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Introduction: Gender and Welfare States in East Asia

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Introduction

This book aims to uncover gender assumptions of welfare states that are very different from Western ones, and to understand women's experience of welfare states across a range of East Asian countries. Gender inequalities in East Asian social policies are clearly important for women across East Asia, and yet they have had too little attention in the literature comparing welfare states. The comparative literature has largely been concerned with Western Welfare states, whether in *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Esping-Andersen 1990), or in gender-based analysis of the male breadwinner model (Lewis 1992, 2001, 2006). Are the welfare systems of East Asian countries distinctive, with Confucian cultural assumptions hidden beneath the surface commitment to gender equality? While economies have been developing rapidly, are social policies becoming less traditional in their expectations of women? East Asian welfare regimes have been studied since the late 1980s, but research questioning their underpinning gender assumptions is new.

The book showcases new research in several East Asian countries, including Korea, Taiwan, China, Hong Kong and Japan, to develop an understanding of gender in welfare systems that have some common history and culture. It will bring together research on gender in welfare systems with a Confucian history. It will also ask about the extent to which Confucian values and practices of gender difference persist in the context of modern welfare states with gender equality legislation. How seriously are gender equality policies promoted by governments? What impact do gender equality policies have at the household level? How difficult is it for households to practise gender equality in these

contexts? Are Confucian values more powerful and gender differences more extreme than comparable aspects of Western welfare systems? How do such conflicts play out in China and Hong Kong, countries with similar cultural backgrounds but contrasting political ones? Has the communist attack on Confucian gender inequalities created societies in which women and men are equally valued and have equal power in households? What assumptions now underpin social policies, and how are they experienced in practice? How is the welfare system in Hong Kong managed in the post-colonial period? Some (Chiu and Wong 2005: 97) argue that the new SAR government's new vision for Hong Kong is an 'amalgamation of Confucian values and free market economy'. How does this affect gender equality and policy issues in Hong Kong?

These chapters complement the broad brush debates in the introduction with detailed discussion of gender in the welfare systems of individual East Asian countries. The book discusses the combination of change and tradition in East Asian welfare states. Rapid economic development makes East Asian economies remarkable, as 'tiger economies', bringing a transformation of living conditions. These changes bring clear social benefits, with women's life expectancy in Japan the highest among OECD (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, and Korean women's life expectancy increasing at a faster pace than any other OECD country. Political changes bring gender equality legislation, which is important for improving women's rights in employment and family law. There are signs of change in society – including gender – as well as in economy and polity. Detailed study of women's experience in practice, particularly as mothers in marriage, and out of it, shows the persistence of some traditional family hierarchies which put younger mothers under unusual pressures, and which could not be described as gender equal. But there is room for optimism that women's involvement in social movements and academic enquiry may be challenging Confucian gender hierarchies (Pascall and Sung 2007).

Social and economic change

Rapid economic and social changes are a crucial backdrop for understanding East Asian welfare states and the changing legislative framework impacting on gender. Korea is one of the fastest growing economies in the OECD, sustaining rapid growth through the crisis years of 2007–2012 (OECD 2012a). Economic change brings clear benefits: life expectancies are among the highest in the world, with Japanese women expecting

to live to 85+, while Korean women have higher life expectancy than UK women, despite *per capita* income of around two-third the UK figure (OECD 2011). According to the Population Database from the United Nations (2009), life expectancy in China is also rising sharply: by 2040 the average life expectancy will reach 78 years and more than 20 per cent of population will be over 65 (in Ye 2011). China is also facing demographic transition with rapid economic growth, from a 'high fertility, high mortality phase to a phase of low fertility and low mortality' (Ye 2011: 679). Figure 1.1 draws on OECD data to show the leading position of East Asian countries in life expectancy, with Japan and Korea above the Western social democracies:

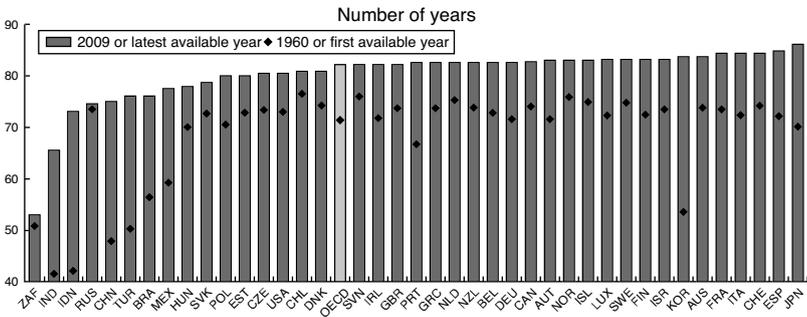


Figure 1.1 Life expectancy at birth: women, 2009

Source: OECD Factbook 2011a.

Japan has nearly the lowest Infant Mortality Rate, even among the social democratic countries such as Iceland, Sweden, Norway and Finland, while Korea's is again close to the United Kingdom's, despite Korea's lower *per capita* income (OECD 2006). Increasing life expectancy and low infant mortality are clear indications of women's health (Pascall and Sung 2007).

But public social expenditure in East Asian countries remains low. Korean public social expenditure, as a percentage of GDP, is among the lowest shown in Figure 1.2, in contrast with Scandinavian countries at the other end of the spectrum. Private spending fills some of the gap, but Korea's social spending altogether is low, suggesting that families fill much more of the gap:

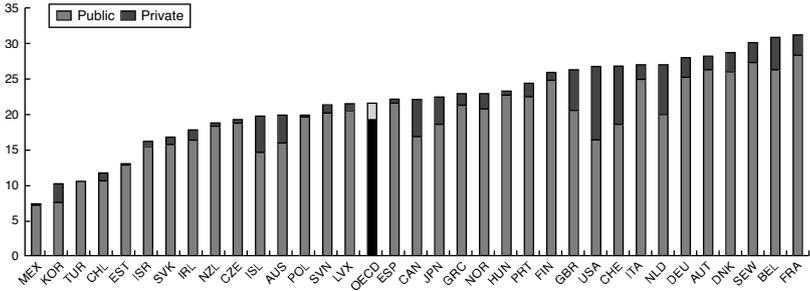


Figure 1.2 Public and private social expenditure, as a percentage of GDP, 2007
 Source: OECD Factbook 2011a.

Japan’s public social expenditure is also below the OECD average. These data give rise to doubts about governments’ commitments to the social care activities which have tended to define women’s domestic lives and contain their public ones. Figures for public social spending over time (Figure 1.3) show Korea increasing from around 5 per cent in the 1990s towards 10 per cent projected for 2012, but remaining well below the OECD average, and even further below that of France, given here as a contrasting Western European example:

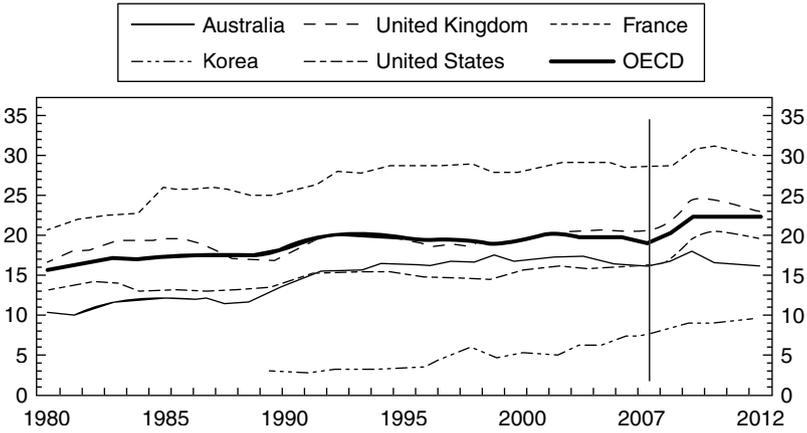


Figure 1.3 Public social spending, as percentage of GDP, for selected OECD countries, 1980–2012
 Source: OECD 2012a Social Expenditure Database.

Policy changes, bringing gender equality legislation, are important. In Japan, the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society in 1999 described a gender-equal society for the first time in Japan and required the state to promote gender participation and gender equality. The opening article of this law proposes ‘a “gender-free” society which does not reflect the stereotyped division of roles on the basis of gender but rather has as neutral an impact as possible on the selection of social activities by men and women as equal partners’ (Takao 2007: 153). Japan’s mandatory long-term care insurance was started in 2000, bringing entitlement to those aged 65 and above, to institutional and community-based care, according to need, bringing an ‘abrupt shift of gender policy’ (Takao 2007: 154) from earlier assumptions about the obligations of daughters-in-law. The government’s perceptions of a need to bring women into employment, while increasing the birth rate, are seen as crucial contributing factors to this change, while women activists have also played a vital role (Takao 2007). In Korea too, there have been important developments in gender equality legislation. Since 2001, the Ministry of Gender Equality has been the focus for state policy, operating through women’s bureaux and through legislation: the Gender Equality Employment Act, Framework Act on Women’s Development, and Employment Insurance Act (Won 2007). These are clearly significant symbolic moments in women’s action towards gender equality, but we need to ask about their significance in practice under Confucian conditions.

Culture and gender: East Asian culture in transition?

Confucianism has been identified as the main cultural heritage in East Asian countries by many Western and Eastern scholars. Some argue that Confucian traditions, such as diligence and hard work, a great emphasis on education, and dutifulness, helped East Asian countries to achieve rapid economic growth. However, others downplay economic growth in favour of the disadvantages imposed, particularly in relation to gender: ‘in traditional Confucian societies women were in a disadvantaged position’ (Palley and Gelb 1992: 3). The Confucian influence on women’s position in society can be best represented with the virtue of three obediences: ‘to the father, the husband and the son’ (Lee 2005). After marriage, women belong to families-in-law and become strangers to their natal families (Sung 2003).

These strong Confucian traditions on women are indeed changing, as a result of industrialization, changes in family structure, women’s

increasing participation in the labour market and the recent development of gender equality policies. However, in East Asian countries, tradition and modernity co-exist: Western influence of gender equality ideals and traditional Confucian patriarchal family systems are intertwined within these societies. As Lee (2005: 166) argued in her research on women and the Korean family: 'although the Korean family resembles the nuclear family in structure, in terms of the actual activities undertaken within it, the principles of the stem family and the extensive influence of the traditional conceptualization of the family have not diminished'. Married women are still more responsible for their family-in-law than their own families. In her research, women often felt duty and responsibility to their parents-in-law, although they were emotionally closer to their natal families. Women also often gave priority to their husbands' families over their own, while men did not feel the same way about their wives' families. This shows that the Confucian tradition still has a strong influence on women in Korean families. In Japan, though with weaker influence of Confucian traditional gender roles than Korea, women's status was often considered as secondary in society and resulted in limited roles for women (Palley and Gelb 1992). In Taiwan, it still seems women's primary roles as carers and domestic workers have not substantially changed, despite the increasing numbers of women entering the labour market as wage earners (Wu 2007). According to Lin and Yi (2011), the strong patriarchal cultural heritage in China and Taiwan influences intergenerational support to ageing parents. From the 2006 East Asian Social Survey, they found that traditional Chinese filial norms still prevail in intergenerational relations. For instance, it is expected that adult children – especially sons – will take the major responsibility for parental support, by co-residence and by providing financial resources. Wong's study (1995) of Hong Kong found about 60 per cent of respondents agreed that children should take the primary responsibility for the financial needs of elderly parents (cited from Chan 2011). While women's increasing participation in the labour market represents social and cultural change in East Asia, it is also important to note that traditional gender roles still prevail within the family and wider society. In this transitional period, East Asian women may encounter conflicts within their families and societies, as well as within themselves.

Family law: gender equality legislation

The family's key role in society as a provider of social welfare is common to East Asian welfare systems. Welfare systems have been described as

'productivist', emphasizing economic objectives with strong education and health services to reproduce human resources (Holliday 2000, 2005), or Confucian, to emphasize the role of the family in welfare and of Confucian values in social harmony. Confucian values may be seen as a cover for welfare states pursuing economic growth at the expense of everything else: in particular, real Confucian values of social solidarity (Chan 2006). While welfare states everywhere have a place for family responsibility, East Asian ones draw on Confucian values to give families a very special responsibility for social welfare. A Confucian tradition of patri-lineal and patri-local families has influenced family living arrangements, with three-generation households, sons expected to live with their parents, and daughters expected to move away on marriage. Filial piety underpins this, with a hierarchy based on gender and generation. While these traditions persist in ideology and reality, households are shrinking and becoming less complex. A change towards nuclear family living arrangements increases younger women's ability to make their own decisions.

Family law has protected men's interests and male dominance in Taiwan and in Korea. In Taiwan, rights to property and decision-making were seen, under family law, as belonging to male breadwinners, while wives were pressured to leave their families of origin and take up their husbands' domicile. Family law also protected men's guardianship of children after divorce, which made it very difficult for wives to leave unhappy marriages. Women have fought for revisions of this legislation and have achieved – by a third round of revisions in 2002 – parity in decisions over domicile, surname and parental rights, while men's economic dominance in family law has been reduced (Wu 2007: 92–94). Similarly Korean civil law protected the male line and male dominance through the *ho-ju* system. *Ho-ju* means 'head of the family' and men's rights to be head of the family have been protected, through a hierarchy in which – when a *ho-ju* dies – a male of any generation takes precedence over the *ho-ju*'s wife. The father's name was written as the head of the family in official documents, such as identity cards, and following the father's death, the eldest son became head of the family, not the mother (Sung 2003). This idea of the 'man as the head of the family' has been challenged: reform of Family Law in 2008 abolished the '*ho-ju*' system in Korea (Kim 2008).

But differences persist between East Asian families based on Confucian traditions and Western families. In Western families, interactions between husbands and wives are key, while the Confucian family system cannot be fully understood without analysing interactions between family-in-law

and daughter-in-law, as well as between husband and wife (Sung 2003). Although the Confucian family system has faded, traditional ideas of women's subordination to their husbands and parents-in-law may still prevail in East Asian families. Changing legislation is crucial to underpin mothers' rights to guardianship of their children and to living independently. But we should ask whether Confucian cultural assumptions continue to bring gender inequality in East Asian societies, despite the climate of change – and political action – bringing legislation for gender equality.

Gender in welfare regimes in East Asia: cultural perspectives

Do social policy approaches overlook the impact of culture on societies and social policy provision? Or do cultural interpretations overemphasize the role of culture, providing a weapon for conservative ideology, playing into traditional hands? Arguments for more understanding of culture and of the interrelationship between culture and social policy are made by some scholars (Baldock 1999; Clarke 2004; Oorschot 2007). Pfau-Effinger (1999) argues that Lewis's 'male breadwinner model' neglects the cultural ideals behind social action: she sees welfare state policies and culture as mutually interrelated, in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. She defines the gender culture as those norms and values that shape the desirable, 'normal' form of gender relations and of the division of labour between women and men. Thus, she argues, it is important to notice the way welfare state policies are embedded in their respective societal context, in any theoretical framework for cross-national analysis. Similarly, Stadelmann-Steffen (2008:391) argues that women's employment is influenced by the 'gender culture'. Cultural values have an influence on the formation of a 'women-friendly' societal and political framework, as well as the individual employment decisions of women. Some studies (Pfau-Effinger 2005; Reiger and Leibfried 2003) focus on the influence of culture on welfare states, proposing that the theoretical framework for the comparative study of welfare has to broaden its scope by looking at the mutual relationship between the welfare state's policy and culture, but without excluding structural dimensions.

Confucianism has long been the most prevalent culture in some East Asian countries. Jones identified East Asian welfare systems as 'Confucian welfare states':

Conservative corporatism without (western-style) worker participation; subsidiarity without the church; solidarity without equality;

laissez-faire without libertarianism: an alternative expression for all this might be 'household economy' welfare state – run in the style of a would-be traditional, Confucian, extended family. (Jones 1993: 214)

Alternatively, Walker and Wang's (2005) study emphasizes the role of political ideology and downplays Confucianism as a contemporary aspect of social policy in East Asia. They claim that the influence of Confucian culture has been overestimated in the past and the present, when analyzing East Asian welfare regimes. In their view, 'Confucianism is best understood as an adjunct to political ideology, which provided powerful backing to the conservatism of East Asian governments in the formative stages of social policy' (Walker and Wang 2005: 229). A rather similar argument is made in this volume by Ochiai and Johshita about the misuse of cultural arguments by political leaders in Japan to fix gender roles, inhibiting international influences towards gender equality.

However, these arguments underplay the cultural role of Confucianism in the lives of individuals, especially of women, considering its impact on traditional gender beliefs in some East Asian countries. Reiger and Leibfried (2003) highlight the impact of Confucian culture on shaping social policy in East Asian countries. They also argue that research focussing on either quantitative aspects of welfare state expansion or formal, institutional features of welfare state institutions often overlooks the impact of cultural factors that shape social policy. Thus, it is important for social policy analysts to pay more attention to culture as one of the welfare state's important dimensions as well as to political economy, given how little research is done on the impact of culture when analyzing social policy, gender and the welfare state in particular. We need to understand the interrelationship between culture and social policy, particularly the extent to which Confucianism has influenced gender differences in East Asian welfare systems (Sung 2003).

The key concern of this book is to explore the influence of Confucian culture on gender and social welfare in East Asia. As Clarke (2004: 50) argues, cultural analysis has not attempted to expel the 'material, the economic or the structural' but rejected these as the sole focus, arguing rather for culture as an objective variable exerting its influence alongside political, economic and institutional factors. Here, the focus is on understanding the impact of Confucian culture on gender and welfare states in East Asia.

Gender in welfare regimes: equality legislation in a Confucian context

How can we understand the gender logic underpinning the welfare systems of East Asia? We will argue here that – while there are differences between East Asian welfare states – they have some features in common: in particular a hierarchical Confucian model of the family, prioritizing male breadwinners, which has only recently been challenged by feminist movements and gender equality legislation.

The characterization of gender regimes based on the male breadwinner/dual earner spectrum (Lewis 1992) puts gender at the centre of comparative analysis and is a starting point here. Gender regimes are understood as systems of gender equality or inequality through which paid work is connected to unpaid, state services and benefits are delivered to individuals or households, costs are allocated, and time is shared between men and women in households as well as between households and employment. The decline of the male breadwinner model has widespread implications in Western Europe (Creighton 1999; Lewis 2001). Welfare states are analyzed here in component parts of the male breadwinner/dual earner spectrum: paid work, income, care work, time and power, asking to what extent they can be seen as systems of gender equality or as systems of traditional gender roles in each of these parts.

We thus use the (mainly western) comparative literature, but argue that Confucian influences remain important, with strong assumptions of family, market and voluntary sector responsibility rather than state responsibility, strong expectations of women's obligations, without compensating rights, a hierarchy of gender and age, and a distinctive, vertical family structure, in which women are subject to parents-in-law. In rapidly changing economies, these social characteristics are changing too. But they still put powerful pressures on women to conform to expectations about care, while weakening their rights to security and support. Nowhere do welfare states' promises bring gender equality in practice. Even in Scandinavian countries women earn less, care more, and have less power than men. We shall compare East Asian countries with some Western ones, to argue that some major comparative data show the extreme situation of women in these countries.

We also need to ask about the level and nature of policy intervention. The *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Esping-Andersen 1990) are relevant to gender, because the Social Democratic countries have had gender equality as well as social equality at their heart (Ellingsaeter and Leira 2006). Social democratic regimes have also underpinned gender equality

with social policies, social spending and social commitment to parents and children. Elsewhere, commitment to traditional families, to gender difference or to free markets may play a greater role than gender equality. Figure 1.4 offers a way to understand key components of gender systems, combined with different levels of intervention in welfare systems:

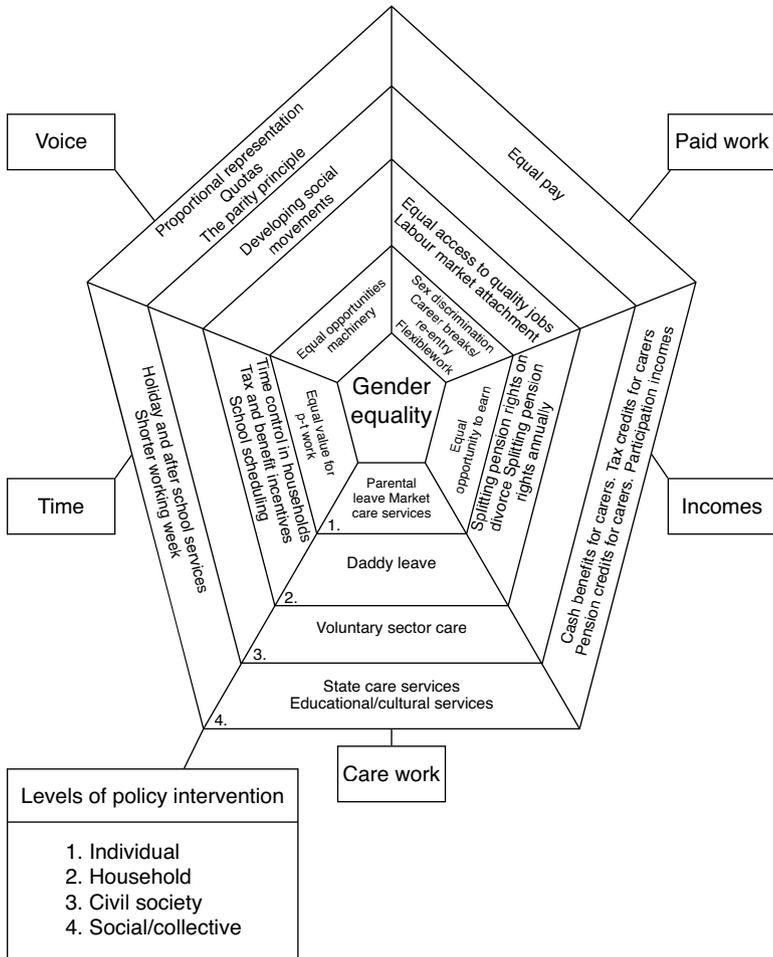


Figure 1.4 Policies for gender equality

Source: Pascall and Lewis (2004).

Are there alternative scenarios for a more gender equal future? The idea of making men’s lives more like women’s is at the heart of Nancy Fraser’s Universal Caregiver model, in which all employees would be assumed to have care responsibilities, while developments in civil society would enable care to be shared (Fraser 1997). But it is argued here that gender equality needs extensive and systematic support, beyond the capacity of civil society. The French working time model also has something to contribute to thinking about building a society in which men and women have time to care as well as to work and to earn. Government commitments to gender equality need underpinning with regulation of time and with social investment. Comparative data clearly show that Scandinavian social democratic countries are the most gender equal: but they have still prioritized women’s employment over men’s care. In a model of Universal Citizenship, gender equality would go beyond paid employment – important as that has been – and attend to gender inequalities in care, income, time and power: men’s and women’s obligations to paid work and care as citizens would be underpinned by regulation of working time and electoral systems and by social investment in citizenship rights.

Employment

The gaps between men’s and women’s employment have been falling in most OECD countries. Governments have wanted and enabled women’s labour market participation for economic reasons, and women themselves have increasingly seen earning as key to their independence and security. Figure 1.5 shows gender gaps in employment across a wide range of countries:

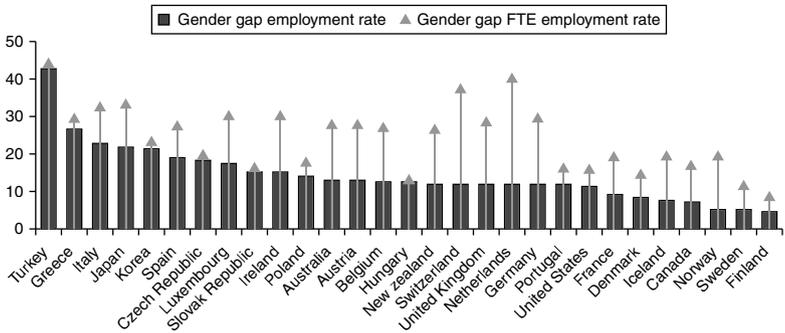


Figure 1.5 Gender gap in employment rates, 2008

Source: Gender Brief (OECD 2010).

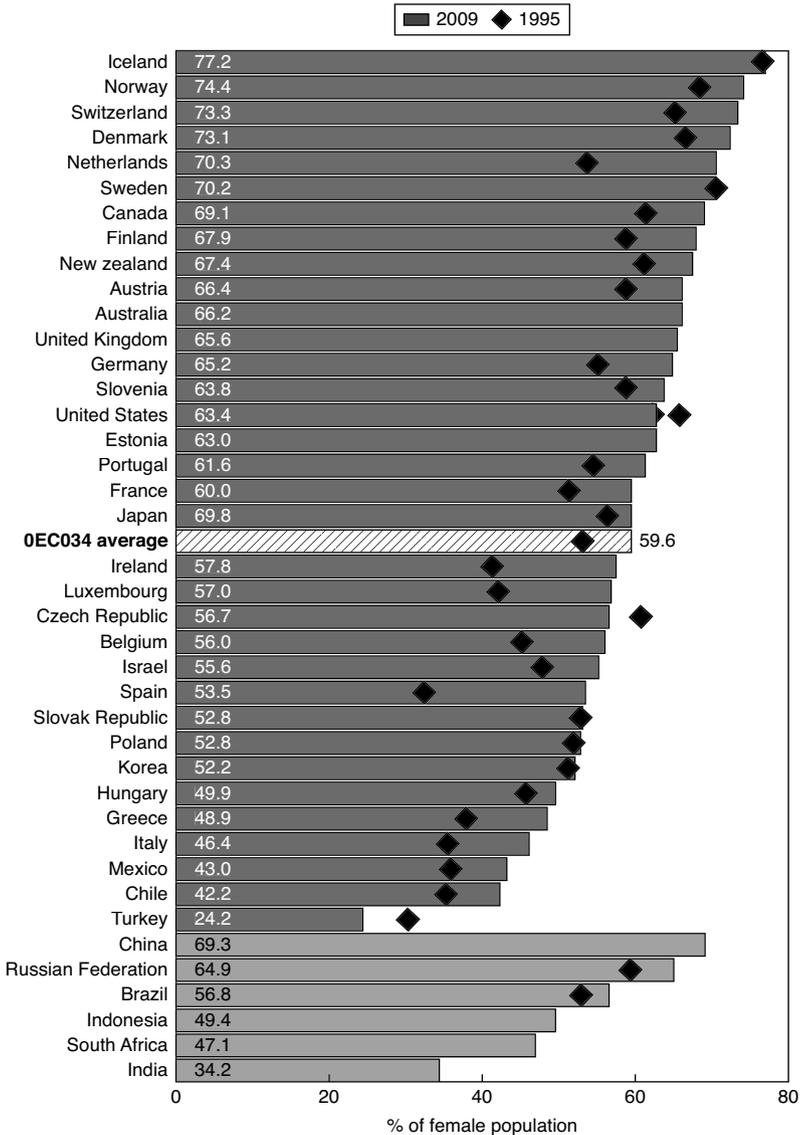


Figure 1.6 Proportion of women (aged 15–64) in the labour market, 1995–2009
 Source: Doing Better for families (OECD 2011).

Everywhere still – even in Scandinavian countries – men’s labour market participation is higher than women’s. As shown in Figure 1.5, among the most economically developed countries of the OECD, Japan and Korea have notably high gaps between men’s and women’s employment, at the opposite end of the spectrum to Finland, Sweden and Norway.

Participation rates for women are shown in Figure 1.6: 52.2 per cent of Korean women participate in paid work, while Japanese women are just above the OECD average of 59.6 per cent. Both are well below Scandinavian countries, Iceland and Norway, where women’s participation rates are well over 70 per cent. The proportion of Chinese women in employment reflects China’s mixed history of communist and market forces at 10 per cent above the OECD average and nearly 70 per cent.

Incomes

Earnings gaps in Korea and Japan are also strikingly high. Again, women’s earnings are below men’s in all OECD countries, on average 16 per cent lower in 2010. But in Korea, women earn 39 per cent less than men, while in Japan the gap has been reducing more rapidly than in Korea, but remains nearly 30 per cent:

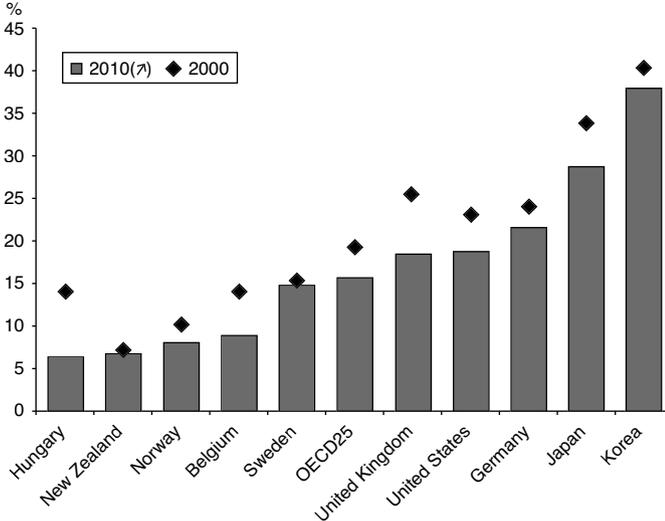


Figure 1.7 Gender gap in median earnings for full-time employees, 2000 and 2010 (or nearest year)

Source: OECD Gender initiative (2012b).

High pay gaps are among reasons families prioritize men's employment. In Korea, discussing whether fathers might take parental leave, economic reasons were a key element in their decisions (Won and Pascall 2004). Large pay gaps make it difficult for women to press their claims to keeping continuity of employment and developing careers. Despite lower pay, economic needs are prominent among women's reasons for labour market participation. Women's ability to support themselves independently of partners is less than men's in most countries. In Korea, Japan and Taiwan several factors keep women's earnings well below men's. The high pay gap, a tendency for participation to dip (more than comparable countries) when women become mothers, long uncontrolled working hours which make it difficult for mothers to sustain their labour market position: all these limit the extent to which women's employment brings independence (Pascall and Sung 2007).

The fragility of life outside families is evidenced by the lack of alternative state support through unemployment, parenthood, sickness and old age. According to Gao et al.'s comparative study (2011) of the Basic Livelihood Security (BLS), systems in China and South Korea, both offer low benefits, insufficient to meet the needs of poor families. They share strict means-testing, limited coverage and a common culture emphasizing familism. In Hong Kong, the social security programme was described as an 'absolute minimum expenditure and minimum intervention in the market or the systems of family obligation' (Macpherson 1993: 5). In 1999, workfare programmes in Hong Kong were introduced to 'change the attitude of unemployed recipients who are less motivated' (Social Welfare Department 1998: 15; in Chan 2011). Chan argues that the workfare scheme in Hong Kong was not introduced to address welfare dependency with a big social security budget but to maintain a low level of social security benefits and a low tax regime. Under workfare, unemployed recipients are required to participate in compulsory voluntary work immediately. Chan (2011) claims that the punitive nature of the scheme impacts on the social atmosphere, discouraging citizens who need benefits from seeking them. Taiwan also provides relatively low levels of benefits, compared with other industrialized countries. Although public expenditure in Taiwan has risen since the late 1990s, in the wake of political democratization, the increase was small relative to the growth of GDP (Huang and Ku 2011). Without state support to meet social needs, and with low pay from employment, women, espe-

cially those with young children, are very far from being able to form 'autonomous households' (Orloff 1993).

Care

Childcare and care for older relatives are key components of gender differences in employment and public life. Government strategies to increase women's employment have included socializing childcare, regulating employers to provide leave so that mothers can combine childcare and employment, and – much more rarely – encouraging a new division of labour so that men's responsibility for childcare can be supported through dedicated 'Daddy leave'. Women's increasing labour market participation has been widely encouraged, as a solution to economic pressures and family change. But while gender differences in care are converging, they are also deeply entrenched (Gershuny 2000) and have been much less subject to government policy, even in Scandinavian countries, where fathers' responsibility for childcare has been promoted by governments.

To what extent are East Asian countries socialising and sharing the costs of childcare between parents and others? Comparative data on public spending show Korea and Japan among the countries with the lowest public spending on childcare and early education services, at the opposite end to Denmark, Iceland, France and Sweden:

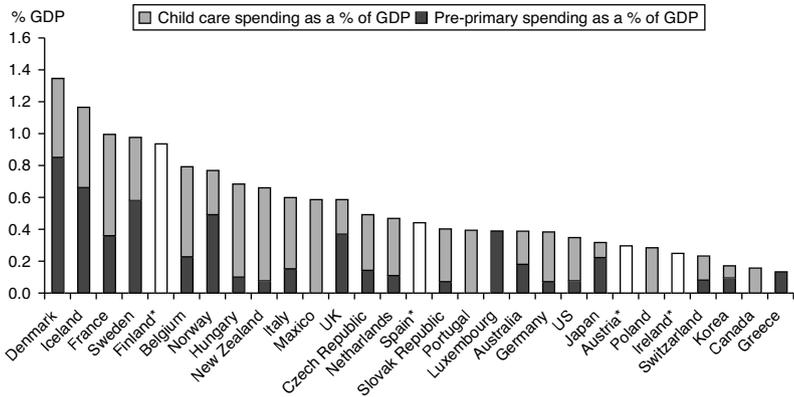


Figure 1.8 Public expenditure on childcare and early education services, as a percentage of GDP, 2005

Notes: * For Austria, Finland, Ireland and Spain only aggregate spending data are presented.

Source: OECD Gender Brief (OECD 2010).

OECD data also allow us to compare fertility and changes in fertility. These reflect many different pressures, and are not a direct indicator of pressure on mothers' time, but they do suggest that motherhood may be becoming difficult for mothers in Japan and Korea:

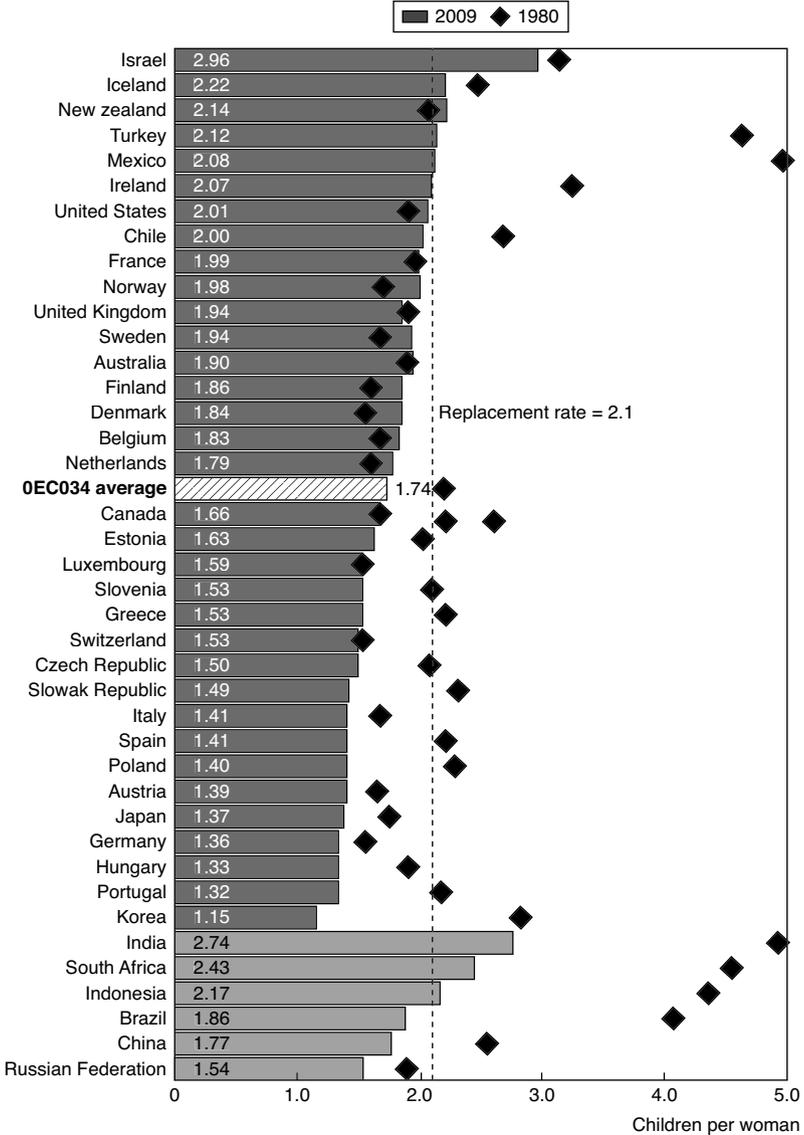


Figure 1.9 Total fertility rates, 1980 and 2009

Source: Doing Better for Families (OECD 2011).

Korea is at the lowest end among OECD countries, with just over one child, and Japan a little above that. Korea shows one of the most rapid declines, more than halving from over two in 1980 to just over one in 2009. The Scandinavian countries are still below replacement threshold but have been stabilizing over this period. In Japan, the birth rate's rapid decline has brought policy changes towards 'attempts to reconcile aspects of family and work life' (Gelb 2003: 114). A 1997 survey in Japan found most respondents saw the main reasons for the decline of the birth rate as the heavy cost of children's education (58.2 per cent of respondents), lack of financial security (50.1 per cent) and the difficulty of raising children while continuing work (44.7 per cent) (Foreign Press Centre (1997: 4) in Gelb 2003: 114). Very low fertility and very rapid decline could indicate great pressures on families in other East Asian countries, especially Korea (OECD 2007: 8).

Debates about the relationship between government, NGO, market and family responsibility for childcare take place everywhere. Most of these debates are premised on the need to sustain mothers' employment, and say nothing at all about men. Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands are exceptions to this. Iceland has the most developed and successful scheme of dedicated Daddy leave (with three months for mothers, three for fathers, and three to share between them) which encourages men to stay at home with their children for the three months paid leave to which they are entitled. What debates flourish in East Asian countries about who should parent, take leave and responsibility? The Gender Equal Employment Law (2002) in Taiwan has given rights to parental leave for men and women and obliges (in principle) larger employers to provide childcare facilities (Wu 2007). In Korea, the Gender Equality Employment Act was revised in 2001, to extend childcare leave to working mothers or fathers to 52 weeks, while Infant Care legislation again makes larger employers responsible for childcare (Won and Pascall 2004). Also, maternity leave pay has increased from 250,000 won per month in 2001 to 500,000 won (approximately £250) in 2007 (Kim 2008). In Japan, economic pressures to bring women into the labour market have brought expansion of the Childcare Leave Law in 1999, to include a three-month nursing care leave, with the scheme expanded to include a close relative as well as children, and was renamed as the Childcare and Family Leave. In 2005, the law was revised again to allow parents up to five days of leave a year to care for a sick child (Lambert 2007). Childcare services in Japan have also improved, as a result of the 1994 Angel plan, which was to tackle low fertility through a widened welfare state-based social care network. The services offered extended

hours, infant care, and after-school care programmes. In 1999, the numbers of babies admitted to public day care increased, as the New Angel plan was introduced (Gottfried and O'Reilly 2001; Peng 2001: 46, in Gelb 2003: 116). Figure 1.10 shows these developments in an international context:

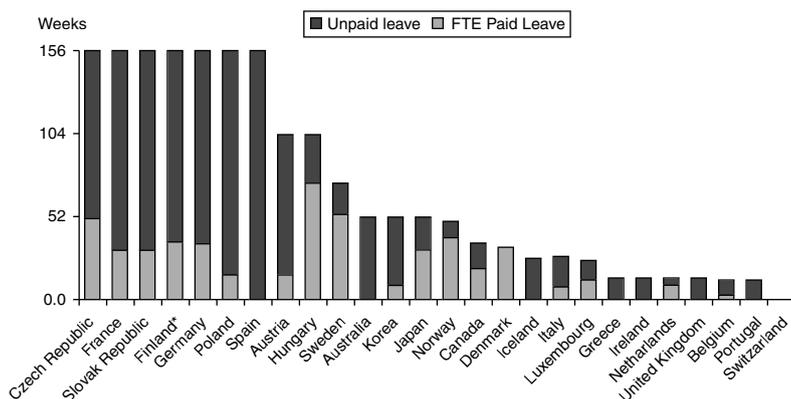


Figure 1.10 Parental leave, weeks, OECD Family Database, 2010

Source: Gender Brief OECD (2010).

Although the recent development of family policies indicates improvement of gender equality policies in East Asian countries, there are still big gaps between policies and practices. For instance, there is evidence from Won that at least some Korean men feel that taking leave for childcare would threaten their jobs and their reputations as men (Won 2007).

These male respondents are not unusual in dismissing taking leave to care for children. But perhaps they are more vehement than their Western counterparts in their negative expression of men's responsibility for childcare. European Foundation data show men and women in Europe with gender-neutral values about childcare even if they do not carry it out equally: 'most people of Europe believe that childcare is basically a nonspecific task: both mother and father are expected to carry out childrearing' (Fahey and Spéder 2004: 60). Korean mothers interviewed by Won (2007) described childcare as a state of war.

The evidence above is of low social spending on childcare and early education in some East Asian countries, especially Korea and Japan. It is also of great distance from defamilization: 'the degree to

which households' welfare and caring responsibilities are relaxed' (Lister 1997: 172). There is little relaxation of pressures on mothers and families through social spending, with very high pressures indicated through very low birth rates. There is also evidence of very little sharing between men and women in households, as shown in the next section.

Time

Unpaid work is one measure of men's responsibility for childcare. Everywhere, men's contribution to unpaid work is lower than women's:

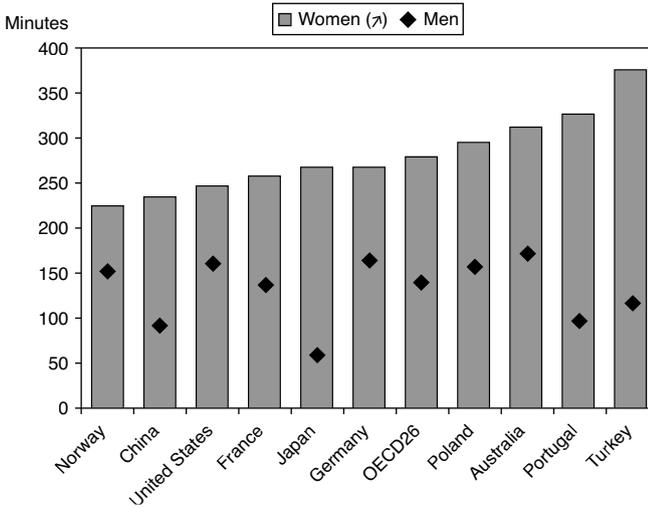


Figure 1.11 Minutes of unpaid work per day, 1999–2009

Source: Gender Initiative (OECD 2012b).

Figure 1.11 shows men in Japan making the lowest contribution. In Korea, the pattern is similar to Japan, with men spending around a fifth of the time spent by women on unpaid work: 3 per cent of their day, compared with women's 14 per cent in 2004 (An 2010). In China, gender differences are less extreme, as shown in Figure 1.11, but men spent under 100 minutes per day, more like other East Asian countries than Norway, France or Germany (OECD 2012 a, b, c).

One way to understand the time men give to unpaid work is to explore the time given to paid work. Comparative data about working time, show South Korea's position at the top of the league for average working time, with Japan above the OECD average, while the Netherlands, Germany, Norway and France are at the bottom. South Korea's lead in this respect is distinctive, with working hours more like much less developed countries (BBC/OECD 2012).

Long working hours are a feature for men and women in East Asia, and a part of the climate in which unpaid care work is difficult to manage and difficult to share. The picture above of average working hours conceals variation: between men and women, full-timers and part-timers, with a variety of working time regimes across countries. Recorded long working hours in Japan are near the high end of the international spectrum, with around 60 per cent of employed men and nearly 20 per cent of employed women working more than 45 hours per week. Japan also has few part-time workers, either male or female (OECD 2007: 19):

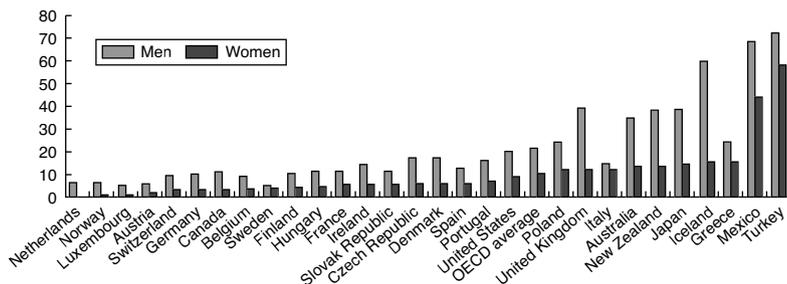


Figure 1.12 Percentage of employees who work more than 45 hours per week, years around 2002

Source: OECD Factbook 2007.

While hours recorded in these comparative data are high, there is room to question whether – in the long hours culture in East Asia – the real picture is of even longer hours, putting pressure on men and women to show commitment through staying at their desks. Korean respondents felt pressured to work beyond the legal limit. Male respondents described this as putting care out of the question (Won 2007).

There is much to be said for a shorter working week, but if it applies to women or to mothers rather than to men or to fathers, then this

may bring gender inequality, and high risks for mothers when marriages break down. There seem to be few debates in East Asia about reducing working hours, or even applying existing legislation on working hours: the chapter by Kimio Ito on Culture includes a discussion of the impact of Japan's working hours culture on men's ability to spend time on families and communities. In Europe, most policy debates have been about making women's lives more like men's. Sweden is the most gender-equal country, and has achieved this through high social support and spending on childcare, underpinning women's labour market participation in as continuous a manner as found anywhere. Making men's lives more like women's is an alternative, advocated by Fraser's 'Universal Caregiver' model, in which both men and women are assumed to have care responsibilities and to need time to care (Fraser 1997). The 35-hour week in France brings more gender equality of working time than elsewhere in Western Europe, while allowing time for care. Research suggests that both mothers and fathers in France are able to spend more time with their children since this legislation (Fagnani and Letablier 2006). There is also evidence of preferences in Europe for more equal working time, with the current French model not far from widespread preferences in Europe (Fagan and Warren 2001).

Power

Representation in democratic processes and institutions is only the most visible and countable form of power. Power also exists in communities, workplaces and families. It may be expressed as violence against women in households (see Leung Lai Ching in Chapter 6) as well as in the legislature. Power may be overt, but hidden assumptions may hold more power than public debates (Lukes 1974). The assumptions underpinning Confucian culture may be a potent force against gender equality in households as well as in public representation and participation. If representation in participatory democracies is an inadequate indicator of power in societies, the indication it gives is of gender inequality in those decision-making bodies that make the rules for the rest.

Women's political representation in most countries is well below the 50 per cent which might be expected if power were distributed equally between men and women: Japan is at the far end of the spectrum of OECD countries, with – as shown in Figure 1.13 – well under 15 per cent of parliamentary seats held by women. Taiwan has a complex quota system with nearly 25 per cent women members (OECD, Matland 2006: 286–289) (Figure 1.13).

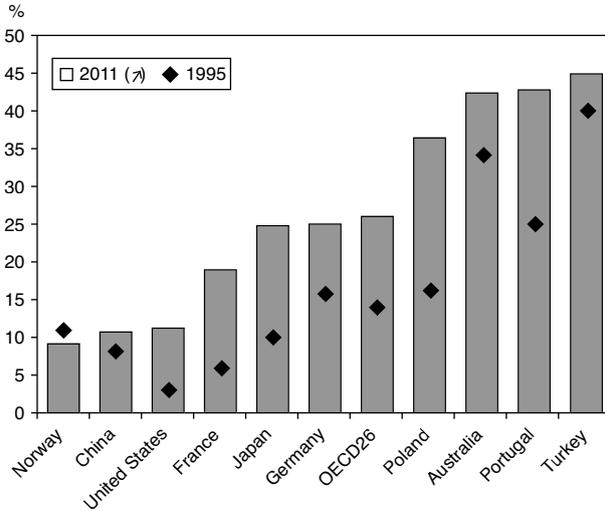


Figure 1.13 Share of women in parliament, 1995 and 2011

Source: OECD Gender Initiative (OECD 2012c).

At the opposite end of this spectrum are Sweden, at 45 per cent, with Iceland and Finland following close behind. We might ask why these East Asian countries have so little room for women in parliamentary politics, with what implications, and are there prospects for increasing this? We would argue that the small minority of women in public decision-making positions undermines women's representation and the representation of core issues for women, such as gendered expectations of care. Women's political representation in national parliaments has been shown to relate positively to their level of employment, education compared with men, length of time since enfranchisement, secularization, social democratic political parties and electoral systems based on proportional representation. But even where women's employment, education and mobilization have brought steady improvements in representation, these have not brought parity with men. Increasingly women's low level of political representation is being targeted by quotas (Dahlerup 2006, 2007).

Can these low levels of representation in parliamentary politics be understood as women's choices? There may be a case for this in East Asian countries, in the context of Confucian cultural values encouraging women to be obedient rather than dominant. But accumulated

(Western) research evidence suggests that discriminatory processes are more important (Phillips 1991). Scandinavian countries have achieved high levels of women's representation through long political work to increase the acceptability of women in politics and decrease the acceptability of men's over-representation. But arguments for equality as parity, rather than as equality of opportunity, have brought campaigns for quotas, which make a direct assault on discriminatory electoral processes, and hope to reduce the time lag between women's suffrage and their full representation in representative parliaments. In some countries (e.g. Rwanda), these have lifted women's participation above Sweden's 45 per cent. There seems a good case for looking at quotas in Europe as well as in East Asia, as a means to bring representation of women, and of issues important to women higher up the agenda, rather more quickly than seems likely under current political conditions.

Conclusion

The chapter has asked about approaches to welfare, about the nature of East Asian welfare states, particularly the gendered nature of East Asian welfare states. Scholars have asked are there distinctive features of welfare systems in East Asia as a region, an 'East Asian welfare model'? Goodman and Peng (1996) argued that strong reliance on non-state agencies – family, community and firm – distinguishes this model from Western welfare regimes. A distinctive welfare state cluster is also argued by Holliday (2000: 709): the 'productivist world of welfare capitalism', in which the state's orientation is to economic growth, with social policies subordinated to economic/industrial objectives. Similarly, Kwon argues for the East Asian welfare system as the 'developmental welfare state' (2005, 2009), in which social policy is instrumental for economic development, for example, promoting private sources of welfare and diverting financial resources from social insurance to investment in infrastructure (Gough 2001). But what are the implications of strong reliance on families and communities, the subordination of social policies to economic ones, promoting private sources of welfare, diverting financial resources from social insurance? In particular, what are the implications for families, for women in families and for gender equality? If these implications have been underplayed in the literature on East Asian regimes, literature about gender and welfare states has tended to neglect East Asia and the extreme position of women in East Asian welfare and family systems. Are there differences between East and West in family systems which put burdens on women while giving them fewer rights? Are young women in East Asian families at the bottom of hierarchies of decision-making and power? What are the implications of China's shift towards market and Confucian ideology for women, especially

disadvantaged women? Is Confucianism a key to differences between East and West, to understanding women's position in employment, income, care, time and power, with East Asian countries at extremes from the social democracies in social spending, fertility and political participation, while sharing economic and life expectations with the same social democracies? The forthcoming chapters therefore address new questions about women's welfare, across the wide East Asian region.

The book asks about the impact of Confucian culture on gender equality in East Asia. It begins with countries the authors see as the most 'Confucian', Korea and Taiwan, where gender equality legislation challenges, and is challenged by powerfully persistent and consistent Confucian values. Sung examines work-family balance policies in South Korea, asking how recent changes and policy reforms influenced women, exploring through qualitative interviews the impact of Confucian culture on women's experience in reconciling work and family life. In the rather similar environment of Taiwan, Wu asks about women's experiences and strategies in balancing motherhood and paid work, about changes in gendered arrangements of family responsibilities, motherhood ideologies and employment patterns between two generations. From the alternative perspective of policy makers, in her qualitative interviews with Korean civil servants, Won asks about the gap between policy rhetoric and the reality, questioning the status of women's bureaux in the Korean gender regime. China may be the birthplace of Confucianism, but communism directly challenged Confucian gender inequalities, bringing girls and women into education and employment, with communist ideology bringing – for nearly half a century – an environment that supported gender equality against Confucian tradition. Using mixed methodologies, Shang, Fisher and Guo address the gendered experiences of older disabled people in rural China. They ask about the implications of communist and post-1990 market reforms – a rapidly and radically changing environment – on gender equality: did either communist or market reforms challenge Confucian gender inequalities, creating communities in which women and men are equally valued in both policy and practice? In particular, they ask about the impact of communist and market reforms on this multiply disadvantaged group: women who are old, disabled and from rural areas. Hong Kong – facing east and west – has also absorbed a variety of influences. Leung Lai Ching's chapter asks about the gender mainstreaming of domestic violence policy. She examines the gender sensitivity and welfare orientation of government officials and frontline social workers, exploring their attitudes towards domestic violence. In Hong Kong, is domestic violence perceived as a family issue or a social issue, by policy-makers and family workers? Does the Confucian welfare model act as a barrier to the gender mainstreaming of domestic violence policy?

Japan experiences – according to chapters by Kimio Ito and Emiko Ochiai and Ken’ichi Johshita – a diversity of influences including Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism. Kimio Ito asks about the sources and nature of a culture which put Japan so very far down the gender equality league: 98th on the Gender Gap Index in 2011. Emiko Ochiai and Ken’ichi Johshita draw upon a content analysis of Prime Ministers’ speeches since the 1970s to ask about the extent to which Confucianism has affected family ideology/policy in Japan. Can the position of women in Japan be understood as a consequence of Confucianism? Or was Confucianism mobilized and re-shaped as an ideology to support the modern state in the form of the ‘traditionalization of modern gender roles?’

The evidence of the comparative data above is of countries with strong and growing economies, overtaking the Scandinavian social democracies in women’s life expectations. But the evidence is also of East Asian countries at the opposite pole to gender-equal social democracies, across the range of measures of gender equality in employment, income, care, time and power. The following chapters address key questions about the lives and welfare of women across a wide region.

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2

Work–Family Balance Issues and Policies in Korea: Towards an Egalitarian Regime?

Sirin Sung

Introduction

Work–family balance has become a key issue since the late 1980s in Korea as a result of women’s increasing participation in the labour market. There have been some cultural shifts in relation to gender roles in combination with economic and political changes. In particular, the traditional idea of ‘the man as head of the family’ has recently been challenged, leading to the 2008 reform of family law (Kim 2008). In spite of these recent changes, the notion that the gendered division of labour in the Korean family has shifted from a traditional to an egalitarian model is highly questionable. To explore this, the chapter asks to what extent recent policy changes have influenced women’s experiences in reconciling paid and unpaid work in practice. It discusses women’s views on their responsibility for unpaid care work, including childcare and eldercare, and on the effectiveness of work–family balance policies. Gender imbalance in unpaid care work is not peculiar to Korean society, as it exists in the most egalitarian countries in Europe such as the Scandinavian countries. However, Korean women may encounter particular difficulties because of their special responsibilities for their parents-in-law embedded in the Confucian value system. Therefore, this chapter examines the recent changes in work–family balance policies in Korea, and it argues that in order to make the policies effective there must be cultural shifts in relation to gender roles.