticism that welfare-state scholars were exposed to in the beginning of the 80s, a criticism which was mainly carried out by the two Scandinavian political scientists Helga Hernes and Birte Siim. Their scholarship makes out a major theme in this Chapter.

history and welfare-state research

Since the development of the welfare state is one of the most important events in modern time, historians have attempted to locate the origins of welfare policies and programs. State intervention in the market has been studied as a historical phenomenon, derived from industrialization, urbanization and economic expansion. The ideologies underlying the welfare state and its institutions have also attracted the attention of historians. Scholars have especially stressed the connection between the Scandinavian welfare state and the principle of equality, which is seen as strongly present in Scandinavian society.

In Norway historians have particularly emphasized the fact that the development of the welfare state coincided with the rise of the political party system. Historians have more often studied the welfare state as a political issue within parties and workers unions. Thus political parties and their welfare priorities have been thoroughly analysed by Norwegian historians. Although welfare policy in general is viewed as a class issue, Scandinavian historians have to a lesser degree than others (Asa Briggs and other international scholars) emphasized the welfare state from a class-conflict perspective. One reason for this can be the existence of a cross-political agreement on the welfare state in all the Scandinavian countries in the post-war period, an agreement that most likely has affected historians in their writings.

Research that has the concept "welfare state" as a point of departure will necessarily see *state* and *welfare* as strongly connected.^[17] As a matter of fact historians confirm this through their focus on the governmental aspect of the welfare state. Thus social insurances and pensions worked out by the state have for long been their major objects of inquiry. More recent research in Norway has, on the other hand, showed that the early Norwegian welfare state emerged within an interplay between state and municipalities and voluntary organizations.^[18] This research has led to a shift of perspective from the national-state level to the local level of municipalities and voluntary organizations.

Whereas research on the state and local authorities results in a focus on the public sphere, research on voluntary

organizations will involve a greater concern for the private sphere and civil life. The interaction between the public and the private sphere therefore has an increasing analytic relevance in present historical writings on the welfare state. Besides, it is within this interaction between private and public that women's historians and mainstream historians have come to meet in their study of the welfare state. While feminist historians traditionally have been stressing the private level of organizations, family, and individuals, historical studies of the welfare state has, as we have seen, been focusing on the central state of the nation. However, shifts in perspectives within "traditional" history has to some extent integrated the areas that for long have been associated with feminist history. Scandinavian feminist scholars (such as Helga Hernes and Birte Siim) have at the same time become more interested in state-centered theories and research. The traditional women's perspective from below has in this way challenged a view from above, and reduced the gap between feminist history and mainstream history. The common interest in the interplay between private and public that these shifts of perspectives have led to is, from my point of view, a very interesting tendency because it brings historians, with different backgrounds and specializations, together somehow.

Despite this shift of interest in Scandinavian welfare-state research, historians are still very much stressing the responsibility held by the state and the structural interplay between state and market. An emphasis on state intervention on the labor market leaves out central aspects of the welfare state which take place in the private sphere but outside the voluntary organizations. For example the caring functions of the family have interested welfare state scholars to a lesser extent. This lack of interest is, from my point of view, due to the definition of work inherent in welfare-state research (as in almost all research). Because scholars have traditionally defined work as wage work on the formal labor market, work within the family has been left out.

The absence of reproductive work and non-wage work from welfare state scholarship has in the last decade been criticized by feminist scholars stressing the relationship between women and the modern welfare state.^[19] This work has in Scandinavia mainly been done by political scientists, such as Helga Hernes and Birte Siim.^[20] They were for example among the first to reject the general belief that the modern welfare state has moved towards a greater equality between men and women. Hernes and Siim have, moreover, criticized welfare-state scholars for ignoring women and the fact that the development of the modern welfare state has affected men and women differently. In their search for theories that can explain these differences, they are asking: does the welfare state maintain or change the existing gender system?

WOMEN AND THE WELFARE STATE

Like many other feminist scholars in the seventies and the eighties, Helga Hernes and Birte Siim began their welfare state research within the patriarchal paradigm, viewing the state as a patriarchal and oppressing system that only served male interests.^[21] In the late eighties they both began to criticize their own starting point. Hence, to understand the development of Hernes and Siim's theories, it is important to be aware of the division between early and later scholarship.

Hernes and Siim have in their work on women and the Scandinavian welfare state in the post-war period especially stressed the changing relationship between the private and the public sphere. The development of the welfare state has, according to Hernes and Siim, enlarged the public sphere and changed the balance of power between the public and the private. Hernes argues that these changes have influenced the relationship between women and the state in particular and "pulled women into the public sphere".^[22] However, Hernes has generally focused on the position of women within the public political system, whereas Siim holds a wider political perspective by stressing women's position outside the formal political institutions as well. Nevertheless their common focus on the state confirms that they both belong to the mainstream social science that until then studied the welfare state mainly on a governmental level. In relation to feminist scholarship in general, they also share an interest in political power, an interest which at the beginning of the eighties represented something new within social science feminist scholarship. Hernes explains that

The major reason for this lack of attention to political power lies in the fact that feminist social science in general has dealt with the relation between gender and social powerlessness, and this has led to the rejection of institutionalized power as a positive value.^[23]

Helga Hernes: "the patriarchal welfare state"

The patriarchal welfare state was the starting point for Helga Hernes when she first began to theorise about women's

relationship to the modern welfare state. In her first book *Staten -kvinner ingen adgang?*, published in 1982, Hernes focused on the institutional power men have over women, and she argued that women's lack of political power derives from the patriarchal character of the political institutions. In order to explain why women have been excluded from the political decision-making process, Hernes analyzed the consequences of the welfare state.

The development of the welfare state has, according to Hernes, both positive and negative consequences. A state-organized welfare system has in the first place led to an increased number of jobs in the public sector for women. Even though this has integrated women into the state and the public sphere, it has also increased governmental control over women's reproductive role. Women have, in other words, become more dependent on the state than men. The state's undertaking of an increasing number of functions which used to be either regulated by the market or performed within the family and volunteer organizations, is by Hernes described as "reproduction going public".[\[24\]](#)

Women's relationship to the state is, from Hernes' point of view, a versatile and changing relationship. In addition to the status as *employees* of the welfare state, women have become *clients* of the same state because they are also recipients of welfare. Moreover, Hernes stresses women's role as *citizens*, which indicates that she is also concerned with their roles as political actors. The transformation from private to public reproduction has, according to Hernes, resulted in a political mobilization of women. This has, on the other hand, not made women more powerful in relation to the reproductive areas and the political institutions. Women's powerlessness is, as Hernes saw it in the mid 1980s, due to their marginal position within the corporate system,[\[25\]](#) a system which is particularly well developed in Nordic countries because of their extensive public welfare bureaucracies and wide-ranging planning functions. Her major point is that even though women have entered the parliamentary system, this has not necessarily given women more power in relation to men, because a shift of power and control from Parliament to corporatist organizations has taken place at the same time. Because women in this way have had a minimal role in the actual decision-making process, Hernes comes to describe the Scandinavian welfare state as a tutelary state for women.[\[26\]](#)

The close connection between the welfare state and the corporate system and women's limited admission to this order supports the hypothesis of the patriarchal welfare state. But why do women have such a limited position within the corporate network? Hernes looks for an explanation in the ways women have organized themselves.

Although organizations have an importance in Nordic countries, not all of them are regarded as politically relevant. Despite the fact that women's organizations for long have assembled women, they have a relatively small amount of political power.

Women's organizations incorporated the complementary role and the activities of women which belonged to the traditionally private sphere. These organizations were not, unlike the economic interest organizations, drawn into the corporate network, not even after their areas of concern and work became subject to increasing numbers of regulations and controls. [\[27\]](#)

Stein Rokkan has described state regulation of new areas -the development of welfare policies- as a result or consequence of political mobilization.[\[28\]](#) Hernes argues that in regard to women, the relationship between mobilization and politization is more diverse because "women's mobilization can to a great extent also be interpreted as a result of politization".[\[29\]](#) Hernes is here obviously looking back in time since she underscores the historical conditions for organization and mobilization of women. This emphasis overshadows the fact that women since the 1980s have had more seats in political institutions than ever. Because Hernes, in her early work, takes the patriarchal welfare state for granted, she does not see the possibilities that have occurred with the gradual improvement of women's representation in the parliamentary system.

Birte Siim: "the welfare state as a social patriarchy"

The theory of the welfare state as a form of social patriarchy was central in the early scholarship of Birte Siim (1988).[\[30\]](#) Welfare-state development simply represents in this perspective a transformation of patriarchal power structures from family to state and society. The state is with Siim's approach interpreted as a system that only signifies the interests of men. Because governmental control over reproduction makes women more dependent on the state than men, the welfare state has reinforced women's powerlessness. Siim has in her search for the nature of sexual power relations in the welfare state, particularly focused on what she calls "the transition from private to public dependence" and its meaning for women.[\[31\]](#) Her conclusion was that the modern welfare state has a double meaning with regard to women.

The welfare state can be said to be patriarchal and paternalistic to the extent that women are absent from the decision-making process and to the extent that public policies are governed by male assumptions about women as mothers and carers. But women have also become empowered as workers, mothers, and citizens to the extent that motherhood and care work have become part of social citizenship in the modern Scandinavian welfare state.[\[32\]](#)

"Patriarchal theories" -too static?

Because Siim became more conscious of the positive consequences of the welfare state, the need to problematize the theory of the welfare state as a social patriarchy moved her in new theoretical directions. She criticized feminist scholars, including herself, for the use of patriarchal theories, arguing that they had resulted in one-sided interpretations. By using a historical approach, she has tried to show that the relationship between the state, women, and the family is more complex than many feminist scholars have been arguing. Already in 1988 she described the relationship between women and the state in this way:

The state has historically helped to undermine authority of the family in society, but at the same time it has also helped to foster family autonomy. The state has helped to weaken the family authority of the father, but at the same time it has helped to institutionalize the power of men over women in the wider society.[\[33\]](#)

Patriarchal theories are problematic, according to Siim, because they impede a dynamic comprehension of gender and power relations. In this perspective women will be reduced to victims of patriarchal structures, which means that their contribution to maintain or change gender relations becomes invisible. In other words, historical changes in the relationship between the family and the state become unambiguously interpreted as a development from a family patriarchy to a social patriarchy.

The universal character inherent in patriarchal theories makes it difficult to express differences or changes in gender relations with regard to time and space. Siim argued in the beginning of the nineties that analysis focusing on the patriarchal oppression of women must be combined with analysis of women's political activity inside and outside formal political institutions. She said:

Det finns fortfarande ett behov av att utveckla teorier som kan bidra till en mer dynamisk förtäelse av könsrelationerna, inklusive en mer dynamisk förståelse av samspelet mellan kvinnors politiska praxis och de statliga institutionerna.[\[34\]](#)

In the late eighties Hernes also began to criticize the patriarchal paradigm.[\[35\]](#) I interpret Hernes' criticism as a sign that she has become more aware of the importance of women's entry into political power positions. Evaluation of the patriarchal paradigm based on the situation within the political institutions in the mid 1980s, when women made up 40% of government members, seems to be the background of Hernes' hypothesis of the "woman-friendly state".[\[36\]](#) A state that enables women to have a natural relationship to their children, their work, and public life, is from Hernes' point of view, woman-friendly. She emphasizes women's increased representation in the parliamentary system and its connection with the social democratic regime. "I wish to make the claim that Nordic democracies embody a state form that makes it possible to transform them into women-friendly societies".[\[37\]](#)

Because Hernes does no longer look at the state as a system contrary to the interests and needs of women, she becomes more aware of the possibilities of change that the welfare state obviously represents. She has become more conscious about women's political activity within the formal political system. Women work in this way both as partners and challengers vis-à-vis the state, and become not just victims of patriarchal structures.

the state as a partnership

Because Hernes only addresses the possibilities of women's power within the political system, she neglects women's activism outside formal institutions. Siim uses this neglect as an argument when she criticizes Hernes for being too one-sided in her approach. Siim argues that the perspective from above must be combined with a perspective from below, because a combination will give a more realistic picture of women's relationship to political power. The hypothesis of the woman-friendly state represents, according to Siim, a Utopia, because it is based on the idea of alliances among women themselves, and between women and the state. Since Hernes addresses only well educated middle class women and their potential to change, she ignores social and cultural differences among women. Siim claims, on the other hand, that socio-economic and cultural variations make it difficult to talk about a shared female experience. If alliances among women are made, it is important to analyze the ways in which they are constructed.

This indicates that Siim is more critical to the use of the category "women" than Hernes.[\[38\]](#)

Siim and Hernes examine the relationship between women and the state in different ways. Hernes focuses on women as political actors within formal political institutions, whereas Siim stresses the different meaning of being consumers and clients of public welfare. Contrary to her earlier scholarship, Siim argues that a strong welfare state does not necessarily make women more dependent on the state. In fact, a strong public sector is a precondition to avoid becoming solely dependent on the welfare system of the state as clients:

kvinnors ökade beroande av staten som konsumenter på daghemsområdet, måste tolkas som en positiv utveckling, eftersom den har get kvinnor större möjligheter att som lönearbetare, mödrar ock medborgare förändra könsrelationerna i det privata och det offentliga livet.[\[39\]](#)

This emphasis on women's roles as clients and consumers does not mean that Siim ignores women as political actors. She argues that analysis of women's political practice (inside and outside formal political institutions) will give a good picture of whether women contribute to maintain or change gender relations. By stressing both the positive and the negative potential inherent in the state where women's interests are concerned, Siim in 1990 developed the hypothesis of the state as a complicated partnership.[\[40\]](#) The description "complicated" is due to the double meaning of the welfare state that Siim also found expression for earlier. "Tesen om ett partnerskap utvecklades som ett led i bestämningen av den statliga politikens motsättningsfulla konsekvenser för kvinnors liv".[\[41\]](#)

Hernes develops a more narrow-minded positive view of the relationship between women and the state than Siim. The patriarchal welfare state was based on the idea of women's dependencies on the state as a form of oppression, whereas the hypothesis of the woman-friendly state indicates the idea of the state as a representative of women's interests. This shift of perspective illustrates a changing attitude towards the state as a system. Hernes went from perceiving the state as an *oppressive* order to viewing it as a system characterized by *possibilities*. However, I interpret this shift from oppression to possibilities as a precondition for both Hernes and Siim's "discovery" of women's political potential.

FROM OPPRESSION TO POSSIBILITIES

Since the welfare state, as a system and a state form, is mutable, it is important to choose theories that include the historical dimension of change. Both the hypothesis of the state as a partnership and the idea of the woman-friendly state are good starting points for historical analysis of the welfare state, because they permit changes in time and space. But have Hernes and Siim's theories had any importance for historians?

If we look at work done by historians in Scandinavia, the answer to this question is no. Scandinavian feminist historians have to a lesser extent been addressing women and welfare in relation to state building and political structures.[\[42\]](#) However, they have more often highlighted the role of women as welfare contributors within welfare institutions, voluntary organizations, and local communities.[\[43\]](#)

However, if we take a look across the Atlantic, to the United States, we will discover that American feminist historians have lately been stressing ideas similar to those of Hernes and Siim, even if not directly inspired by them. The major difference is, that these historians focus on the welfare state in its earliest phase, from the 1890s to the late 1920s. By stressing women as political actors, American scholars have discovered that female reformers played an important role in constructing social policies in the Progressive Era.[\[44\]](#) In order to account for women's social political activity and the possibilities this activity brought about, some American feminist researchers have during the last five years begun to use the term "maternalism" as a new historical concept. While the patriarchal paradigm for long dominated American feminist research within both history and the social sciences, the concept of maternalism is a sign of a reorientation towards *possibilities* similar to that of Hernes and Siim in the late eighties.[\[45\]](#) This means that Scandinavian and American feminist research has come to raise some corresponding theoretical questions, which have led them away from the patriarchal paradigm. The theoretical process began, however, some years earlier in Scandinavia, with Hernes and Siim, than in the United States.

The concept of maternalism, introduced in American scholarship, in its different definitions and the international discussion rising from the applications of this concept, is the major theme in the two following Chapters.





Feminist Scholars define Maternalism and Maternalist Policy

- [THEDA SKOCPOL DEFINES THE TERM MATERNALIST POLICY AND SETS OFF A DEBATE](#)
- [DEBATE BETWEEN LINDA GORDON AND THEDA SKOCPOL](#)
- [SETH KOVEN AND SONYA MICHEL](#)
- [MOLLY LADD-TAYLOR](#)
- [ANN TAYLOR ALLEN](#)
- [CONCLUDING REMARKS](#)

The use of the concept "maternalism" is one of the most visible signs of American feminist historians growing interest in integrating a gender perspective in welfare-state research. But whether the scholars who use this concept have a common notion of gender, is difficult to say. Scholars generally tend to understand and use the concept very differently. The following quotes demonstrate clearly that maternalism has become a fertile soil for conflicting interpretations.

By maternalism historians have meant the female version of paternalism, the assumptions women reformers made about women's nature, and the policy strategies they devised to provide social protection for women's maternal responsibilities

-Kathryn Kish Sklar [\[46\]](#)

What makes maternalism more than just a women's paternalism, however, is its rootedness in the subordination of women.

-Linda Gordon [\[47\]](#)

Even though this divergent use has not stopped American scholars from using the concept of maternalism in their welfare-state analysis, it is important to clarify its meaning. How is the concept used and for what purposes, and why are American scholars defining maternalism differently? What importance does the concept have for attempts to analyze the early welfare state?

In order to answer these questions, I will analyze the ways in which American historians define and use maternalism. It is important to emphasize that in this Chapter, I aim to explore some aspects of the debate rather than to even out the various views defended or to resolve the disagreements between them. However, I hope to set the various definitions in context by presenting the scholars more broadly in terms of publications and major ideas. It seems natural to start with Theda Skocpol because she is the one that most thoroughly has promoted the necessity of employing gender in social political analysis. Moreover, Skocpol claims that use of gender also leads to a rewriting of welfare-state history in general. Using Skocpol's ideas as a starting point, I present and analyze the debate that has taken off between American scholars. The analysis developed in this Chapter will be a point of departure for the last Chapter when I discuss the relationship between *maternalism* as a historical concept and *gender* as a category of historical analysis. The second part of Chapter three contains an examination of the possible consequences of using maternalism as a historical concept.

MATERNALISM IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT [\[48\]](#)

It is necessary to see maternalism, which is a theoretical term, in its historical context: the development of welfare states in the period 1890s - 1920s. The end of the nineteenth century was a historical turning point for many countries in the Western World. New ideas about the role of the state alongside new social needs due to the development of an industrial society resulted in increased state activity and commitment to social welfare. Political mobilization and organization in society also led to growing pressure on the state to form alternatives to stigmatizing poor reliefs. However, a characteristic feature of the emerging social security systems in the Western World was its private-public mix. Even though the state initiated new social reforms, it still relied on and co-operated with private welfare producers, such as philanthropic and voluntary organizations.

In the 1880s, Germany was the first country to introduce compulsory national insurance against sickness, accident, disability and old-age. Sweden and France followed soon with a voluntary sickness insurance in 1891 and 1898, respectively (see Table 1-3, page 29-32). While the German social insurance system originally was designed for industrial workers and workers in trade and transport, it was already in 1911 extended to cover white-collar workers. However, most of the welfare programs that emerged in the period 1890s -1920s, were aimed at needy people with low incomes. Both the Norwegian Sickness Act of 1909, and the British National Insurance Act two years later, were designed for blue- and white-collar workers above a certain income level. The labor question was also central when France in the same period began to form their social security programs. Although the French insurance programs were voluntary in the beginning, they soon came to accompany the international trend towards compulsory social programs.

Social welfare and the role of the state was also on the political agenda in the United States (see Table 2, page 30-31). But until well into the twentieth century, the US government did not undertake elaborate social welfare programs. This means that the Civil War Pension of 1862 for long was the only federal welfare program, consuming 34% of the federal budget, and that the US was a social political "laggard" compared to many European countries. On the other hand, 38 states enacted Workmen's compensation laws between 1911 and 1919. Compared to Europe, the federal government in the United States came to play a limited role in promoting social welfare in this period. It was not until the Great Depression in the 1930s that the US government came up with a contributory insurance program for retired wage earners and their dependants. [\[49\]](#)

USA: -a welfare state "late-comer"?

Since the United States never developed a national health insurance program, like many European countries did in the twentieth century, the American welfare state is often viewed as "less" developed than the welfare state systems of Europe. The USA can besides be described as a "laggard" on the road towards the welfare state, due to the fact that the United States in a European perspective also was the last country to develop a social security system. [\[50\]](#) To present the United States as a "welfare state late-comer" indicates an emphasis on the social political development in relation to only a few social programs on a national level. The German historian Gisela Bock describes this as follows:

The reforms by which the development of welfare states is usually studied and which are compared with each other normally relate to a limited range of "social problems": sickness, disablement, old age, unemployment, labour protection and the introduction of progressive income taxes. This literature deals at best marginally with politics to do with motherhood, fatherhood, childbearing, and childraising. [\[51\]](#)

Bock indicates by this that welfare policies not aimed at the (male) wage earner have often been left out of the historical picture painted by welfare-state scholars. Scholars' focus on men and the problems of members of the male labor force may also be a result of the fact that the labor question was a central theme at this time. In particular, the countries where the early welfare policies were based on social insurance arrangements emphasized the wage worker on the formal labor market. However, if we look at the United States, the latter explanation does not ring true. Although a social security system based on insurance arrangements was not passed by Congress before 1935, it does not necessarily mean that the federal government or the government of the states played a minimal role in promoting social welfare before 1935. In other words, it is possible that scholars focusing on the labor market have underestimated or obscured the degree to which the United States and other countries developed social reforms aimed at other social groups such as women and children (see Table 2, page 30-31). These social reforms compose the social, political, and historical

context in which maternalism operates.

social reforms aimed at women and children in the United States, 1890s -1920s

Even though the United States never developed a national health insurance program, many American states in the early twentieth century passed welfare programs that were aimed directly at women and particularly at mothers. In the period 1911-1928, 44 American states passed Mothers' Pension programs which provided cash benefits to poor single mothers and widows with children.[52] In addition to these pension programs, many states in the same period developed protective labor laws to limit working hours and to establish a minimum wage for women workers. One of the first "Women's hour laws" was passed in Oregon in 1908, and by 1921 41 American states had laws restricting daily labor for women. Regulations for working women were justified as protection for those who were, or might become, mothers. Women and children were a group which needed protection because they were not able to protect themselves. Thus the court in Oregon justified protection of working women:

That woman's physical structure and the performance of maternal functions place her at a disadvantage in the struggle for subsistence is obvious. This is especially true when the burdens of motherhood is upon her.....⁵³

While both labor protective laws and Mother's Pension programs were welfare arrangements on state level, the US federal government in 1912 showed its concern for the welfare of mothers and children by establishing the National Children's Bureau as a part of the federal Department of Commerce and Labor. This publicly-financed bureau was established to collect and disseminate information concerning the welfare of children and mothers. As elsewhere in the Western World, this was motivated by response to the high infant mortality and falling birth rates. Although the Children's Bureau was a research agency, it became the first female stronghold in the federal government, mainly headed by professional women.[54]

The activity within the Children's Bureau led to a growing federal interest in maternal and child welfare which culminated with the passing of the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act in 1921. The act, which provided federal funding for maternal and infant health programs, was formed in the hope of reducing the high infant mortality rates that the Children's Bureau had documented. By its federal funding, the Sheppard-Towner Act was the first federal program for social welfare in the United States. But, in contrast to Mothers' Pensions programs, it never survived the Great Depression in the 1930s. The Congress decided already in 1929 to shut down federal education programs.

Table 1: Social Policies in Germany and Britain 1890s - 1920s: Year and Type of First Reform (see note 48)

	GERMANY 1883	BRITAIN 1911
Sickness	compulsory insurance for workers, female workers could obtain three weeks maternity leave 1884	compulsory insurance for manual workers, including maternity benefits for the wives of covered workers (1914 maternity benefit paid directly to the mother) 1887 the Workmen's Compensation Act 1911 compulsory insurance for workers in a limited number of trades 1908 the Old Age Pensions Act
Accident	governmental employment provision 1889	insurance for people with low income 1909 minimum wages in selected industries, also included women in some of the lowest paid occupations 1908 the Children Act
Unemployment	compulsory insurance for workers 1924	legislation concerning the treatment of children by the law in both criminal and civil cases 1918 the Maternity & Child Act encouraged development of local maternal clinics and services
Old-age pension	Maternity benefits extended to non-employed wives of insured husbands	
Labor protection		
Maternity/children		

Table 2: Social Policies in Norway and the United States 1890s -1920s: Year and Type of First Reform (see note 48)

	NORWAY	UNITED STATES
Sickness	1909 compulsory insurance for workers above a certain income level, including maternity benefits for wives of covered workers in 1915, paid directly to the mother 1894	*1862 the Civil War Pensions for Union soldiers who were wounded, or, if they had died in battle, to their survivors 1911-1911 workmen's compensation laws passed in 38 states 1920-1932 in 2 more states 1935 Social Security Act contributory insurance program for retired wage earners and their dependants 1890s Women's hour laws passed in 8 states 1900-09 New or improved women's hour laws passed in 13 states 1909-17 New or improved women's hour laws passed in 39 states
Accident	compulsory insurance with state and employees' funding 1906	
Unemployment	voluntary/unions with state contribution 1936 compulsory and universal means-tested system 1892	
Old-age pension	"fabrikktilsynsloven" prohibited factory-work for children under 12 years old and prevented women from working in the mining-industry and from work in general for a period of six weeks after giving birth. The law also limited working-hours for children and young people between 12 and 18.	
Labor protection		
Maternity/children		

Table 2 continues

Labor protection	NORWAY 1915 granted small maternity allowances to poor single mothers 1919 Mothers' pension introduced in Oslo, cash benefits to single mothers	UNITED STATES 1912-23 Minimum-wage laws passed in 15 states 1918-32 Women's hour laws in 2 more states; 12 states makes improvements 1911-19 Mothers' pension laws passed in 40 states, cash benefits to single or widowed mothers 1923-28 Mothers' pensions in 4 more states. 1911
Maternity/children		

the Children's Bureau a research agency on child welfare 1921 the Sheppard-Towner Act provided federal funding for maternal and infant health education programs

Table 3: Social Policies in France and Sweden 1890s-1920s: Year and Type of First Reform (see note 48)

	FRANCE	1898	voluntary	SWEDEN	1891	voluntary
Sickness	insurance for workers in industry and trade	1893	free medical assistance to poor pregnant women	private insurance with state funds	1901	voluntary/private insurance
Accident	1911 compulsory old-age and disability insurance		1909 the Engerand Act a maternity protection law that guaranteed jobs to women who stayed away from work up to 8 weeks before and after giving birth	1912 compulsory maternity leave in six weeks (was not put into effect before 1931)		
Unemployment	1913 the Strauss Act prescribed a mandatory maternity leave of four weeks after childbirth and two weeks later, included domestic workers					
Old-age pension						
Maternity/children						

As Table 1-3 shows, the United States was not alone in developing social welfare reforms aimed at mothers and children in the period 1890s-1920s. Maternity benefits were included in the Norwegian and the British health insurance acts from 1909 and 1911, respectively. Countries like France and Sweden also enacted laws concerning maternity, but in contrast to Norway and Britain, these programs were formed separate from the insurance programs. In other words, national variations were many, and governmental concern for the welfare of mothers and children has to be seen as an international trend in this period.

However, the American welfare system stands out in comparison to the European systems. While social reforms directed towards women and children for long made up the major part of public welfare programs in the US, maternal reforms constituted only one part of a broader social security system in the European countries. This difference is crucial in order to understand why researchers focusing on social security based on wages have seen the USA as a laggard, and why American feminist scholars are now focusing on mothering (maternalism) as a source of women's political empowerment in the Progressive Era.

THEDA SKOCPOL DEFINES THE TERM MATERNALIST POLICY AND SETS OFF A DEBATE

maternalism: a characterization of early social policies and their initiators

Theda Skocpol uses the term "maternalist policy" to characterize the early social policies that emerged in the Progressive Era and benefited some women as mothers.^[55] Women's hour laws, minimum wage laws, Mothers' pensions, the establish of the Children's Bureau and the passing of the Sheppard-Towner Act are thus described as maternalist legislation. Moreover, Skocpol also uses the term to identify different welfare systems such as the American and the British. The latter is especially clear in her article from 1991, with co-author Gretchen Ritter.

During the period when major European nations, including Britain, were launching paternalist versions of the modern welfare state, the United States was tentatively experimenting with what might be called a maternalist welfare state.^[56]

Skocpol's characterization of the British and the American welfare regimes is derived from two major observations. Firstly she focuses on the ways in which the welfare systems are organized. Whereas the early British welfare state featured regulations and benefits for workers and low-income dependent people, direct ties were established between public authorities and women as workers, mothers or widows in the US. Even though also Britain ended up offering support to mothers and widows, women's social rights were mainly decided by their ties to wage earning males. Thus the principle of direct and indirect channelling of social benefits to women is the ground on which Skocpol builds her sharp distinction between maternalist and paternalist welfare policy.

PATERNALIST	social benefits	indirectly to	women as dependants of male worker
MATERNALIST	social benefits	directly to	worker women as workers, single mothers and widows

Besides being devised by male politicians, bureaucrats, and trade unionists, paternalist measures such as those that dominated British social policy during the early 1900s attempted to shore up the working condition of all workers in ways that reinforced male trade unions, and attempted to channel public benefits to women and children through male wage-earning capacities. In contrast, early US labor regulations were not only devised and implemented primarily by female professionals and women's groups, they also applied directly to women.^[57]

Secondly, Skocpol emphasizes the political processes and political actors that initiated and shaped the welfare state development. She says:

In Britain, male bureaucrats and party leaders designed policies "for the good" of the male wage-workers and their dependants. Meanwhile, in the United States, early social policies were championed by elite middle-class women "for the good" of less privileged women.^[58]

These two last quotes indicate that Skocpol defines maternalist policies as policies formulated by women for women in particular. Thus the term "maternalist" also becomes a label for the women who promoted maternalist welfare policies. Organizations that pushed for a maternalist line of development, according to Skocpol, are the National Congress of Mothers (1897), General Federation of Women's Clubs (1890), the National Consumers' League (1899), and the National Women's Trade Union League (1903).^[59] After 1912 the maternalist line was also influenced by the Children's Bureau. Paternalist policies are, in contrast to maternalist policies, identified as policies articulated by men for men and their dependants.

Skocpol's use of maternalism, as an opposition to paternalism, has been strongly supported by the historian Kathryn Kish Sklar. In an article from 1993, Sklar maintains that:

By maternalism historians have meant the female version of paternalism, the assumptions women reformers made about women's nature, and the policy strategies they devised to provide social protection for women's maternal responsibilities. ^[60]

But Sklar fails (as Theda Skocpol fails) to give a more exact specification of the term.

criticism of previous welfare-state research

In the article from 1991, Skocpol points out that the distinctiveness of American social policy prior to the New Deal, was its maternalist character. Even though the maternalist line dominated the shape of the American welfare state, Skocpol does not preclude the existence of several lines of welfare development in the post-Civil War

period. In her recent book *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* (1992) she claims that there was at the same time a paternalist as well as a maternalist line of welfare development in the United States. [61] However, the paternalist line never became influential because the country never developed a strong labor movement. The Workmen's Compensation was from Skocpol's point of view the only victory of the paternalist approach (see Table 2, page 30). [62] But, says Skocpol, this provision was an exception.

With a focus on the "maternalist" character of the American welfare system prior the New Deal, Skocpol argues that the United States did not join the mainstream evolution of western European social progress. Accordingly, the USA was not a welfare-state "laggard", argues Skocpol. [63] Such a statement implies that the American experience is exceptional and it revives the old interest in *American exceptionalism*. However, in contrast to previous research on this issue, Skocpol does not use "American exceptionalism" meaning the country's uniquely strong liberal values. Social policies in this period were unique because they were created and worked out for the benefit of women, argues Skocpol. Social progress in the US was identified with the strength of gender and not with the fortunes of the working class, as in Western European countries.

Previous comparative research on the development of welfare states has primarily relied upon theoretical approaches stressing the effects of socio-economic modernization, national values and ideologies, or demands by working class organizations. [64] Interpretations stressing the strength of the working class and political parties have marked our understanding of the welfare state development. Skocpol, on the other hand, explains that theories stressing the strength of labor are insufficient to explain social policies aimed at mothers and female workers as opposed to industrial workers and their dependants.

Gender identities and relationships are simply not treated as analytically central in theories that derive political conflicts and outcome straightforwardly from balances of power between capitalists and organized wage earners. [65]

The political forces shaping the early patterns of social provision in the US were not grounded in conflicts between capitalists and industrial workers but in ethnic and gender identities. This, in Skocpol's view, made the American experience exceptional.

In order to find explanations that take the American maternalist experience into account, Skocpol argues in her latest book that we have to find an explanatory approach which differs from existing theories of welfare state development. Existing theories are insufficient because they all share problematic assumptions about the evolutionary nature of the welfare state and the socio-economic roots of political processes. In arguing for an alternative approach, she says:

Yet only by taking processes of state formation and patterns of political organization seriously, and notice that these intersect in varied ways with economic and social transformations, can we break with the progressive notion of social policies as aspects of societal evolution. [66]

Skocpol wants to explore how social and political factors combine to affect the social identities and group capacities involved in policy making. By viewing the *polity* as the primary locus for action, we are able to understand political activities, whether they are carried out by politicians or social groups, as conditioned by the institutional configurations of governments and political parties.

Skocpol's polity-centered analysis is a continuation of her previous state-centered approach, which excluded those political forces she now tries to integrate; grassroots-activism, non-institutional political activity, voluntary social work etc. Thus "polity" becomes a broader term than "the state". By asking why maternalist forces promoting social policies for mothers and women workers were more effective than paternalist forces in US politics, she turns to the structure of the polity, the "fit" between the organizational capacities of maternalist and paternalist forces, and the opportunities offered by US political institutions.

Generally speaking, Skocpol criticizes previous theories for ignoring gender dimensions of politics which not only means that they overlook social policies targeted on mothers and women workers but that they also "fail to notice the contributions of female-dominated modes of politics, some of which are not dependent on action through parties, elections, trade unions, or official bureaucrats". [67] She implies that unless we can bring the politics of gender into our comparative analysis, we will not be able to explain patterns of politics and policy that were especially important in the US.

Skocpol's interpretation of early social policy stands in contrast to previous welfare-state scholarship. Her rethinking can be summarized by the three following elements: first, the United States was not a welfare state "latecomer" because the country already in the early twentieth century formed social welfare programs aimed at women and children. Second, these welfare programs were initiated and shaped by female reformers, who by their maternalist activities attended to the interests of all women. Third, this means that gender, and not class, became the major force in the making of the American welfare state.

This intention to rewrite the histories of the early welfare states raises many complex questions with regard to feminist scholarship of the welfare state. Especially Skocpol's attempt to present women as a unified political force by defining all women as potential mothers, has caused debate among feminist scholars. The US historian Linda Gordon in particular has presented a thorough criticism of Theda Skocpol's latest book.

DEBATE BETWEEN LINDA GORDON AND THEDA SKOCPOL

Linda Gordon, one of the leading feminist historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries America, did already in the 1980s what Theda Skocpol is trying to do in the 1990s: employing the category "gender" in the analysis of the American welfare state. [68] Like Skocpol, Gordon also stresses the importance of organized women as promoters and initiators of maternal and child welfare in the Progressive Era. This indicates that both Skocpol and Gordon have moved away from the patriarchal paradigm. In spite of their common emphasis on women as political actors and the possibilities that might represent, they tend to interpret maternalist policies quite differently. Actually, as we will see, Linda Gordon disagrees in many respect with Skocpol's dichotomous use of maternalism. By looking into the debate that developed between Skocpol and Gordon in *Contention* (1993), I hope to find out why they understand maternalist policies differently. [69]

maternalist policies and the concept of "power"

Whereas Skocpol argues that the maternalist celebration of the civic value of mothering was shared "by mothers of all classes and races" [70], Gordon claims the contrary. She says:

the maternalists were elite, dedicated to providing what they believed was good for the working class, and mainly in agreement on the necessity of shoring up the male breadwinner as head of family. [71]

Gordon indicates that America's maternalists were captive to the country's elite and gender-traditionalism from the start. Moreover, the history of the mother's pensions, which became Aid to Families with Dependent Children (ADFC) with the Social Security Act in 1935, provides also, from Gordon's point of view, a clear evidence that women's power does not always promote all women. Even though female reformers initiated social welfare programs for women, their activity first of all reflected the interests and the values of the middle-class. Skocpol fails, according to Gordon, to see this because she neglects the concept of *power*. Referring directly to *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*, Gordon maintains:

The book fails to create a satisfying explanation of the construction of social provision in the period because of the systematic exclusion of social-structural power relations -as class and gender- from her analysis. [72]

While Skocpol's polity-centered claims bring social movements back into the analysis centre, they leave out social structures such as class and gender. Gordon continues:

Without any discussion of power differentiations between men and women, rich and poor, white and Black, WASPs and immigrants, the various civic organizations are reduced to pressure groups competing on a presumably level field. Moreover, her lens picks up formal organizations but not informal policy influences from social movements or shifts in popular consciousness. [73]

To Gordon, the problems in Skocpol's interpretations are already present in the outset of the book: she fails to produce any adequate definitions of what she means by "paternalist" and "maternalist".^[74] Gordon continues: "This failure exemplifies ways in which Skocpol's approach to the influence of gender is undeveloped in relation to the theoretical level of much scholarly gender analysis today".^[75] Clearly, Gordon indicates that Skocpol's analysis is not matched by familiarity with scholarly debates on gender. Gender means "female" for Skocpol, and Gordon claims that "she produces an entirely celebratory account of the women's organizations she studies. She has no critique of maternalism".^[76]

Skocpol uses maternalism as an opposition to paternalism, without directly expressing the distinctions between the two concepts, with the exception of the structural differences mentioned above. The absence of such a specification and definition is a result of her failure to ground her concept of gender in questions of male and female power, says Gordon.

Gender is, after all, not merely a neutral or benign difference; it is a difference, or rather a set of meanings culturally constructed around sexual difference, in a context of male domination. In the entire book there is no discussion of male power in general or in its specifics -or, to put it inversely, of the fact that the forms of political power with which Skocpol is so concerned are shaped by their maleness.^[77]

The maternalist strategy was after all a result of women's lack of political power, says Gordon, and thus the concepts of paternalism/maternalism refer to an inequity of power in relation to both gender and generation.

maternalist policies: -result of fixed differences between men and women or shared understandings of the proper family?

Identifying the influence of gender in welfare thought, we should not argue that these visions were dichotomized between men and women, claims Gordon. In an article from 1992, she emphasizes this by saying:^[78]

My purpose is not so much to distinguish male from female as it is to illustrate the importance of asking questions about gender, questions that illuminate similarity as well as difference.^[79]

The stratification of the American welfare system into the social insurance and public assistance program, often called the two-track welfare system ^[80], was, in the way Gordon sees it, a result of gender values shared by both men and women, in order to maintain the family wage system.

...male and female welfare reformers worked within substantially the same gender system, the same set of assumptions about proper family life and the proper sphere for men and women. ^[81]

By not employing gender as a male/female opposition, Gordon is able to underscore that men and women were holding similar visions of the economic structure of the proper family in which the welfare state took its form. However, while these gendered assumptions did not necessarily express antagonism between men and women, they were anything but universal: "they expressed a dominant outlook, to be sure, but one that did not fit the needs and understandings of many less privileged citizens".^[82] In other words, Gordon thinks it is false to believe that a kind of unity among women was present at this time. Women's activism was as much as men's, determined by class as much as by gender. "Specifically, this supposed unity denies that women's agency also derives from other aspects of their social position."^[83] Gordon continues:

She [Skocpol] generalizes about these "maternalists" as if they were manifestations of some universal female principle. They did share some fundamental beliefs and assumptions about proper role of government and the proper construction of families, but Skocpol identifies these commonalities no more than their differences.^[84]

By accusing Skocpol for presenting women as if they have no class identities, Gordon can be said to have taken an anti-essentialist view which became visible among US feminist scholars in the 1980s.^[85] She says: "At one time women's studies or gender scholars assumed that male/female were inevitably a binary set of opposite principles, and that women had a unique and universally similar perspective, but no longer!"^[86] Gordon tries by this to avoid the trap of false generalizations by unmasking the differences among women.

Gordon's argumentation against Skocpol corresponds in many ways with Birte Siim's criticism of Helga Hernes.^[87] Gordon is, like Siim, more critical to the idea of female alliances across social boundaries, than both Skocpol and Hernes. By stressing women's various social positions, Gordon and Siim problematize the common female experience that Skocpol and Hernes emphasize. Whereas Skocpol and Hernes see "women" as a homogenous group, different from men, Gordon and Siim stress that women's gendered identity is also necessarily determined by their socio-economic position in society. Therefore, gender becomes, in the way Gordon and Siim argue, not a category of fixed differences between men and women, but differences constructed socially and culturally.

This contrastive notion of gender explains partly why Skocpol and Gordon have different understandings of maternalist policies. Skocpol sees maternalist and paternalist policies as results of female and male political activity, respectively, whereas Gordon understands maternalist policies as a result of shared understandings of the proper family among male and female welfare reformers. According to Gordon (but contrary to Skocpol), men can also initiate and produce maternalist policies.

Linda Gordon defines the concept of "maternalism"

Although Gordon denies the idea of any kind of unity between middle-class and working-class women, she still implies that such a unity should exist. By characterizing social insurance programs for workers as superior to public assistance programs for women and children, Gordon is asking "Why did women design inferior programs for women?"^[88] In order to understand how women, and indeed feminist women, could design and support inferior social programs for other women, she thinks the legacy of feminism has to be considered. Historians in general, and especially feminist historians, have normally used feminism to refer only to those who struggled primarily for gender equality. A broader definition is needed, in order to include the women and men who did not believe in total gender equality but who agitated for greater respect and power for women in their proper sphere. Gordon defines feminism in this way: "Feminism is a political perspective that considers women unjustly subordinated, finds that oppression to be humanly changeable, and strategies for women's advancement."^[89]

This definition might include women who did not call themselves feminists. Nevertheless, it enables us to describe the women reformers who worked for improvement of women's conditions within the separate female sphere, using the language of gender difference instead of gender equality, without interpreting them as less "real" or "true" feminists. Does this mean that Linda Gordon also sees maternalists as feminists?

Linda Gordon thinks, despite her critical remarks, that maternalism is a useful label for an orientation among women reformers from the mid-nineteenth century to the Progressive Era. In order to use the concept, she says, we need to specify it more than Skocpol does. Gordon's definition of maternalism contains four parts: First, maternalist policy proposals contained a conviction that women reformers should function in a motherly role towards the poor. Second, this conviction was embedded in women's belief that it was their work and experience as mothers that made women uniquely able to lead in the campaign for social public provision. Third, the arguments that maternalist feminists used to justify the need for state protection was their responsibility as mothers of future generations. Arguments like these were sometimes biological, other times social, but always based on a commitment to gender differentiation. This explains why women reformers had a mixed attitude to women's economic independence: they were supporting direct payment to women at the same time as they were refusing to support permanent or universal child benefit programs, which might have undermined male-headed households.^[90] Since many female reformers adapted the family-wage assumption to their maternalist strategy there are no reasons for defining maternalism as antithetical to paternalism. As Gordon explains:

Most of the women-dominated groups agreed with these men on the basic premise that public provision should support the family wage, i.e., the principle that men alone should be able to earn enough to support a family without help from wife or children.^[91]

Actually, argues Gordon, the policies and advocates that Skocpol calls "maternalist" can just as well fit the paternalist definition, because "the maternalists were elite, dedicated to providing what they believed was good for the working class, and mainly in agreement on the necessity of shoring up the male breadwinner as head of family".^[92] However, to Gordon maternalism was not "women's paternalism" as Kathryn Kish Sklar expressed it. Maternalism is in contrast to paternalism rooted in the

subordination of women. Gordon expresses the fourth aspect of maternalism as follows: "Maternalism showed its standpoint -its view from underneath- and from there built a strategy for using the space inside a male-dominated society for an activism that partially subverted male power".[\[93\]](#)

maternalist policies and the concept of "race"

Gordon argues that the faith in the family wage, in addition to being a social construction, also was a racial pattern, far more characteristic of white than black women in the early 1900s.[\[94\]](#) By focusing explicitly on differences in welfare visions among black and white women activists, Gordon has shown that black women to a greater extent than white women, accepted married women's employment as a long term and widespread necessity.[\[95\]](#) Although black women activists differed from whites in their approach to women's economic role, they can still cautiously be described as maternalists, says Gordon, because they stressed the importance of motherhood in the same way as their white counterparts.[\[96\]](#)

The racial aspect of maternalism has also been highlighted by the political scientist Gwendolyn Mink. She claimed already in 1991 that America's maternalists were captive to the country's racism, because they linked the problem of racial order to the material and cultural quality of motherhood.[\[97\]](#) In a more explicit way than Gordon, Mink has been occupied with maternalist policies and racism. She says:

Women's politics was moreover a racial politics, tying the future of the republic to uplift of the citizenry. In the main, this politics was directed towards the new immigrant population -the eastern and southern Europeans who moved into northern cities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[\[98\]](#)

Theda Skocpol is concerned with race in another meaning than Gordon and Mink. While Gordon and Mink emphasize maternalist policies with regard to respectively racial differences and racism, Skocpol highlights the ways in which maternalists used "race" rhetorically, in their welfare campaigns. In general Skocpol criticizes feminist scholars for overstating their sense of race and race anxiety in the Progressive Era by referring directly to Mink. Skocpol says:

Mink traces social policies for mothers in this period to a vague, overarching sense of "race anxiety". She pays little attention to variations. And much of her evidence consist of quotations using the word "race". Many quotes from female reformers and women's groups are taken out of context, and Mink often misunderstands the use of the word "race". Sometimes in this historical period, it was, as she suggests, used to refer to whites versus nonwhites, or northwestern versus southeastern Europeans; but at other times it was used to refer to the human race, or all citizens, or all humankind. Women reformers often used the word in this sense when they spoke of mothers' responsibility for furthering the well-being of the race.[\[99\]](#)

Skocpol's argumentation shows that she, in contrast to both Gordon and Mink, chooses to interpret women's reformers use of the word "race" in two ways, both in situations where it was used in the meaning of all human beings and where it was used in the meaning whites versus people of color. This understanding of race is matching her celebratory account of the maternalist organizations. Mink, on the other hand, says that she is using the term "race", "as it figured in the politics of industrializing America. It refers to people of color and to white people we commonly refer to today as "ethnics" ".[\[100\]](#) Gordon, on her side, employs race in the meaning black/white, African-Americans versus Anglo-Americans. The major point with Gordon's emphasis on race was to show that maternalism was a highly racial construction, formulated mainly by white middle class women. On the other hand, Skocpol does not take this aspect into account.

As the discussion shows, the concept "race" invites different interpretations of maternalist policies. The debate also shows how sensitive race, as a theme, is in the United States, and how academic scholarship is influenced by this sensitiveness. Skocpol's attempt to present maternalist policies and the maternalist women as an inclusive phenomenon with regard to social classes and races, can be said to be a political reckless project in a multi-cultural country like the USA. Even though the racial feature of maternalist policies only composes one part of maternalism, it becomes a crucial one in the discussion between Gordon and Skocpol.

In the following we will see that the racial aspect is not explicit among the remaining definers and users of maternalism. While Skocpol and Gordon in general went into details in their discussion, the remaining scholars such as Seth Koven and Sonya Michel have a less conscious stand to the questions raised in *Contention*. This does not mean that they do not deal with the scholarship of Skocpol and Gordon. Both Koven and Michel refer to Skocpol and Gordon in their footnotes and biographies.[\[101\]](#) Still, it is important to point out that they do not take critical stand on Skocpol's and Gordon's definition (or lack of definition) of maternalism.

SETH KOVEN AND SONYA MICHEL

The two historians Seth Koven and Sonya Michel are perhaps the scholars, besides Theda Skocpol and Linda Gordon, that most thoroughly have tried to employ the concept of maternalism in their analyses of women's welfare activism.[\[102\]](#) Already in 1990 they worked out a definition of maternalism that in many ways became style-setting for the new comparative scholarship on gender and the origins of welfare states. Their central role within the scholarship was largely confirmed in 1993, when they edited a collection of essays written on the topic of maternalist politics and welfare state formation. The book *Mothers of a New World* contains articles from scholars such as Kathryn Kish Sklar, Molly Ladd-Taylor as well as from Koven and Michel themselves. As we will see in this part, Koven and Michel are more ideologically concerned than Theda Skocpol. They intend to see maternalism as an ideological trend in the early twentieth century. How do they succeed?

maternalism as political discourses about women, the state and society

Koven and Michel focus on individual and organized women who campaigned for the improvement of maternal and child welfare. By being "maternalist" in orientation, these women initiated welfare programs that to some degree came to serve as models for the ways in which central authorities handled the welfare needs of women and children. Through the example of women's welfare agency in Europe and the US, Koven and Michel introduce maternalism in order to explain the ideological grounds on which women's reform activity were built.

In an article co-authored with Ruth Rosen, Seth Koven refers to maternalism "as a political concept that accepts the principle of gender difference, especially women's identity as mothers, but maintains that women have a responsibility to apply their domestic and familial values to society as a whole".[\[103\]](#) In the introduction of *Mothers of a New World*, Seth Koven and Sonya Michel define maternalism as follows:

We apply the term to ideologies that exalted women's capacity to mother and applied to society as a whole the values they attached to that role: care, nurturance, and morality. Maternalism was the central and defining core of some women's vision of themselves and of politics.[\[104\]](#)

Such specifications emphasize that Koven and Michel perceive maternalism as a political discourse that operated in relation to other political discourses and in relation to a wide array of concrete social and political practices. Both of them deny, however that maternalism was a unified movement speaking with one voice. They say: "Maternalism does not refer to a specific movement per se. Nor do we use the noun "maternalist" as we might "feminist", to establish identity of a particular social actor".[\[105\]](#) Feminists and not-feminists, radical, liberal or conservative, pro-and anti-suffrage: the capacious umbrella of maternalism gathered them all, argue Koven and Michel.

Not referring to a specific movement or identity, Koven and Michel's definition accepts that visions of motherhood and maternal roles may vary over time and place in relation to the social and political locations of activists and reformers. Even though Koven and Michel call attention to the changeable character of maternalism, they also stress that the maternalist rhetoric served different interests for men and women: "Although male politicians used maternalist rhetoric, it was often merely a cloak for paternalism."[\[106\]](#) This attempt to limit maternalism by referring to its contrast is quite similar to the way Theda Skocpol contrasts paternalism with maternalism. Contrary to other feminist historians who have highlighted the repressive use of politics and rhetoric of motherhood by male social-reform activists, Koven and Michel along with Skocpol, try to illustrate the opportunities that maternalism offered women. They both criticize feminist historians who consider motherhood and maternalism incompatible with female emancipation. From their point of view this incompatibility has led some feminist historians to downplay women's influence on the formation of welfare states. [\[107\]](#)

maternalist policies - between private and public

Koven and Michel also criticize traditional historians for minimizing the role of women in welfare state formation. Because historians in general have underestimated the role of the voluntary organizations, they have also failed to notice the role of women. Historical studies of welfare-state formation have from their point of view:

failed to look closely at those places where women were most influential: in their localities as elected and appointed officials and as leaders and rank-and-file members of voluntary societies that addressed every conceivable social problem. In their zeal to trace origins of central government, they have minimized the role of local government, and hence of women as well.[\[108\]](#)

Because voluntary organizations have merely been viewed as private training grounds for men who wanted to make careers in public office, historians have in general failed to notice that voluntary organizations had different meanings for men and women. Since few or no women were able to follow the path of careers in public office and since women also lacked the rights to vote at this time, the activity within voluntary organizations became the major arena in which they could engage in public life and social policy.

It was within the maternalist paradigm, closely linked to the traditional female sphere, that women first claimed new roles for themselves by stressing the importance of motherhood for society as a whole. Koven and Michel are claiming that women reformers challenged the boundaries between public and private by transforming motherhood from women's private responsibility into public policy. However, at the same time as they challenged the distinctions between public and private, men and women, state and civil society, they also evoked traditional images of womanliness. This apparent paradox of entering the public political arena by reinforcing the traditional female sphere of children, family, care, and nurture, is what maternalism is all about, argue Koven and Michel.[\[109\]](#)

The public/private distinction is especially addressed by Seth Koven in her contribution to *Mothers of a New World*.[\[110\]](#) Maternalism as practices and discourses involves interactions between private and public in a way that led Koven to underscore the artificiality of constructing private and public as two bipolar categories. She stresses that women moved between the private and the public in their roles as social reformers, activists, workers and consumers of welfare.

radical and conservative maternalists

Even though there were no common political strategy among women reformers besides their concern for improving maternal and child welfare, Sonya Michel argues that maternalists were divided into two general factions on the question of the state's role in protecting and aiding women and children. When some women fought for greater federal responsibility in social welfare, others insisted that maternal and child welfare should be the concern of private and philanthropic organizations and not the state. Historians have from Michel's point of view tended to focus on the radical maternalists that supported an extension of state intervention.[\[111\]](#) These radical women aimed their activity at the government, and operated within the settlement movement, the National Consumers' League and the Children's Bureau.[\[112\]](#) Michel calls for more attention to their counterparts, the conservative reformers

who were committed to the protection of mothers and children, but whose conservative convictions inclined them to take another political path -one that did not necessarily lead to or through government. [\[113\]](#)

The conservative fraction of the maternalist movement gathered reformers which asserted that the role of the federal government should remain minimal. With this distinction between radicals and conservatives, Sonya Michel stresses the complexities of maternalist ideologies and the numerous forms they could take. She says: "As a powerful set of metaphors, maternalism was taken up by the activists across the political spectrum".[\[114\]](#)

By dividing the maternalist paradigm into two major fractions, the radical and the conservative, Michel tends to see maternalism more as a specific movement. She also uses the label "maternalists" as a characterization of women reformers who pressed for maternal and child welfare reforms.[\[115\]](#) This use appears as a paradox compared with her definition in the introduction of *Mothers of a New World*. "Maternalism does not refer to a specific movement per se. Nor do we use the noun "maternalist" as we might "feminist", to establish identity of a particular actor".[\[116\]](#)

the connection between women's power and the strength of the state

Women's maternalist policies was, according to Koven and Michel, strongest in the nations that had the weakest, least bureaucratic state. They say: "the strength and the range of women's private-sector welfare activities often varied inversely with the strength of the state".[\[117\]](#) The American state and, to a lesser degree, the British state are from their point of view, "weak" states because they relied on local and private forms of welfare provision, in lack of a strong centralized government. Nations with strong centralized governments and well-developed welfare bureaucracies, such as France and Germany, provided, on the other hand, less space for women's welfare activism to develop. Despite a weak women's movement, the French and the German state regimes resulted in more social welfare programs for women and children than the "weak-states" (see Table 1-3, page 29-32). Especially France developed many social protection laws for working women. This means that a strong women's social-action movement did not necessarily result in more benefits for women and children: "in the first group of four countries [USA and Britain] those where women's social-action movements were strongest granted the least generous state-welfare benefits for women and children before 1920".[\[118\]](#) This line of reasoning is contrary to the ways in which Theda Skocpol presents the US as the "first maternalist welfare state".

The "strong-state/weak-state" paradigm created by Koven and Michel has resulted in discussion within the new feminist scholarship on the welfare state. Theda Skocpol is among the scholars who has commented on Koven and Michel's argumentation about the connections between the power of women's welfare agency and the strength of the state. Skocpol says:

I do not fully agree with Koven and Michel's analysis. Their contrast between "weak" and "strong" states is too crude to get at the differences among national political systems that affected how likely women are to become politically active and

(a separate issue) in what ways women can have an impact on policy decisions. In particular, Koven and Michel fail to analyze crucial differences between the ways class and gender identities figured in the social politics of Britain and the United States between 1870s and the 1920s. Although both of these nations had "weak states" in Koven and Michel's terms, they actually had very different governmental institutions, administrative systems, and electoral and political party systems. [\[119\]](#)

In line with these critical remarks on Koven and Michel's scholarship, Skocpol is in general hostile to their way of approaching the history of welfare-state formation. But Skocpol expresses clearly that she appreciates Koven and Michel's comparative approach because it shows that

gender is not just a relation of social domination or social inequality, as the patriarchal theories emphasized. Female gender identities-which are not all the same, and which change over time -can also be sources of social solidarity, organization, and moral purpose. [\[120\]](#)

Although Skocpol mentions the constructive elements of female identities, women's common identity as "Women" becomes the most important aspect for Skocpol.

Koven and Michel employ maternalism generally as a political ideological concept in order to describe and explain women's social political activity, based on their identity and capacity as mothers. Maternalism becomes in this manner not manifested in a particular movement or organization per se. Michel tends, however, to use maternalism more as a characterization when she distinguishes between radical and conservative maternalists, and locates them within specific organizations or networks. In the following we will see that the historian Molly Ladd-Taylor has brought Michel's specification of maternalism as a movement even further.

MOLLY LADD-TAYLOR

maternalism as a social movement

Molly Ladd-Taylor is another US historian who has recently developed yet another definition of maternalism based on her research on women's child welfare activism in

early twentieth-century US.^[121] In contrast to Koven and Michel's wide definition, Molly Ladd-Taylor has a more specific use of the term. In her latest book *Mother-Work*, Ladd-Taylor expresses explicit dissatisfaction with the way feminist historians have used the term "maternalism". While scholars such as Theda Skocpol, Seth Koven, Sonya Michel employ the term to describe practically any woman who used the language of motherhood to justify her political activities, Ladd-Taylor thinks that "such a general use conflates very different ideologies and types of organizing that relied on the rhetoric of motherhood."^[122]

In order to distinguish women activists who used the language of motherhood, Ladd-Taylor calls for a more precise definition of maternalism. She uses the term maternalism

to denote a specific ideology whose adherents hold (1) that there is a uniquely feminine value system based on care and nurturance; (2) that mothers perform a service to the state by raising citizenworkers; (3) that women are united across class, race, and nation by their common capacity for motherhood and therefore share a responsibility for the world's children; and (4) that ideally men should earn a family wage to support their "dependent" wives and children at home.^[123]

Even though this definition can refer to a wide range of political perspectives including the women who worked for women's suffrage, Ladd-Taylor argues that she does not believe that maternalists can properly be called feminists. The distinction between feminism and maternalism is crucial, according to Ladd-Taylor, because maternalists were wedded to an ideology rooted in the nineteenth-century doctrine of separate spheres and to a presumption of women's economic and social dependence on men. On the other hand, feminists stressed female individuality, political participation, and economic independence. Ladd-Taylor explains that both feminists and maternalists used the language of motherhood in the 1910s, but that their argumentation had different meanings. Whereas maternalists argued for protection of women within their traditional family role, feminists used the rhetoric of motherhood to improve women's status and to criticize the male-headed family. Moreover, feminists were, contrary to maternalists, relatively unconcerned with social welfare reforms.

According to Ladd-Taylor's definition, only leaders of the National Congress of Mothers and members of the Hull House/Children's Bureau network can be called maternalists.^[124] However, she does not treat these women under one general category "maternalists". Women within the Mother's Congress (later the Parent-Teachers' Associations) are in Ladd-Taylor's work characterized as sentimental maternalists because they were convinced that women's highest calling was marriage and childbearing. Their traditionalist thinking was clearly visible in their negative attitude towards extending government aid to working-class or wage-earning women. These women therefore limited their social welfare visions to single or widowed mothers and their children. From Ladd-Taylor's point of view, the sentimental maternalists were principally responsible for the passing of mothers' pensions legislation in the 1910s. Women within the settlement movement and the Children's Bureau saw maternal and child welfare reform as "a step towards broader government protection for male as well as female members of the working class".^[125] Ladd-Taylor characterizes them as progressive maternalists.

Through characterizing the club women and the government women as respectively sentimental and progressive maternalists, Ladd-Taylor ends up with a very specific definition of maternalism. She also operates with a sharp distinction between maternalism and feminism. The term "maternalist" refers in the way she uses it to a particular social actor who is not a feminist. Feminism and maternalism coexisted, however, in the 1910s, until the debate over the effects of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the 1920s brought about fundamental differences between the two, argues Ladd-Taylor.^[126]

Feminists associated with the National Woman's Party made individual women's right to equal opportunity in the public sphere a political priority, while their maternalist opponents strove first of all to protect women in their family role.^[127]

According to Ladd-Taylor, pro-ERA arguments depended on the language of gender sameness and equality while the maternalists argued against the ERA by emphasizing women's difference from men. Thus Ladd-Taylor's distinction between feminism and maternalism is based on the opposition between the language of gender equality versus the language of gender difference.

ANN TAYLOR ALLEN

maternalism as a paradigm for feminist ideology

Contrary to Ladd-Taylor's distinction between maternalism and feminism, Ann Taylor Allen has in her historical work on feminism and motherhood, defined maternalism as a paradigm for feminist ideology and action.^[128] She says that maternalism is

a feminism that takes woman's experience as mother and nurturer as the basis for interpretations of women's history, for distinctively female approaches to ethical and social questions, and for improvements in women's status.^[129]

Maternal feminism as a feminist ideology based its claims on women's difference from men, and not on the essential similarity between the two. According to Allen, maternal feminism or maternalism represents what the historian Karen Offen calls "relational" forms of feminism because these women stressed social contribution rather than individual rights.^[130] Whereas historians such as Molly Ladd-Taylor and others present equal-rights feminism and maternalism as conflicting, Allen claims to the contrary that these two forms of feminist ideology coexisted and interacted because

feminists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not find them contradictory or mutually exclusive, but would use arguments based both on similarity and on difference as the context and opportunity dictated.^[131]

Motherhood has always been central in feminist discourses, says Allen.

"Motherhood" -private, public, biological, and social- was the centre of a feminist discourse that, although constantly developing, was also continuous from the first feminist writings in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries until the twentieth century.^[132]

Especially the idea of motherhood as a basis for a specifically female ethic, provided a standpoint for feminist criticism and activism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This standpoint was often expressed symbolically by the mother-child bond which "became the basis of a concept of social morality that linked the self to the other and the individual to the community".^[133]

The rhetorical use of motherhood shows, from Allen's point of view, that the social construction of gender was indeed connected to the bodily realities of sex and reproduction. However, this does not mean that the feminist standpoint was a product of a biological function and thus common for all women. The idea of motherhood as a source of ethical authority, was a cultural construction derived from the socio-economic conditions of the elite.

The ideology that made motherhood a basis of empowerment was chosen, not determined, in response to a specific historical situation, among a specific group of women. For them, it provided a way to shape their experience by devising a symbolic framework on which to understand it. Feminist ideas of motherhood were based on a familial culture that originated within the upper and middle-classes. The ascendancy of this ideology resulted from the ascendancy of middle-class women within the feminist movement.^[134]

This indicates that Allen views maternalism as a "bourgeois" product, built upon the experience of elite and middle class women within a specific historical situation. She continues: "The practice of social motherhood through education and philanthropy supported the wider claim of the middle class to cultural hegemony over the lower classes".

While historians of feminism often have identified equal-rights ideology as more progressive or more "real" feminism than maternalism, it is connected to the ways in which historians of feminism tend to approach and judge the theme.^[135] Allen says: "Historians of women have more often judged the figures to be discussed here according to present-day feminist ideology based upon equal-rights theory and the questioning of all gender differences". In other words, by evaluating previous

generations of feminists on present-day ideologies, we tend to marginalize aspects of women's work and experience, especially in regard to women's role as mothers. The present-minded approach to the history of feminism can partly explain why maternalism for long has been neglected by feminist historians, argues Allen. "Therefore, we must reconstruct the intellectual, social, and political contexts in which feminists spoke in order to understand their meanings".[\[136\]](#)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The numerous definitions and uses of maternalism and maternalist policy presented above, confirm the difficulty in stating anything general about these concepts. Nevertheless, the analysis enables me to summarize three major considerations about maternalism and maternalist policy, common to all disputing scholars.

Maternalist policies are first of all used as a characterization of maternal and child welfare policies that emerged in the early twentieth century, and which channelled social benefits directly to women as mothers. Second, the scholars also use *maternalist policy* to define the ways in which women reformers mobilized and sought power in order to improve the welfare of women and children. By being cut off from the ballot and political parties, women sought alternative means of political action outside the institutionalized political system. Put differently, women's exclusion from the formal political system forged political styles different from and in opposition to male politics. This alternative political activity found expression in the emergence of voluntarism politics such as the creation of voluntary associations, lobbying, parades, and mass-meetings, together with practical charity work such as the foundation of social settlements.[\[137\]](#) Third, the ideological principle for female reformers claiming political influence and power was, according to the debating scholars, grounded in a celebration of women's difference from men, a difference based on women's experience and responsibility as mothers, as nurturers, and as carriers of morality in society as a whole. *Mothering* became in this way the ideological backbone of women's welfare activism. The use of the ideology of motherhood to legitimize women's political activity, in times when political rights were reserved for men, thus is what these scholars define as maternalism.[\[138\]](#) As maternalism was challenging the idea of separate spheres for men and women, female reformers reinforced the notion that women were essentially different from men and thus especially gifted for specific functions in society. By applying the idea that women possess special knowledge or moral qualities by virtue of being mothers, female reformers made mothering and reproduction the fundamental defining experience of womanhood.

Even though all scholars agree about mothering and nurturing as the basic components of gender difference, they still end up with contrastive definitions of the concept "maternalism". In the debate between Linda Gordon and Theda Skocpol we saw that different explanations of maternalism are due to different notions of gender.

Skocpol's use of gender as fixed differences between men and women explains why she contrasts maternalism to paternalism. By arguing that only women could hold maternalist visions of welfare politics, she indicates that women's social political activism was shaped by their essential femaleness. Thus mothering, nurturing, and caring become female "attributes", common to all women. This indication is also promoted by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel: "Although male politicians used maternalist rhetoric, it was often merely a cloak for paternalism".[\[139\]](#) Such a statement tells us indirectly that male politicians have different intentions of politics than women by virtue of their maleness, and vice versa. Therefore Koven and Michel use gender as fixed or essential differences between men and women. Molly Ladd-Taylor, however, does not define maternalism by referring to its male opposition. But she confirms the notion of women's essential difference from men by defining maternalism as a uniquely feminine value system based on care and nurture, shared by all women. Thus Ladd-Taylor's notion of gender is solely female-centered.

Linda Gordon, on the other hand, understands gender as meanings culturally constructed around perceived differences between the sexes. The tendency to define women as different from men on the basis of their capacities as mothers and nurturers is, according to Gordon, a social and cultural construction, grounded on dominant social definitions of maleness and femaleness. This notion of gender does not preclude that also men could take up maternalist visions of politics. Ann Taylor Allen also follows this line of reasoning when she interprets female reformers focusing on women's experience as mother and nurturer as a cultural product. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the social and cultural construction of gender, does not preclude Allen from being concerned with bodily realities of sex and reproduction. This connection between biological sex and gender is of interest in the next, and last Chapter, where I highlight the relationship between *maternalism* as a concept and the category of *gender*. The major aim in Chapter three, however, is to present and discuss possible consequences of the use of maternalism as a historical concept.





Maternalism as a Historical Concept and its Consequences

- [THE RELATION BETWEEN MATERNALISM AS A HISTORICAL CONCEPT AND GENDER AS A CATEGORY OF HISTORICAL ANALYSIS](#)
 - [CONSEQUENCES: -DECONSTRUCTION BY CREATING AND REINFORCING NEW/OLD BINARY OPPOSITIONS?](#)
 - [CONCLUDING REMARKS](#)
-

THE RELATION BETWEEN MATERNALISM AS A HISTORICAL CONCEPT AND GENDER AS A CATEGORY OF HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

The concept of *maternalism* and the category of *gender* are closely interwoven: each is a constitutive element of the other. However, while the use of gender highlights the social and cultural dimension of identity formation, maternalism—more than any other aspect of gender—brings about essential and biological associations.

Biological essence-thinking about mothering and motherhood is first of all due to the development of the life sciences in the last century. "Scientific explanations" of women's reproductive experience made, as we have seen, motherhood into women's major identity at the turn of this century. In order to challenge naturalistic descriptions of women, feminist scholars have in the last decades sought to stress that our notions about sexual differences derive from culture and not from nature or biology. The articulation of the term "gender" in the early 1980s, was of significance in this project because it enabled scholars to express the fundamentally social and cultural quality of sexual difference, without having to deal with biological determinism, implicit in terms such as "sex" and "sexual difference".^[140] Thus the extensive use of gender became marked by a distinction between sex and gender, nature and culture. Moreover, this use also implies a constructive notion of gender formation, exemplified, as so many times before, by Simone de Beauvoir's "One is not born a woman; one becomes one".^[141] The idea of gender as social, cultural, political, and historical constructions (constructionism) have thus become a common frame of understanding for many feminist scholars, in opposition to the biological essentialism.^[142]

Linda Gordon and Ann Taylor Allen can be said to have taken up the constructive notion of gender. As we have already seen, this idea had consequences for their interpretations of maternalism. The importance of women's identity as mothers in policy making becomes, according to Gordon and Allen, a cultural product forged on the experience of the dominant social group. They mean by this that mothering and motherhood have cultural implications rather than natural or biological ones.

Theda Skocpol, Molly Ladd-Taylor, Seth Koven, and Sonya Michel, on the other hand, hold a more essential notion of gender. They all stress the existence of a female culture and a female otherness within specific organizations and movements, autonomous from the male world. However, I do not think there is any reason for describing their uses and definitions of maternalism as an example of essentialism, and thus in opposition to Gordon and Allen. The essence-talk which results of their scholarship is, from my point of view, not a conscious research strategy, but rather an unfortunate outcome, due to a simple celebration of difference. Instead of viewing the two groups of researchers in opposition to each other, as respectively constructionists and essentialists, it seems more likely that they operate on different levels (of abstractions). While Gordon and Allen strike one as theoretically updated, the other scholars have no deliberated relation to the postmodern critique of unitary notions of women and feminine gender identity.^[143] The latter is especially obvious in regard to the work of Theda Skocpol, where she insists on

motherhood as a universal female experience. Contrary to the historians, Skocpol has to be seen as a new-comer in the field. Even though she is a world famous social scientist, she "discovered" the importance of women and gender only a few years ago, which means that *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* is her first major work marked by a gender (or women) perspective.[\[144\]](#)

Although some scholars, such as Skocpol, still use gender to postulate dichotomous categories in order to valorize the female part, many researchers have already opened up for the relational potential inherent in gender. Men and maleness have in this way become just as central as women and femaleness. Because the relational perspective has brought "balance" (represented by both men and women) into our analysis, we might also dare to ask more questions about the material body and its cultural implications without being afraid of returning to essentialism and biological determinism.[\[145\]](#) The conceptualization of maternalism can, from my point of view, be seen as an attempt to integrate bodily experiences into a social and historical frame. This might mean that the term in itself has consideration for the tension between the biologically given sex and the culturally created gender, a tension which has been consciously avoided for long. Despite the essence-talk that the use of the term might result in, I think the concept of maternalism rises some interesting questions about the political effects of how society views the relationship of male to man and female to woman. By taking bodily experiences into account, we may enlarge our knowledge and understanding of the process of policy making (and identity formation) In any case, the concept of maternalism also has other consequences than those related to the analytical vocabulary of gender. In the following I point out and discuss some central effects of the ways in which the American feminist scholars use this concept.

CONSEQUENCES: -DECONSTRUCTION BY CREATING AND REINFORCING NEW/OLD BINARY OPPOSITIONS?

rethinking the political and challenging the public/private distinction

Politics has something to do with distribution of benefits and values within a social system (organizations, local communities, national societies etc.) says the Norwegian historian Leiv Mjeldheim.[\[146\]](#) Any action, private or public, formal or informal, taken to affect the course of this distribution, thus becomes political activity.[\[147\]](#)

Mjeldheim's wide definition of politics and political activity is consistent with the understanding of politics involved by the concept of maternalism because it gives room for both public and private displays of power. While historians traditionally have highlighted the public activity that takes place within organizations, unions, political parties etc., and which is directly aimed at the decision-making institutions, the users of maternalism intend to focus on the connection and the interplay between the private and public, formal and informal, arenas of political behaviour. Viewing the activities of the voluntary organizations as a part of the political system (though outside the formal political system as long as women lacked the right to vote) the disputing scholars in many ways expand our understanding of politics and of the connection between political participation and policy making.

The voluntary organizations stressed by the different scholars were all political in the meaning that they sought to influence the distribution of values and benefits (welfare) in society.[\[148\]](#) However, their political activism can be said to be double-edged in the meaning that they exerted their political activity in two different ways. Whereas some organizations aimed their activity directly at needed groups in society, by establishing health clinics and soup kitchen, others were more concerned about lobbying on state or federal level for maternal and child welfare reforms. Tone Margrethe Birkenes has described these two forms of activity as respectively *horizontal* and *vertical* political activity.[\[149\]](#) Even though the users of maternalism do not employ the terms "vertical" and "horizontal", they call attention to the same distinctions or features as Birkenes. Especially Sonya Michel addresses the relationship between indirect and direct, or horizontal and vertical political activity. Separating between what she calls radical and conservative maternalists, Michel explicitly stresses the fact that women used different political paths in order to improve the welfare of poor women and children; one that led to or through government and another that went directly at needy groups in society.[\[150\]](#) The National Consumers' League, the Children's Bureau and the settlement movement were, according to Michel, directing their activities towards the political public. The General Federation of Women's Clubs and the National Congress of Mothers, on the other hand, were more engaged in practical charity-work than pressing for social reforms. Molly Ladd-Taylor also calls attention to the existence of different political strategies when she talks about the differences between the club women and the government women.[\[151\]](#) Albeit the remaining scholars are less specific than Michel and Ladd-Taylor, they include the activities conducted at domestic concerns in the frame of politics. Theda Skocpol for example wants to put voluntary activism and institutional political activity on an equal footing by using what she calls a polity-centered approach.[\[152\]](#)

By demonstrating that private and public activities are interrelated, the disputing scholars challenge the private/public distinction underlying much scholarly work on the welfare state.[153] Their focus on the horizontal line of activity expands particularly our ideas about political spaces. Although mainstream scholars, such as Mjeldheim, operate with wide definitions of politics, they still tend to leave out the private displays of power, which means that the horizontal line of activity most often "fell out". Despite the fact that women's practical charity-work did not result in specific social reforms or welfare laws, it did affect the behaviour of others because it often resulted in more permanent public welfare arrangements such as health clinics, food-stations, day-care centres, etc. When Theda Skocpol and others treat the private welfare contributors as a part of the welfare state, the study of welfare states no longer becomes tied merely to the state or the governmental institutions. Welfare-state research becomes, in other words, a study of relations between both private and public welfare contributors, where the state not necessarily plays the major role.[154] This indicates, moreover, that the term "welfare state" got a very inclusive meaning, a meaning in which the link between welfare and state is weakened.

As mentioned in the introduction, the Norwegian historian Anne-Lise Seip has explicitly emphasized such a relational approach on welfare-state research, through the "welfare-triangle". Concerning the American debate and the American welfare-state structure, it is perhaps more correct to talk about a study of interaction in a rectangle between private organizations, local authorities, state legislatures, and federal government. The contributions of the disputing scholars in the maternalist debate lies, however, in the intersection between state and voluntary organizations, which in a Norwegian context can be compared with the level of municipalities.

The concept of maternalism involves, as far as I can see, a rethinking of a different kind of politics, one for which the public/private distinction will not necessarily make sense. This rethinking is, from my point of view, a positive consequence of maternalism because it contributes to a better understanding of the ways the welfare state took its form. Furthermore, the approach that these scholars initiate, gives more room for different welfare state experiences, seeing a high degree of state intervention as only one possibility among many.

Despite the positive potential inherent in many of the discussed contributions, the use of the concept of maternalism leads in some cases to simplifications of national differences. With regard to Theda Skocpol this simplification appears through her sharp distinction between paternalism and maternalism. By celebrating differences between the European and the American welfare states, Skocpol ends up presenting the two systems as mutually exclusive. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel besides operate with a distinction between countries based upon the strength of the state. Since the strength of the central state is identified through the contrast strong/weak, Koven and Michel have constructed a dichotomy between strong states and weak states.

creating new binary oppositions: maternalism/paternalism & strong states/

weak states

As already mentioned, the United States and major European nations came to organize their early welfare systems in different ways (see Table 1-3, page 29-32).[155] During the time when many European countries arranged their social schemes around the wage worker, the US formed a social security system aimed at women and children in particular. Because less women than men were engaged in wage-work in the early 1900s, the early European welfare state tied few women directly to the insurance schemes. Many women nevertheless obtained social benefits through their insured husbands.

According to Theda Skocpol, the European welfare states have to be seen as paternalist welfare states because most women in Europe received social benefits on the basis of their ties to wage-earning males. The American system, on the other hand, is characterized by Skocpol as a maternalist system because women by virtue of their status as single mothers, widows, and workers, were objects for social provisions. Furthermore, the American welfare state was also maternalist in the sense that it was formed to a large extent by women themselves (as professionals and politicians). The paternalist European systems were forged by male politicians, bureaucrats and union leaders.

Skocpol's distinction between the "maternalist" United States and the "paternalist" Europe has as a purpose to demonstrate that the United States did develop social welfare programs before the New Deal. In other words, the United States was not a welfare state "latecomer" compared to Europe. Skocpol wants besides to show that the American welfare state was a better welfare state than the European because it placed women and children at the centre. This results in a hierarchical relationship between the American and the European experience, placing the

American welfare state, by its virtue as woman-friendly, above the European.

The opposition between indirect and direct channelling of welfare benefits, between paternalism and maternalism, helps Skocpol to neglect the fact that many European nations did form maternal social policies at the turn of the century, policies which gave social benefits both directly and indirectly to women.

The British insurance Act of 1911 included cash maternity benefits for insured women and the wives of insured men, and the Maternity and Child Welfare Act of 1918 encouraged the further development of local maternity clinics and services. In Norway the Sickness Act of 1909 introduced cash maternity benefits for insured women as well as for wives of insured men, and the Child Welfare Act of 1915 granted small maternity allowances, paid out of taxes, to poor single mothers. [\[156\]](#)

Examples like these show that Skocpol's sharp contrast between maternalism and paternalism represents a strong simplification (see Table 1-3. page 29-32). Even though European countries and the United States arranged their social systems in different ways, both systems were based on the ideal of separate spheres. Most social policies were aimed at women both in Europe and the US in this period, were designed explicitly to benefit them in their capacities as wives and mothers and not as independent workers. The British historian Jane Lewis says that healthier motherhood, which was the purpose of maternal policies, "was meant to strengthen the family, not threaten it by giving economic assistance to mothers and undermining the responsibility of fatherhood".[\[157\]](#)

Skocpol exaggerates, from my point of view, the importance of direct versus indirect distribution of welfare. Instead of celebrating differences in the way Skocpol does, it seems more fruitful to give attention to similarities and the fact that the notion of motherhood as a public virtue played an important role in the promotion of maternal policies in Europe as well as in the US. Furthermore, it seems important to notice that demographic and nationalistic justifications also were behind maternal policies. Pat Thane, also a British historian, sees the growing interest in maternal and child welfare at the turn of the century in connection with declining birth-rate and the high rates of infant mortality throughout Europe. She says:

Nor, anywhere in Europe, can growth of infant and maternal welfare in particular but also social, especially health, policies more generally be dissociated from the sense of demographic crisis which hung over most of the Continent from 1880's to World War Two. [\[158\]](#)

Jane Lewis supports this line of reasoning, saying that the interest in child and maternal welfare began with the recognition that infant mortality was a problem of national importance.[\[159\]](#) Mothering and motherhood became the centre of state activity primarily in order to save infant lives. Because maternal and child welfare was treated as a political issue of national importance, Lewis does not approach the issue of maternal policies as something specifically female, in the way Theda Skocpol does. Nevertheless this does not preclude Lewis from noticing that men and women sometimes had different reasons for promoting maternal and child welfare. But contrary to Skocpol, this notice does not result in an opposition between the interest of men and the interest of women, between paternalism and maternalism, respectively.

Everyone who uses the term "maternalism" places an emphasis on women's ability to influence the creation of welfare policies. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel argue, as we have seen, that women were more influential in countries marked by a "weak" state structure. By distinguishing between *strong* and *weak* states, Michel and Koven tend to measure women's welfare activism against the character of the central state.[\[160\]](#) The American state and the British state, to some extent, are characterized as "weak" because both states lacked a strong central bureaucracy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A decentralized state structure encouraged, according to Koven and Michel, political activism outside the institutional borders. On the contrary, "strong states", defined as those with well-developed central bureaucracy and long traditions of government intervention, allowed women less space in which to develop social policies. Thus the "strong states", such as France and Germany, were marked by a low degree of voluntary engagement compared to the USA and Britain.

Pat Thane has criticized categories of "strong states" and "weak states" saying that any simple dichotomy which defines states as "strong" or "weak" in such terms as the size of a central bureaucracy is unhelpful in the British case".[\[161\]](#) Even though the British state was less bureaucratized than the states on the Continent, it was by no means limited or weak, says Thane.

The state system which was constructed in the mid-nineteenth century on the foundation of older institutions and

principles was "minimal" in the sense of possessing a small central bureaucracy, and in consciously limiting the areas of activity of central government. But this state was in no useful sense "weak" because those areas were carefully selected as keys to effective central control and the central state operated in a clearly theorized relationship with the broader spheres of activity of local government and voluntary institutions.[\[162\]](#)

In order to evaluate women's welfare activism, we have to look at the context in which they were acting, says Thane. A strong voluntary sector, organized by women, was by no means a sign of a weak central state, in the way Koven and Michel argue. "The important role of voluntarism in nineteenth-century Britain was not the fortuitous corollary of the limited state but integral to the conceptualization of the state by its leaders".[\[163\]](#) Thane continues:

Hence to understand the capacities of the British state for socio-economic intervention at any time before World War Two, it is not enough to examine only the institutions and personnel of the central state. It is essential to understand its close and shifting relationship with local government and with the voluntary and private sectors.[\[164\]](#)

Although Thane criticizes Koven and Michel for the use of the "weak state/strong state" dichotomy, they seem to agree about women's ability to influence the shaping of maternal and child welfare policies in Britain. This common assumption about British women stands in contrast to Skocpol's simple distinction between a "maternalist" American and a "paternalist" British welfare system.

The construction of the dichotomy strong states/weak states has, like the paternalism/maternalism formulation of Skocpol, the purpose of accentuating the United States as better and more woman-friendly than Europe.[\[165\]](#) This need to emphasize the American "greatness" can at first sight look rather "childish". However, I think the answer to this need lies elsewhere. In order to understand why Skocpol, Koven and Michel tend to present the US as better than Europe, we have to look at the political context in which these scholars operate. Whereas most western-European countries have welfare systems with many universal benefits, the United State never came to develop a social security system for all Americans. [\[166\]](#) To claim the existence of an American welfare state better than the European, has, as far as I can see, thus highly political underpinnings. I think Theda Skocpol, Seth Koven, and Sonya Michel want to establish a welfare tradition in which they can base their present day demands for a universal health system, free from stigmatizing means-tested welfare programs. Put differently, their intentions are not to say that the American welfare system actually is better, but to stress the fact that USA has a welfare state tradition on which to build future welfare policies.[\[167\]](#)

American scholars' focus on welfare policies is to some extent due to the current debate on the role of the federal government in ensuring health care in the US. Despite the fact that national social policy for long has been a topic on the American political agenda, the debate took a new turn in the beginning of the 1990s, when the Democratic party began to address the topic: universal health insurance. During the campaign for presidency in 1992, the Democratic candidate Bill Clinton picked up on this theme, a theme on which Clinton continued to work after he assumed office in January 1993. Already in the fall of 1993, he unveiled a comprehensive health care reform (Health Security Plan), hoping to "end welfare as we know it". Many scholars openly supported Clinton's health plan. Theda Skocpol and Linda Gordon are among these that directly, through their scholarship, have commented on and advocated the social political line of the president.

In addition to the constructed oppositions between paternalism and maternalism, between strong states and weak state, some of the disputing scholars reinforce other dualistic distinctions that for long have characterized feminist positions and political strategies. Molly Ladd-Taylor revives for example the (never-ending) debate around the conceptual couple "equality and difference", when she opposes feminism and maternalism.

reinforcing dualistic distinctions: feminism/maternalism

& equality/difference

According to Molly Ladd-Taylor, maternalism has to be seen as a female ideology separate from feminism.[\[168\]](#) Feminists stressed individual rights in social, political, and economical matters, whereas maternalists emphasized to a larger extent the complementary role of women. Using the language of gender sameness and gender difference, respectively, feminists and maternalists have promoted very different ideas about women's role in society, argues Ladd-Taylor.

Ladd-Taylor's definition of maternalism is based on a mutually exclusive character of the relation between

arguments of gender sameness and gender difference. In feminist thought polarization between a difference and similarity perspective has contributed to a contrastive notion of equality and difference, where feminists more often are defined as agents of equal rights arguments.[\[169\]](#) Ladd-Taylor, however, makes her two-category model, which is an abstraction, concrete by placing the two mutually exclusive ideological orientations (feminism and maternalism) within specific organizations and movements.[\[170\]](#) This placement strengthens the notions of equality and difference as interdependent, as well as it precludes Ladd-Taylor from noticing that the membership (and even the leadership) of both kinds of groups extensively overlapped in the early twentieth century United States.[\[171\]](#)

As we have seen, Ann Taylor Allen challenges the dichotomous distinction between equality and difference.[\[172\]](#) Claiming that women activist in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not find equality and difference mutually exclusive, Allen sees no reason for separating feminism and maternalism. Actually, she defines maternalism as a paradigm for feminist action and ideology, and thus breaks the dichotomous notion of equality and difference, reinforced by Ladd-Taylor. Linda Gordon also talks about maternalism as a variant of feminism by using the term "maternalist feminist".[\[173\]](#) In order to include the maternalist arguments within the frame of feminism, Gordon claims the necessity to expand our ideas of feminism. Gordon means by this that maternalism does not fit within the equal-rights model being used to index feminism.

The disagreement between scholars such as Ladd-Taylor, Allen, and Gordon mirrors in many ways the current debate about "equality-versus-difference" within feminist theory circles on both sides of the Atlantic.[\[174\]](#) In fact, it is quite misleading to talk about it as *one* debate. The discussion around the conceptual couple equality/difference has literally turned out to be a complex dispute which has brought about many different positions and perspectives. With regard to the users of maternalism, it is possible to identify two of these modes: 1) Ladd-Taylor seems to belong to those who insist on the mutually exclusive character of the relation between "equality" and "difference", and thus also on the necessity of an either/or choice. The effect of this stand is the idea that arguments for equality of civil rights and political rights cannot be made without denying difference.

2) Allen and Gordon, on the other hand, do not see "equality" and "difference" as interdependent. By identifying the way that types of equality and difference are interwoven in particular historical contexts, they question in many ways the dichotomous stance between the two. In this perspective, claims for equal rights does not indicate a rejection of differences.[\[175\]](#) Thus Allen and Gordon can, in contrast to Ladd-Taylor, be seen as promoters of as-well-as solutions.

The position taken up by Allen and Gordon is, as far as I can see, inspired by Joan Scott and her theorizing around the dichotomy equality/difference. Despite the fact that this dichotomy has served to characterize feminist politics and strategies, Scott points out that; when equality and difference are paired dichotomously, they structure an impossible choice. "If one opts for equality, one is forced to accept the notion of difference as antithetical to it. If one opts for difference, one admits that equality is unattainable".[\[176\]](#) Instead of choosing one side, Scott wants to question the dichotomy itself, because both focusing on and ignoring difference risk creating it. Hence to avoid this problem -the dilemma of difference- Scott argues the need to establish a new way of thinking on difference which rejects the idea that equality-versus-difference constitutes an opposition. Instead of remaining within terms of existing political discourses, we need to subject those terms to critical examination. Scott concludes from this that the only alternative is to,

refuse to oppose equality to difference and insist continually on difference -difference as the condition of individual and collective identities, difference as the constant challenge of the fixing of those identities, history as the repeated illustration of the play of difference, difference as the very meaning of equality itself. [\[177\]](#)

An insistence on difference in the way Scott argues, undercuts, from my point of view, the tendency to absolutism and essentialist categories (women=mother).[\[178\]](#) Such an approach will, on the other hand, not deny the existence of gender difference, but it suggests that its meanings are always relative to particular constructions in specified contexts. This brings us back to the constructive notion of gender, shared by Linda Gordon and Ann Taylor Allen, and the fact that "throughout its history, women's liberation has been seen sometimes as the right to be equal, sometimes as the right to be different".[\[179\]](#)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The application of "maternalism" as a historical concept in the studies of welfare states has both positive and

negative implications. Concerning an analysis of the early welfare state, maternalism can be said to be a gainful concept because it gives expression to the interaction that took place between private and public welfare contributors in the earliest phase of the welfare state. Through integrating voluntary and private welfare activity in the study of social policy, the debating authors manage to shed light on the private-public mix that marked the first welfare policies in many Western countries. Because the welfare state as a state form and an institution is a result of political activities (and styles) on different levels of society, we should strive for an approach which enables us to see individual welfare activism in relation to the welfare state as a whole. The concept of "maternalism" fulfils in many respects this demand since the modes of politics which are not dependent on action through political institutions are viewed as central and important as formal political activity in welfare-state formation. Since the activism of private organizations is placed on equal footing with the action of political parties, trade unions, and official bureaucrats, maternalism endues researchers to notice and integrate the contributions of those who did not have formal political rights. The introduction of maternalism is thus an interesting attempt to challenge both the state-centrism and the limited definition of "politics" that for long has dominated welfare-state research.

By integrating welfare policies concerning women and children into the studies of the welfare state, these scholars have, moreover, enriched the study-field of welfare-state researchers in general. An inclusive conceptualization of the term "welfare state", is furthermore of importance in order to include other welfare-state experiences than those of Northern- and Western Europe.

However, some researchers such as Theda Skocpol, Seth Koven, and Sonya Michel make use of this potential to establish oppositions between countries on mistaken foundations. Rather than opening for a comprehensive understanding of the development of welfare states, these scholars seem in fact to limit their own approach by creating false dichotomies. The reviving of the "equality versus difference" debate made by Molly Ladd-Taylor is, from my point of view, another problematic outcome of the use of maternalism. By reinforcing binary oppositions, Ladd-Taylor creates, along with Skocpol, Koven, and Michel, mutually exclusive approaches to questions of welfare state and gender.





Conclusion

Despite the fact that historians such as Ann Taylor Allen and Linda Gordon open for the relational potential inherent in gender (men and women) they still concentrate on the link between women and the welfare state. In the work of Theda Skocpol, Seth Koven, Sonya Michel, and Molly Ladd-Taylor, the female-centered emphasis becomes evident through the extensive use of the category "women" as a euphemism for "gender". This idea of a common female identity corresponds with Helga Hernes' earliest work. Actually, the one-sided focus on women among feminist scholars in the United States may be seen as a result of the fact that there are few women in American politics to this very day. Hernes' reorientation towards the thesis of the "woman-friendly state" may have been caused by an increase of women's representation in the Nordic parliamentary system during the 1980s. US politics, on the other hand, is still very male-dominated. Therefore American researchers' widespread idea of women as a unity can be interpreted as a product of a political practice which still excludes women from the decision-making institutions.

The extensive focus on women as a universal group is, furthermore, due to the American tradition of scholarship on women and gender. By creating autonomous Women's Studies departments in the 1970s and 1980s, which institutionalized women as the "other", US scholars introduced feminist inquiry in opposition to mainstream research. This was much less the case in Scandinavian countries, where the interest in feminist perspective to a larger extent has emerged within traditional institutional frames. The notion of women as a unified classification in sharp contrast to men, thus has to a lesser extent been pronounced among Scandinavian researchers. However, the scholarly differences between Helga Hernes and Birte Siim obviously show that feminist research in Scandinavia by no means is a united project with a common strategy. Hernes has in fact by her stress on "women" much in common with American feminist scholarship. On the other hand, downplaying a universal female experience, Birte Siim appears to be more related to a tradition among Scandinavian feminist historians, where social class has always been seen as important.

Notwithstanding some major differences between American and Scandinavian feminist scholarship, I do not think there are any reasons to see the two traditions as contradicting. In fact, this thesis shows that American and Scandinavian feminist scholarship has evolved in some similar theoretical directions. Moreover, disciplinary differences have more than likely also marked the development of feminist inquiry, which makes it difficult to talk about feminist research as a uniform tradition or process. For instance, the intense dispute between Linda Gordon and Theda Skocpol, brings about some crucial reflections around the relationship between history and the social sciences.

Even though Skocpol operates as a historian, she still relies on sociological quantitative approaches. By using methods that give priority to monocausal explanations, Skocpol seeks straightforward causal proportions about gender and social policies. She finds this parallelism between women's voluntary organizations and the passing of mother's aids laws, and concludes that the pressure from the female organizations was the key factor in the distinct development of social provisions in the US. Gordon is more concerned about nuances. She avoids the use of universal explanations and underscores that the "maternalist" organizations mainly attended to the interest of white middle-class women. Gordon and Skocpol have in this way a very different attitude towards the use of historical data. Skocpol uses history to highlight and verify her theory of the maternalist welfare state, whereas Gordon theorizes on the basis of historical knowledge and facts. The results of these essentially different research-practices are, as we have seen, antithetical interpretations of the relationship between gender and welfare state formation. In fact, Skocpol turns the history of welfare states upside down and concludes that thanks to female reformers, the United States formed a different and more "woman-friendly" welfare state than many European countries. Gordon, on the other hand, interprets the maternalist welfare state as a result of bourgeois understandings of the proper family shared by both men and women.

As the concept of maternalism still gains currency within historical research in the US, American scholars have so far tended to focus on the relationship of maternalism to either *welfare-state building* or *feminism*. Researchers such as Theda Skocpol, Seth Koven, and Sonya Michel are all stressing welfare-state formation, while Molly Ladd-Taylor and Ann Taylor Allen are primarily underscoring maternalism in relation to the women's movement. The

scholarship of the historian Linda Gordon shows, on the other hand, that an emphasis on state-building does not preclude the interest in questions of feminism. Nevertheless, the application of maternalism in the studies of welfare states and/or feminism is by no means unproblematic. In fact, it appears that the use of this concept brings about three major problems.

Maternalism as a historical concept will, by its focus on gender difference, first of all mediate an ambivalent stand towards individual rights for women. Another dubious aspect of maternalism is the ways in which the concept has gained currency. Because the term has come into use without sufficient clarification or specification, scholars tend to use it with contradicting meanings. A sloppy research-practice explains, therefore, to some extent why maternalism, in its multiple variations, is a difficult concept to handle. Third, the woman-centrism and the accent on motherhood, which is implicit in the concept, can also be problematic in relation to welfare-state research in general. Actually, I fear that a focus on mothering, claimed by the creators and the users of maternalism, will limit mainstream scholars' interest in the concept. A one-sided stress on the female quality of gender may restrain the concern for using gender as an analytical category in the studies of welfare states. Such an analysis of gender and welfare state formation, through the concept of maternalism, will impede a further incorporation of "gender", and it might confirm the impression of women's history as a supplement to "traditional" history. Focusing exclusively on motherhood, the concept of maternalism may therefore blind more than it illuminates, as the historian Nancy Cott said:

Words and categories are the tools we use to survey and map the terrain of women's past activism; they are our beacons, which can blind as well as illuminate.[\[180\]](#)

If the American practice of scholarship, exemplified by the introduction of the concept maternalism, impedes a more extensive use of gender in studies of welfare state history, one may ask why I am concerned with the maternalist debate at all? In the introduction I argued for this interest as a way of examining the category of gender and reveal some of its explanatory potential. Concerning the fertility of "gender", this analysis shows clearly that the use of gender as an analytical category elucidates a development of American social policies which until now has been overlooked: maternal and child welfare. But, in contrast to Theda Skocpol's thesis, gender alone can not explain why maternal and child welfare became the backbone of the American welfare systems prior to the New Deal. Put differently, the category of gender has to be combined with different analytical designations such as social class and race, to make the most of its potential. The scholarship of Linda Gordon and Ann-Taylor Allen obviously shows that the racial and the socio-economic landscape is of great importance in studies of welfare in the United States.

The concept of maternalism may in many ways be compared to an archaeological tool which enables us to dig out areas or dimensions of the early welfare state that have been forgotten. But at the same time as the concept highlights less studied areas and thus provides us with new knowledge, it also restricts our field of vision through focusing on motherhood only. Evidently, the motherly aspect of care is of significance to understand the gendered dimension of the welfare state, but so is men's roles as breadwinners. The idea of men as providers and earners of a family-wage was also part of the gender-ideology inherent in the formation of the welfare states. Without expanding the term of maternalism to questions of parenthood, breadwinner, fatherhood, and men these scholars will hardly succeed in neither rewriting the history of the welfare states nor incorporating a gender perspective in mainstream welfare-state research. Only by stressing masculine as well as feminine gender identities can we take full advantage of using the category "gender" in historical studies of welfare-state formation. Still, it is interesting to notice that the male role as breadwinner and provider literally is the same aspect as the one that has dominated mainstream welfare-state research (and which feminist researchers first directed their criticism towards). The major difference between approaching welfare policies as products of constructed ideas of maleness and masculinity and the perspective long hold by mainstream welfare-state scholars is, however, the degree of theoretical consciousness about gender. Whereas mainstream researchers have taken the male breadwinner aspect as the only possible way to approach issues of welfare- state formation, feminist scholars may, through emphasizing men's role as providers along with women's roles as mother and nurturer, advance the field of welfare-state research.

The anti-dichotomous thinking which characterizes the scholarship of Linda Gordon and Ann Taylor Allen, as well as of Birte Siim, represents, from my point of view, a good strategy for a further incorporation of gender in studies of welfare states. The notion of gender as fixed differences between men and women demonstrates in this respect a "dead-end road". While the picture painted by Skocpol has more in common with women's history in its earliest phase (when women's history provided a supplement to mainstream history), Gordon, Allen, and Siim have taken crucial steps towards a more extensive use of a gender perspective. By defining gender as a social and cultural construction, valid for women as well as for men, and emphasizing the interplay of gender and other analytical categories, such as class and race, we might manage to bridge the gap between feminist and "traditional" welfare-

state research, and rewrite the history of the welfare states.





Bibliography

Allen, Ann Taylor 1991. *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800-1914*.

New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

Allen, Ann Taylor 1993. "Maternalism in German Feminist Movements", in

Journal of Women's History, Vol.5, No.2, Fall: 99-103.

Andreasen, Tayo et al. (eds.) 1991. *Mowing On. New Perspectives on the Women's Movement*. Århus, Aarhus University Press.

Baker, Paula 1991. "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920", in ed. Linda Gordon: 55-91.

Berkowitz, Edward & Mc Quaid, Kim 1988. *Creating the Welfare State*.

New York, Praeger.

Beveridge, Sir William 1942. *Social Insurance and Allied Services*.

New York, The Macmillian Company.

Birkenes, Tone Margrethe 1995. "...ET STILLE TOG..." *Kvinnerns frivillige organiserte samfunnsaktivitet i Kristiansand, 1901-1907*.

hovedfagsoppgave i historie, Universitetet i Bergen, vår.

Blom, Ida 1994. *Det er forskjell på folk - nå som før*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.

Blom, Ida 1995. "Fra det moderne til det postmoderne subjekt", in

Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift. nr.2: 137-145.

Blom, Ida 1996. "Refleksjoner over stat og kjønn", in *Kjønn og Velferdsstat*.

ed. Anne-Hilde Nagel (forthcoming).

Bock, Gisela 1991. "Challenging Dichotomies: Perspectives on Women's History", in eds. Karen Offen et al.: 1-23.

Bock, Gisela & Thane, Pat (eds.) 1991. *Maternity & Gender Policies. Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States, 1880s-1950s*.

New York, London, Routledge.

Bock, Gisela & James, Susan (eds.) 1992. *Beyond Equality and Difference. Citizenship, feminist politics, and female subjectivity*.

New York, London, Routledge.

Boris, Eileen 1994. *Home to Work. Motherhood and the politics of industrial homework in the United States*. New York, Cambridge University Press.

- Brennan, Teresa 1993. *History after Lacan*. London, New York, Routledge.
- Chodorow, Nancy 1978. *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press.
- Cott, Nancy 1987. *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. New Haven, London, Yale University Press.
- Cott, Nancy 1989. "What's in a Name? The Limits of "Social Feminism"; or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History", in *Journal of American History*. Vol.76, No.3, December: 809-828.
- Cova, Anne 1991. "French Feminism and Maternity: theories and policies", in eds. Gisela Bock & Pat Thane: 119-137.
- Chambers, Clarke A. 1986. "Toward a Redefinition of Welfare History", in *Journal of American History*. September: 407-433.
- Chester, Ellen 1994. "The Politics of Motherhood", in *The Women's Review of Books*. Vol.11, No.8, May: 27-28.
- de Beauvoir, Simone 1953 (1949). *The Second Sex*. New York, Vintage Books, A Division of Random House. (*Le Deuxieme Sexe*, Paris.)
- Erikson, Hansen, et al. (eds.) 1987. *The Scandinavian Model. Welfare States and Welfare Research*. New York, M.E. Sharpe.
- Fraser, Nancy & Nicholson, Linda J. 1990. "Social Criticism without Philosophy: An Encounter between Feminism and Postmodernism", in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson. New York, London, Routledge.
- Glenn, Evelyn Nakano et al. (eds) 1994. *Mothering: -Ideology, Experience, and Agency*. New York, Routledge.
- Gilligan, Carol 1982. *In a Different Voice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, Harvard University Press.
- Gordon, Linda (ed.) 1991a. *Women, the State, and Welfare*. London, England, The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Gordon, Linda 1991b. "Black and White Visions of Welfare: Women's Welfare Activism, 1890-1945", in *Journal of American History*. September: 559-590.
- Gordon, Linda 1991c. "On "Difference"", in *Genders*. No.10, Spring: 91-111.
- Gordon, Linda 1992. "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States, 1890-1935", in *American Historical Review*. Vol.97, No.1, February: 19-54.
- Gordon, Linda 1993. "Gender, State and Society: A Debate with Theda Skocpol", in *Contention*. Vol.2, no.3, Spring: 139-156, 185-189.
- Gordon, Linda 1994. *Pitied But Not Entitled. Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935*. New York, The Free Press.
- Goodwin, Joanne L. 1992. "An American Experiment in Paid Motherhood:

The Implementation of Mothers' Pensions in early Twentieth-Century Chicago", in *Gender and History*. Vol.4, No.3, Autumn: 325-342.

Grønlie, Tore 1991. "Velferdskommunen", in *Velferdskommunen:*

-kommunenenes rolle i utviklingen av velferdsstaten, ed. Anne-Hilde Nagel

Bergen, Alma Mater: 43-52.

Haave, Per & Nordby, Trond 1990. *Helse-, sosial- og trygdesektoren som etterkrigshistorisk forskningsfelt*. Etterkrigshistorisk Register, nr.10, LOS- senter Notat 90/38.

Hernes, Helga Maria 1982. *Staten -kvinner ingen adgang?*

Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.

Hernes, Helga Maria 1987. *Welfare State and Woman Power. Essays in State Feminism*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget/London, Oxford University Press.

Hess, Beth & Ferree, Myra Marx 1987. *Analyzing Gender. A Handbook of Social Science Research*. London, New Dehli, SAGE Publications.

Hill, Michael 1993. *Understanding Social Policy*.

Oxford UK & Cambridge USA, Blackwell.

Kerber, Linda & De Hart, Jane Sherron (eds.) 1991. *Women's America. Refocusing the Past*. Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press.

Koven, Seth & Michel, Sonya 1990. "Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, 1880-1920", in *American Historical Review*.

Vol.95, No.4, October: 1076-1108.

Koven, Seth & Michel, Sonya (eds.) 1993. *Mothers of a New World. Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*. New York, Routledge.

Koven, Michel 1993. "Borderlands: Women, Voluntary Action, and Child Welfare in Britain, 1840 to 1914", in eds. Seth Koven & Sonya Michel: 94-135.

Kuhnle, Stein 1983. *Velferdsstatens utvikling. Norge i et komparativt perspektiv*. Bergen, Universitetsforlaget.

Kuhnle, Stein & Solheim, Liv 1991. *Velferdsstaten -vekst og omstilling*.

Oslo, Tano.

Kuhnle, Stein & Selle, Per 1990. *Frivillig organisert velferd -alternativ til offentlig?* Bergen, Alma Mater.

Ladd-Taylor, Molly 1993a. "Toward Defining Maternalism in US History", in *Journal of Women's History*. Vol. 5, No.2, Fall: 110-113.

Ladd-Taylor, Molly 1993b. "My Work Came Out of Agony and Grief: Mothers and the Making of the Sheppard-Towner Act", in eds. Seth Koven & Sonya Michel: 321-342.

Ladd-Taylor, Molly 1994. *Mother-Work. Women, Child Welfare, and the States*,

1890-1930. Chicago, Urbana, University of Illinois.

Larsen, Eirinn 1995a. "Joan Wallach Scott: Feminist & Historian", unpublished final project in Advanced Feminist Theory, Women's Studies course no.104, University of California at Berkeley (UCB).

Larsen, Eirinn 1995b. "Postmodernism & Feminism", unpublished presentation and paper in Women's Studies course no.104, UCB.

Lewis, Jane 1980. *The Politics of Motherhood. Child and Maternal Welfare in England, 1900-1936*. England, Croom Helm.

Lewis, Jane 1991a. *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England*. Stanford, California, Stanford University Press.

Lewis, Jane 1991b. "Back to the Future: A Comment on American New Right Ideas about Welfare and Citizenship in the 1980s", in *Gender & History*. Vol.3, No.3, Autumn: 326-336.

Lewis, Jane 1992. "Models of equality: the case of state support for children in twentieth-century Britain", in eds. Gisela Bock & Pat Thane: 73-92.

Lewis, Jane 1994. "Women's Agency, Maternalism and Welfare", in *Gender & History*. April: 117-123.

Lübcke, Poul (ed.) 1983. *Politikens filosofi leksikon*. Copenhagen, Politikens Forlag A/S.

Liotard, Jean-Francois 1984 (1979). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. (trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi),

Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press. (*La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*, Paris.)

Mc Gerr, Michel 1990. "Political Style and Women's Power", in *Journal of American History*. December: 864-885.

Melby, Kari 1991. "Women's Ideology: Difference, Equality or a New Femininity, Women Teachers and Nurses in Norway", in eds. Andreassen et al.: 138-154.

Michel, Sonya & Rosen, Robyn 1992. "The Paradox of Maternalism: Elizabeth Lowell Putnam and the American Welfare State", in *Gender and History*. Vol. 4, No.3, Autumn: 365-386.

Michel, Sonya 1993. "The Limits of Maternalism: Policies towards American Wage-Earning Mothers during the Progressive Era", in eds. Seth Koven & Sonya Michel: 277-320.

Mink, Gwendolyn 1991. "The Lady and the Tramp: Gender, Race, and the Origins of the American Welfare State", in ed. Linda Gordon: 92-122.

Mjeldheim, Leiv 1987 (1969). *Politiske prosessar og institusjonar*. Bergen, Universitetsforlaget.

Moi, Toril 1985. *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. London, New York, Routledge.

Muncy, Robyn 1991. *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform*,

1890-1935 . Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press.

Offen, Karen 1988. "Defining Feminism: A comparative historical approach", in *Signs*. Vol.14, No.1: 119-157.

Offen, Karen et al. (eds.) 1991. *Writing Women's History. International Perspectives*. London, Macmillan.

Ohlander, Ann-Sofie 1991. "The invisible child? The struggle for a Social Democratic family policy in Sweden, 1900-1960s", in

eds. Gisela Bock & Pat Thane: 60-72.

Pettersen, Per A. 1982. *Linjer i norsk sosialpolitikk*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.

Rendall, Jane 1991. "Nineteenth Century Feminism and the Separation of Spheres: Reflections on the Public/Private Dichotomy", in eds. Andreasen et al. : 17-37.

Rokkan, Stein 1970. *Citizens, Elections, Parties*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.

Rosenbeck, Bente 1992. *Kroppens politik. Om køn, kultur og vitenskap*.

København, Museum Tusulanums.

Rubin, Gayle 1975. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex", in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. ed. Rayna R. Reiter.

New York, London, Monthly Review Press: 157-210.

Saarinen, Aino 1992. *Feminist Research -an intellectual Adventure?* Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Relations Publications 4/1992, University of Tampere. Jyväskylä, Gummerus Printing Ltd.

Sainsbury, Diane 1994. *Gendering Welfare States*. London, SAGE Publications.

Scott, Joan Wallach 1988a. *Gender and the History of Politics*.

New York, Columbia University Press.

Scott, Joan Wallach 1988b. "Deconstructing Equality -versus- Difference: or the uses of poststructuralist theory for feminism", in *Feminist Studies*. Vol.14, No.1, Spring: 33-50.

Scott, Joan Wallach 1993a. "The Evidence of Experience", in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. eds. Henry Abelove, Michéle Aina Barale, David M. Halperin. New York, London, Routledge: 397-415.

Scott, Joan Wallach 1993b: "The Woman Worker", in *A History of Women in the West. Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*.

eds. Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: 399-426.

Seip, Anne-Lise 1991. "Velferdskommunen og velferdstrekanten -et tilbakeblikk", in *Velferdskommunen: - kommunenes rolle i utviklingen av velferdsstaten*. ed. Anne-Hilde Nagel. Bergen, Alma Mater: 24-42.

Seip, Anne-Lise 1994 (1984). *Sosialhjelpstaten blir til. Norsk sosialpolitikk*

1740-1920. Oslo, Gyldendal Norske Forlag.

Siim, Birte 1988. "Towards a Feminist Rethinking of the Welfare State",

The Political Interests of Gender: developing theory and research with a feminist face. eds. Kathleen B. Jones & Anna G. Jónasdóttir. London, SAGE Publications: 160-187.

- Siim, Birte 1990. "Feministiska tolkningar av samspelet mellan kvinnor och välfärdsstaten", in *Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift*. nr.2: 13-23.
- Siim, Birte 1993. "The gendered Scandinavian welfare states: The interplay between women's roles as mothers, workers and citizens in Denmark", in *Women and Social Policies in Europe*. ed. Jane Lewis. England, Elgar, Hants: 25-48.
- Sklar, Kathryn Kish 1990. "A Call for Comparisons", in *American Historical Review*. Vol.95, No.4, October: 1109-1114.
- Sklar, Kathryn Kish 1993. "The Historical Foundations of Women's Power in the creation of the American Welfare State", in eds. Sonya Michel & Seth Koven: 43-93.
- Skocpol, Theda & Ritter, Gretchen 1991. "Gender and the Origins of Modern Social Policies in Britain and the United States", in *Studies in American Political Development*. Vol. 5, Spring: 36-91.
- Skocpol, Theda 1992. *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers. The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Skocpol, Theda 1993. "Soldiers, Workers, and Mothers: Gendered Identities in Early US Social Policy", in *Contention*. Vol.2, No.3, Spring: 157-183.
- Skocpol, Theda 1995. *Social Policy in the United States: Future Possibilities in Historical Perspective*. Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press.
- Thane, Pat 1982. *The Foundations of the Welfare State*.
London & New York, Longman.
- Thane, Pat 1991. "Visions of gender in the making of the British welfare state: the case of women in the British Labour Party and social policy, 1906-1945", in eds. Gisela Bock & Pat Thane: 93-118.
- Thane, Pat 1993. "Women in the British Labour Party and the Construction of the Welfare State, 1906-1939", in eds. Seth Koven & Sonya Michel: 343-377.
- Weiner, Lynn Y. 1993. "Maternalism as a Paradigm", in *Journal of Women's History*. Vol.5, No.2, Fall: 96-98.
- Wolfe, Alan 1993. "The Mothers of Invention", in *The New Republic*.
January 4 & 11: 28-35.

