Work–Family Balance, Gender and Policy

Jane Lewis, formerly Professor of Social Policy, London School of Economics, UK

This important book looks at the three main components of work–family policy packages – childcare services, flexible working patterns and entitlements to leave from work in order to care – across EU15 Member States, with comparative reference to the US. It also provides an in-depth examination of developments in the UK. Variations in national priorities, policy instruments, established policy orientations and the context for policy making in terms of employment patterns, fertility behaviour and attitudes towards work and care are highlighted.

‘In this authoritative and beautifully written book, Jane Lewis addresses the vexed question of how societies can ensure that individuals and families are able to both support themselves and to care for their dependants without material disadvantage. . . Lewis combines theoretical and conceptual sophistication with fine-grained empirical description and analysis to compare work and family policies, the way they have evolved and their underlying logic, in the European Union (EU) and the USA. . . This is a nuanced, compassionate and absorbing book. . . It is a unique synthesis of the literature and presents a compelling argument in a new way. It is theoretically sophisticated and full of detailed empirical analysis, yet is highly readable, clear and accessible. It would be very useful in teaching courses on women’s studies, public policy and sociology of the family. It would have broad appeal to anyone concerned with work and family issues, and should be essential reading to those with an academic interest in welfare state analysis, social policy and gender.’
– Lyn Craig, Sex Roles

‘Based on multiple comparative as well as UK sources, this new book by one of the most well-known European social scientists unravels the multiple dimensions and relationships involved in balancing family and paid work demands. Jane Lewis documents persisting, and even increasing cross-country differences. Notwithstanding these, work–family reconciliation policies are more concerned with allowing women to combine paid work and family care than with redistributing care between men and women. This important book should be required reading for everyone interested in social policy and welfare state analysis.’
– Chiara Saraceno, Social Science Research Centre Berlin (WZB), Germany and University of Turin, Italy

‘This book provides a brilliant synthesis of comparative research on work–family policies with particular relevance to the emerging policy agenda in the UK. Jane Lewis is a profound thinker and graceful writer who leavens her theoretical sophistication with comprehensive attention to practical details.’
– Nancy Folbre, University of Massachusetts Amherst, US

‘Jane Lewis is a brilliant conceptual innovator and gifted empirical analyst in the field of social policy. This book expertly illuminates the dramatically changing terrain of social policy with reference to employment, family and gender relations.’
– Ann Orlo, Northwestern University, US

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