

Annotated Bibliography on Gender, Work & Family in Belgium

Compiled by Ryan A. McMahon and Katherine Pile-Spellman

Tulane University

April 16, 2008

Alter, George. 1984. "Work and Income in the Family Economy: Belgium, 1853 and 1891". *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 15(2): Pp. 255-276.

Alter makes an important distinction between previous work on working-class families and current research in that the previous focuses on the physical and moral hardships of women and children while the recent does not discount the previous but puts an emphasis on the positive economic contributions that women and children make to the family budget. The article breaks down into four sections: 1) Proportions of children and married women participating in the wage labor force. 2) The amount that these women/children worked. 3) The amount they contributed to the family budget. 4) How the patterns changed during the last half of the 19th century. Though the study focuses on the 19th century, this information will be particularly useful in establishing a historical context to current work/family relations. Not only context, Alter feels this time period shows a great shift in the public understanding of women and children in the workplace, that when tied to other works will give an idea of where Belgium came from, why it was changing and will give a good idea of how it has led to the current situation today.

Avramov, Dragana, Marc Callens, and Robert Cliquet. 1995. "Belgium: A Family-Friendly Climate as the Valorization of Individuality." Pp. 81-101 in *Population, Family, and Welfare: A Comparative Survey of European Attitudes* Vol. 1, edited by H. G. Moors, and R. Palomba. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press.

Avramov, Callens and Cliquet take a micro approach in their examination of the key aspects of childbearing in Flanders as experienced by women and men of prime childbearing age and during early and middle parenthood. They first describe Belgium's demographic background including the fertility decline from 2.6 in 1965 to the current (at the time of publishing) below replacement level estimated at 1.7. Analyzing data from the fifth Family and Fertility Survey and the Population Policy Acceptance survey questionnaire, they attempt to discover whether the Flemish population wants "to be a target of policy aimed at encouraging family formation, and, if so, of what kind of policy" (83). Their findings suggest that while population does not approve of attempts to influence fertility levels, they do approve of a more individualized policy targeted at individuals and primary groups aimed at facilitating the arrival of children, and increasing the quality of life of parents and children. Their findings suggest the population's willingness to share the cost of creating a more family-friendly Belgium during a time when the government was proposing to reduce child benefits in order to cut costs. Their findings shed light upon the Flemish perception of public policy and family.

Bradshaw, Jonathan and Naomi Finch. 2002. "Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No. 174: Comparison of Child Benefit Packages in 22 Countries." Leeds, England: Corporate Document Services. Retrieved February 20, 2008 (<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/174summ.pdf>).

Bradshaw and Finch, updating their previous study commissioned by the United Kingdom's Department of Work and Pensions, compared child benefit packages in 22 countries. Their data was obtained from national informants who completed a matrix, which simulated how families of varying types at varying earning levels would be treated by the child benefit package in their country. Belgium placed seventh, equal to the United Kingdom, in their overall ranking of the average child benefit package paid to a 'representative' sample of families. One of their conclusions was that benefit packages vary widely within and between countries. Family size, type, and earnings are some of the factors contributing to this variability. This points to the danger of studying one or even a few standard families to represent a country's child benefit package.

Bussemaker, Jet and Kees van Kersbergen. 1999. "Contemporary Socialist-Capitalist Welfare States and Gender Inequality". Pp. 15-46 in *Gender and Welfare State Regimes*, edited by D. Saintsbury. Oxford University Press.

In this chapter, Bussemaker examines the relationship between gender inequality and "social capitalism" (a welfare state regime). A major point made by Bussemaker is that until the 1980s, social policy was more reactive and only after did it make active efforts to enforce the policies of the state. Looking at five different countries (including Belgium), we can see that the total social expenditures from the 1980s to the 1990s has risen, proving that the state is taking a more active role in policy. The author then moves into the changing "breadwinner bias", providing useful charts to the social policy of Belgium that propagates the male bias (24). Solid information is also provided on a country by country basis on the statutory leave policies enforced by the countries. This article will be best used as a source for the actual policy in place of Belgian society and will give a nice view of how the political arena has fostered much of the change that Belgium has seen over the last few decades.

Columbia University. 2004. *Belgium*. New York: The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth and Family Policies at Columbia University. Retrieved February 20, 2008 (<http://www.childpolicyintl.org/countries/belgium.html#maternity>).

Columbia University's Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth and Family Policy provides a succinct overview of Belgian family policy. They assert that Belgium was among the first countries to develop an explicit family policy. They attribute this, in large part, to class and culture cleavages and the role of the Catholic Church. Going along with the strong conservative tradition in Belgium, the country's social policy has historically supported the traditional family. That being said, recently, in response to sociodemographic trends, the family ministry has changed its reference point from 'the family' to 'the household,' which is defined as having "two

unrelated persons, whatever their sex, who are neither parents nor related to the third degree, who cohabit and at minimum, partially pool their resources” (1). The country summary shows how policy is split between the federal level and the governments of the largely autonomous regions of Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels. Tax policy, health care and child benefit (family allowances) fall under federal jurisdiction while childcare, education and youth welfare are regional. Family policy does not exist in a vacuum and, as the article mentions in its final paragraph, Belgium is trying to expand its support for policies that facilitate reconciliation of work and family life.

Corijn, Martine. 2001. “Couples’ Careers in Flanders.” Pp. 98-118 in *Careers of Couples in Contemporary Society*, edited by H.P. Blossfield and S. Drobnic. New York: Oxford University Press

One of the main points that Corjin makes is the fact that previous literature has usually only focused on one gender and not the couple in the interaction. The article is especially useful in the fact that it focuses solely on Belgium and does not act as a comparative study between other nations. The study then goes through, in order, the process of creating families, the characteristics of each gender and finally resources to parents (such as childcare, nannies or state subsidization of childcare) and the effects that they have on the working careers of Belgian women. While the data used may be somewhat outdated (Fertility and Family Survey in Flanders and Brussels – 1991) information does make the argument for the individualistic perspective that many industrialized countries have adopted as one of the major reasons for the rise in women’s employment, while some of the other previously mentioned topics address why there is still some deterrents to total gender equality in Belgian society.

Den Dulk, Laura, Anneke van Doorne-Huiskes, and Joop Schippers. 1996. “Work-Family Arrangements and Gender Inequality in Europe.” *Women in Management Review* 11(5): 25-35.

This article centers on the effect of government policy regarding work-family arrangement on the labor market position of women and men in the European Union. Dulk, Doorne-Huiskes and Schippers use four indicators to determine whether there is more equality between men and women in countries that have larger government policies. Although the research pertains to the European Union, it does provide information on Belgium specifically. Belgium is one of six member states to offer an entitlement to paternity leave (although it is only three days.) Also, they reveal that Belgium has a “career-break” system, which allows all private employees to take a six to 12 month full-time or six month to five years part-time break for a variety of reasons including child care, instead of a parental leave arrangement. In addition, they found that in 1992, the average wages of Belgian women was 74.5% of men’s (excluding the agricultural sector). The real relevance of Dulk, Doorne-Huiskes and Schippers’ research goes beyond the specific references to Belgium, to highlight the broader implications that work-family policy have on gender equality. Paradoxically, they found that the more statutory work-family arrangements were accompanied by less gender equality in the labor market.

De Schampheleire, Jan. 2001. *Changeover From Career Breaks to Time Credits Proves Complex*. Dublin, Ireland: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Retrieved April 1, 2008 (<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2001/08/feature/be0108360f.htm>)

This article reports on the system of time credits that replaced the former system of career breaks. The new system was introduced in the Belgian private sector on January 1, 2002 by the Belgian Minister of Labor. The source, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, is a European Union body established by the Euroean Council.

Drew, Eileen P., Ruth Emerek and Evelyn Mahon. 1998. *Women, Work and the Family in Europe*. New York: Routledge Publications.

This book looks at the interaction of major societal changes within the European Union. Drew makes the distinction between families, labor markets and the state as well as how gender roles in these societies encompass each of these facets to daily life. The book is broken down into three sections. The first deals with the new conceptualization of the family itself. Looking at mainly the demographic shifts in recent years, the implications for more gender equality across EU states is established. The second part then focuses on many of the same issues in the workplace. The final section deals with the reconciling of both the work and family lives, the gender differences that occur and the possible solutions to what the author refers to as an “adoption of family-friendly” options (1). While many other articles dealt with the historical context of why Belgium has many of the policies it does, this gives a better description of the current state of affairs regarding gender, work and the family in European Union countries.

Dumon, Wilfred. 2005. “Belgium’s Families.” Pp. 215-233 in *Handbook of World Families*, edited by B. N. Adams and J. Trost. New York: Sage Publications.

Wilfred Dumon summarizes family issues in contemporary Belgium. More specifically, he looks at pairing up, fertility and socialization, gender roles, marital relationships, divorce, kinship, aging and family policy. While most research about Belgian families exclusively deals with one of Belgium’s three regions, Dumon attempts to provide information on the country as a whole by combining the previous research. He reports a trend towards small families due to low fertility rates as well as low birthrates. In addition, he finds that socialization and raising of children in Belgium is not entirely a family matter but instead, it is considered a community matter. With regard to gender roles, he notes the decline of the breadwinner family and the appearance of two new models in its place (one in which both partners have full-time jobs in labor market, and the other in which the male partner works full-time and the female partner is employed part time. Although equality between the sexes is considered ideal, gender imbalances still exist. For example, women spend 23 hours per week on household chores compared with 8 hours by men. He stresses how the country is in the process of profound changes: (1) a striking change in family organization, (2) a shift in the balance between the public

and private domains that reveals that families are gaining power in society and, finally, (3) changes in demographic parameters and social parameters.

Evans, John M. 2000. "Firms' Contribution to the Reconciliation between Work and Family Life." Retrieved February 27, 2008. (<http://idasa.repec.org/ploec/elsaaa/us-en.html>). Vancouver, Canada: University of British Columbia Press.

While it is evident that there is a growing international workforce, both male and female, Evans takes a look at the policies in place that help to foster the "dual-earner" perspective of society. While Evans gives a brief overview of governmental policy in place to help the work/family conflict, he acknowledges that the majority of the policies that will help perpetuate this schema are going to be based in the businesses themselves. Policies range from parental leave (both male and female), company provided childcare or benefits based on child care costs, and the increased acceptance of part-time employees in the workforce. Additionally, he goes into possible factors that can help encourage these work practices from government tax breaks to subsidized childcare to laws providing benefits to companies that provide benefits to their employees. Many scholars (as well as students in the class) have commented that it is difficult to change the country's policies on social issues, but by focusing on the businesses themselves, the transition to the work/family schema seems more viable. This article provides an international comparison (including Belgium) of "family-friendly" countries and looks at the policies they have in place that has perpetuated the shift to a more gender equal family and workplace.

Gornick, Janet C. and Marcia K. Meyers. 2003. *Families That Work: Policies for Reconciling Parenthood and Employment*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Families That Work examines European and American family and labor market policies. Gornick and Meyers believe that America should move toward a "dual-earner/dual-carer" society modeled on European solutions to reconcile work and family obligations. In the "dual-earner/dual-carer" society, men and women would equally fulfill the role of provider and nurturer, could not be penalized for reducing or stopping work when their children are young and could resume work without penalty when their children can go to school.

Gornick, Janet C., Alexandra Heron, and Ross Eisenbrey. 2007. *The Work Family Balance: An Analysis of European, Japanese, and U.S. Work-Time Policies*. Washington, DC: The Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved February 17, 2008 (<http://www.sharedprosperity.org/bp189.html>).

Gornick, Heron and Eisenbrey extol policy reforms aimed at reducing work time. Reducing total employment hours and raising the quality and availability of part-time work, these policies are a vital part of work-family reconciliation policies. Distinct from family leave and child care policies, work-time regulations almost always apply to all workers, rather than just parents. While these policies have been implemented in almost

every European nation, the United States has resisted reform in this area and, instead, has focused on childcare, family leave and flexibility in the workplace. The decrease in the average work hours in almost every European nation since 1979 attests to the effect of these European policies. Gornick, Heron and Eisenbrey also make policy recommendations for the regulation of work time. Similar to many of the other articles found, this article focused more on a comparison of European countries than it did on Belgium alone. Nevertheless, the article provided a more detailed look at work time regulation as a mechanism to adjust to the influx of mothers in Belgium and other countries.

Jacobs, Jerry A. and Janet C. Gornick. 2001. "Hours of Paid Work in Dual-Earner Couples: The U.S. in Cross-National Perspective". Retrieved February 27, 2008. (www.soc.upenn.edu/courses/J%20Jacobs%20Soc%20041_Hours%20of%20Paid%20work.pdf).

Jacobs uses data from the Luxembourg Income Study to compare the US with nine other industrialized countries in Europe (including Belgium). The different statistics analyzed (on a couple basis) are hours of work by joint couples, the proportion of long weekly hours and on the issue of gender equality within working families. While the US ranks very high across many of these categories, this can be attributed to the amount of dual earner couples, the amount of long week work hours and the portion of individuals that work extremely long hours. When compared to Belgium, there does not seem to be the same "drive" to work as much. This article will tie nicely with the previous (also by Gornick) on the reduction of work hour policies in many of these European nations. Possible solutions presented by Jacobs are regulation of maximum hours, a push for more part-time work and its acceptance and a move toward the public responsibility of childcare (another topic addressed frequently in other readings).

Kremer, Monique, 2002. "The Illusion of Free Choice: Ideals of Care and Child Care Policy in the Flemish and Dutch Welfare States." Pp. 113-142 in *Child Care Policy at the Crossroads: Gender and Welfare State Restructuring*, edited by S. Michel, and R. Mahon. New York: Routledge.

Kremer provides a more detailed account of Flemish childcare policy in "The Illusion of Free Choice" than she does in her 2006 article described below. She provides charts, hard numbers and a more comprehensive historical, cultural and economic background of the country. Although the Netherlands and Flanders are "always clustered together," share the same language, are both considered conservative-corporatist regimes and have the same dominant political ideology of Christian democracy with regard to welfare politics, the two countries have strikingly different child care systems. Although the Netherlands is an otherwise well-developed welfare state, expansion of its childcare system began only in the 1990's. Contrastingly, Flanders has a well-developed, relatively long-standing, state-sponsored child system. Kremer attempts to explain these differences using a cultural-institutional approach. She attributes the Netherlands's very late start to the fact that until the 1980's, it was still economically feasible to embrace the ideal of full-time motherhood. By comparison, childcare policies in Belgium were rooted

in anti-poverty policies of the 1940's. While the surrogate mother care ideal replaced the outdated ideal of the full-time mother (although currently the professional care ideal is being pushed as an alternative to the surrogate mother), parental sharing is becoming the dominant ideal in the Netherlands. Kremer asserts that citizens of both the Netherlands and Belgium lack agency and that neither ideal promotes complete gender equality. In the Netherlands, even though the parental sharing promotes gender equality, the women continue to perform most of the caring tasks and have fewer career prospects. Belgium's surrogate mother care ideal still relies on the notion that caregivers should be "mother-like" and because it is state-subsidized, the day care mother option is far more readily accessible than the childcare institution is.

-----, 2006. "The Politics of Ideals of Care: Danish and Flemish Child Care Policy Compared." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society* 13(2): 261-285.

While most Europeans agree that the ideal of full-time mothering is a thing of the past, they differ over what kind of childcare alternatives should be provided. Kremer uses the term "ideals of care" to describe a definition of care laden with moral implications. . Although Denmark and Flanders(Belgium) have adopted extremely different care models, the two countries have the highest number of children in state-subsidized childcare in Europe. Comparing the development of childcare policy in Denmark and Flanders, she examines the factors involved in the policy change. Some of these include macro-economic necessity caused by women entering the workforce, parent's preference and the women's movement. Kremer also explores how, in both Denmark and Flanders, the women's movement was able to ally itself with a powerful organization to counter other coalitions supporting different normative ideals in order to uphold the care idea advocated by each. While offering insight into the recent history of childcare policy development in Flanders, Kremer also made me think about how policymaking is not a straightforward top-down approach. Instead, it involves the individual agents who care enough to fight for or against it and the 'advocacy coalitions' they join to strengthen their position.

Lesthaeghe, Ron and Guy Moors. 1995-2001 (Working Paper). "Ideational Trends and the Stages of Family Formation in Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, 1981-1990." Retrieved February 27, 2008. (www.un.org/popin/confcon/milan/plen7/plen7.html). University of Brussels.

This article focuses on a comparison of France, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands and the "life-trends" that effect the family orientation in these societies. Specifically, the authors look at religion, civil and sexual morality and traditional orientations to family. The findings showed these that these trends pushed for a decline of cohabitation and an increase in family orientation and childbearing at earlier ages. Movements to the political right in the majority of these countries were also found to decrease cohabitation and increase family. The article successfully shows the shift to the family-oriented structure but also asserts that the "radical change" that is discussed has and will continue to level out with stability providing the basic necessity to continue to

family oriented structure in the future. The information provided will match with the other articles that have seen a rise in familialism Belgium which in turn is a major reason for the push to change policies regarding work/family policies.

Mandel, Hadas and Moshe Semyonov. 2005. "Family Policies, Wage Structures, and Gender Gaps: Sources of Earnings Inequality in 20 Countries." *American Sociological Review* 70(6): 949-967.

Mandel and Semyonov analyzed hierarchical linear models combining individual- and country-level data from 20 countries to explore the paradoxical consequences of family policies for gender based labor inequality. They find that family policies and wage structures influence the gender earnings inequality in opposing directions. While wage disparities between the sexes are less distinct in nations with developed family policies, they attribute the difference to more egalitarian wage structures rather than to their family policies. Because countries with developed family policies are also usually characterized by more egalitarian earning distribution, people often conflate the two. Family policies that try to reconcile work-family conflicts are usually directed towards the mother, which, in turn, facilitates discrimination and the disproportionate allocation of women to low-paying female-typed jobs.

Marques-Pereira, Bérengère and Olivier Paye. 2001. "Belgium: The Vices and Virtues of Pragmatism." Pp. 56-87 in *Who Cares?: Women's Work, Childcare and Welfare State Resdesign*, edited by J. Jenson and M. Sineau. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Bérengère and Paye examine welfare resdesign in Belgium, which began in the late 1960's and ended in 1990. While the new programs supplemented existing family policy, they did not displace them. Their research covers the period between 1960 and the present. It explains and names each of the major childcare and women's work policies in the context of the economic, social and political situation and the dominant model of gender relations. They also identify the dynamics influencing legislative initiatives of the 1990's. One recent trend is the state's attempt to diversify the childcare options. The reinforcement of state efforts to foster parental rather than publicly-provided care is another trend.

Morelli, Anne. 2002. "Nestore's Wife? Work, Family, and Militancy in Belgium". Pp.327-348 in *Women, Gender and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

This is another article that will provide historical background into the trends that we see today in Belgian society regarding gender equality and the workforce. The chapter focuses specifically on Belgium, but more importantly to the influx of immigrants following World War II (and in this case, Italian immigrants). Citizens across Europe were stifled in both their ability to be politically active as well as foster a family life and bring in income from both partners. Many Italians thus immigrated to Belgium due to the policies that nurtured family solidarity. While that article states that

Belgium had better policies regarding work and family following WWII than many other nations, it is also interesting that the huge influx of immigrants seeking these values as Belgian citizens also helped to perpetuate even better policies that are in place today. Also, from the political standpoint, Belgium served as a ground for those anti-Fascists who were not able to protest the political, family and work values they desired. Thus, Belgium's political arena was also transformed into one which continued to push for social welfare programs that promoted family values and more equality in both the work and family environments.

Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development(OECD). 2006. *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development. Retrieved February 28, 2008 (http://www.oecd.org/document/63/0,3343,en_2649_39263231_37416703_1_1_1_1,00.html.)

This report is a review of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in twenty OECD countries to describe the social, economic, conceptual and research factors involved in shaping early childhood policy. It also provides profiles of each of the twenty countries.

Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development(OECD). 2007. *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life; A Synthesis of Findings for OECD Countries*. Paris: Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development. Retrieved February 28, 2008 (<http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?sf1=identifiers&lang=EN&st1=812004161p1>.)

This article summarizes the main findings of the Babies and Bosses reviews of work and family reconciliation policies in OECD countries. It summarizes cross-national differences in policy approaches.

Population Reference Bureau. 2007. "Belgium." Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau. Retrieved February 17, 2008 (<http://www.prb.org/Countries/Belgium.aspx>).

Described by Professor April A Brayfield as "THE source for demographic data around the world, the Population Reference Bureau lists Belgium's demographic data. As of mid-2007, the country's population was 10.6 million with a 0.2 rate of natural increase. Some statistics were surprising. One such was the high percent of contraceptive use. 79% of married women, ages 15-49, and 75% of unmarried women within the same age cohort, use at least one method of contraception. This bare-bones list of statistics is obviously useful and relevant resource for general facts about the country.

Silverman, William and Reuben Hill. 1967. "Task Allocation in Marriage in the United States and Belgium." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 29(2): 353-359.

In this 1967 article, Silverman and Hill attempt to explain patterns of task allocation in marriage in families of Belgium (specifically Flemish and Walloon) and the United States. They refer to three theories of task allocation (cultural prescription theory, availability theory, and family development theory) to explain the differences and similarities in the two countries. They found more similarities than differences between the task performance of husbands and wives in America and Belgium. The main difference between the two was the explanations they made for the variation of task allocation structures in the two settings. Contending that the availability theory is the best explanation for variations in the United States (but not in Belgium) and rejecting cultural prescription theory for both countries, they found that the best theory for explaining variations in both countries was the family development theory.

Stratigaki, Maria. 2004. "The Cooptation of Gender Concepts in EU Policies: The Case of Reconciliation of Work and Family." Pp. 30-56 in *Social Policies 11(1)*.

The main point of the article is the shift in the meaning of gender equality as it moves through European Union policy. Originally a feminist idea of equality, the policies took on a more market-oriented perspective pushing for more flexible hours and forms of employment. Thus, while helping to allow women into the workforce and have dual earner (full or part time) families, the policies did not explicitly push for any type of equality. The article is useful in the fact that it deeply analyzes the EU acts (1974, 2002, 2001-2005) and gives reason for the continued gender stratification even in progressive European nations. Also, it makes a solid point about the EU legislation as "guiding-points" to member states and not as mandated law. Some countries go above and beyond the requirements while others disagree for a variety of reasons. Though applicable to overall policy, the article does not provide much information of Belgium specifically.

Vandenbroeck, Michel. 2006. "The Persistent Gap between Education and Care: a 'History of the Present' Research on Belgian Child Care Provision and Policy." *Paedagogica Historica* 42(3): 363-383.

"How was the division between education and care constructed in Belgium and why did it persist?", Vandenbroeck asks in his main research question. He contends that most of the literature concerning early child care focuses on its context in relationship to the mother's role in the labor market and somewhat neglects its educational aspects. Looking at the history of Belgium childcare beginning in 1919, he focuses on the gap between infant care and preschool education, as well as, 'liberté subsidée,' subsidized liberty as a specific form of public-private partnership. While both have their roots in the original 1919 legislation, they are still core aspects of current childcare policy. Vandenbroeck looks at the 20th century debate, between the dominant discourse on mothers' innate gift for childrearing and the growing support for interventions in family life to save the children from the mother, as important to the historical construction of the division and as origin of 'liberté subsidée.' The article explains historical trends of Belgian childcare policy, as well as the origins of the economic disparity of child care benefits.