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Morgan's "Working Mothers and the Welfare State: Religion and the Politics of Work-Family Policies in Western Europe and the United States" - Book Review

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appear not to want to make room for those in social work from other ideological perspectives. Here they seem unable to escape the same exclusive tendencies of professionalization, since they espouse “justice, not charity” (p. 302), and thus (inadvertently?) denounce and exclude those workers in religious and other similar organizations who provide daily help to those suffering from poverty and related problems.

This book is a challenge to all those who think of themselves as doing social work (in all its forms and titles). For those social workers who have uncritically endorsed the pursuit of professional status (either individually or for the profession as whole), this book will challenge you to question the costs of professionalization. For those who consider themselves to be social workers outside the professional infrastructure, this book may challenge you to look beyond your own specific area of work and find new ways to join in solidarity with others working in similar fields. *One Hundred Years* makes an important contribution to our understanding of the history of social work, but its dependence on sources from sanctioned organizations should spur others who have identified themselves as social workers to also tell their stories. ❖

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Working Mothers and the Welfare State: Religion and the Politics of Work-Family Policies in Western Europe and the United States

K. J. Morgan (2006) Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press

IMPORTANT SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DEBATES CENTER AROUND ISSUES related to child rearing. Some mothers choose to stay at home full-time while others work full or part-time by choice or necessity. This book offers a comparative analysis of different governmental responses to this issue by looking at the development of work-family policies regarding childcare, parental leave, and flexible work time arrangements in Sweden, France, the Netherlands, and the United States. This book is the result of extensive research by the author that began as a dissertation and continued through several years of post-doctoral study, including

interviews with scholars and government officials in each of the four countries. With a background in political science and international affairs, author Kimberly J. Morgan does a wonderful job describing opposing political positions and contrasting moral perspectives throughout the book in a fair and balanced way.

The book examines each country's prevailing ideological position regarding the involvement of government in family life, the involvement of governments in market economies, and the role of mothers in childrearing. Differing ideological frameworks resulted in unique work-family policies in each of these political systems. Morgan highlights the role of organized religion in shaping the underlying ideologies that drive policy decisions.

Chapter 1 begins by presenting an introduction and overview of the politics of women's employment in general and that of mothers of young children in particular. This first chapter summarizes the main ideas of the book, which are then examined in closer detail in the remaining chapters. Chapter 2 looks at the historical foundation for current policies, beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. The author examines the role of organized religion in shaping political thought regarding education, childcare, and the division of labor in the home. Chapter 3 examines the rapid expansion of welfare programs during the economic boom following World War II, during the 1960s and early 70s. The remaining chapters discuss contemporary policies in each of the four countries: chapter 4 focusing on Sweden and France; Chapter 5 the United States; and chapter 6 the Netherlands, followed by the author's concluding summary of the study results, including specific lessons for the United States.

Christians in social work may be encouraged to see the essential role religious organizations play in providing an alternative voice to national governments. Countries like Sweden and France, in which a strong government overshadowed the national religion, became largely secularized over time. Without a religious counterbalance, the Swedish government took an activist role, using social policy to restructure family roles and gender relations in order to create an egalitarian society. The Swedish government promoted full employment by providing universal benefits and services to both mothers and fathers, including public child care services and generous parental leave. French policy similarly provided generous government benefits to workers and encouraged mothers to work, although conservative voices influenced

the government to provide assistance to both mothers in paid work as well as mothers who stay at home.

In contrast to the Swedish and French models of direct government provision of services, social policy in both the Netherlands and the United States was shaped by the idea of subsidiarity, which holds that social services should be provided by the lowest level of society, such as families and the voluntary sector. The development of family policy in the Netherlands was affected by Catholic, Protestant, socialist, and liberal constituencies, each of which developed voluntary organizations providing educational and childcare services. The Dutch government supported services to children and families indirectly by funding these voluntary associations.

Morgan shows how the religious diversity of the United States led to the early separation of church and state, resulting in strong religious organizations that promoted traditional family values. As a result, the U. S. government also took a more indirect role, providing day care subsidies for low-income parents and part-day programs for preschool children. Childcare services developed by religiously motivated voluntary organizations provided an effective alternative to government-run childcare, making the type of universal government childcare seen in other countries unnecessary in the United States. Morgan also points out a weakness of U. S. policy: the lack of quality low-cost childcare and benefits such as parental leave and flexible work time arrangements in minimum-wage jobs perpetuates poverty for low-income families.

In an age of increasing secularization, this study offers a fresh perspective on the vital and enduring role religion plays in political life. Morgan shows that while social policies in much of Western Europe have long promoted the move of mothers into full-time employment, popular sentiment in many of these countries continues to favor the maternal care of children at home. This cross-national comparative study sheds light on the intricate interplay of forces that contribute to social policy. Morgan's scholarly examination provides insights that may be particularly valuable for social work educators who would like a new perspective on their own political processes. Educators may also find that case examples from other countries provide helpful illustrations of different political systems, policy solutions and outcomes over time. ❖

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