

tages in employment and wages – are diminishing, pension reform trends are becoming a new source of gender inequality in pensions. Comparing the highly variable poverty risk for women across countries, this chapter considers what pension policies minimise older women's poverty. While the answer to this question depends on numerous country-specific social policies as well as on pension policy, the residence-based pension of the Netherlands stands out as a simple way of ensuring a low and gender-equal poverty rate. Three case study chapters on pensions and an examination of what promotes or reduces the employment of Finnish women midlife follow. A final, editorial chapter assesses trends in sharing domestic and caring work more equally, how this varies with the educational level of the couple, and the importance of formal childcare provision. The chapter then recapitulates the issues debated in the book, stressing the diversity of women's life courses, which must be accommodated in any policy aiming to create a fairer pension system.

The book has some omissions. While the pension consequences of the fact that women need to ensure their own children are looked after are recognised, there seems little awareness of the dilemmas facing midlife women (age 50 to state pension age). Midlife employment can contribute substantially to pensions, yet many women either leave their job or cut their hours to provide eldercare (informal care for frail older people) or grandchildcare (to enable their daughters to retain their job after maternity leave). Credits in state pensions for these forms of caring in midlife are as important as childcare credits, and raise similar issues about men sharing more equally in care and the need for improved state care services. It is a pity that more scrutiny is not applied to the gender effect of private pensions, where compensatory measures are entirely lacking. The book lacks an index, which is surprising and makes it diffi-

cult to use the book efficiently. Sadly, the copy editor has let the editors and chapter authors down by failing to pick up errors. Numerous irritating mistakes in spelling or grammar remain, such as 'loose/loosers' for 'lose/losers'; 'housewives'; 'private lifes' 'Luxemburg'; 'pyramide'; and 'did they never had any...?'. There is sometimes an odd use of words which is misleading or cumbersome: for example, 'overseen' is used when what is meant is 'overlooked'; 'overproportionally' instead of 'disproportionately'; and 'profoundness' (depth?). Such mistakes and oddities could easily have been put right by the copy editor if s/he had not been asleep at the wheel. Another barrier to clarity and readability is the use of unnecessarily long and convoluted sentences in places. However, the thorough comparative treatment and careful weighing up of the complex 'trade-off' issues surrounding women's work and pensions more than offsets the above problems; and the wealth of comparative data in the Annex is a further reason to buy this book.

Jay Ginn  
Kings College London

**Gillian Pascall and Anna Kwak:**  
*Gender Regimes in Transition in Central and Eastern Europe*

Bristol, 2009: Policy Press, 224 pp.

Since the Second World War, female labour force participation across Europe has increased dramatically. In the socialist states, the communist regimes' making of employment obligatory brought about almost the full employment of women. In Western Europe, women's initiation into paid labour proved less inclusive and more gradual, with lower overall participation rates and a higher incidence of part-time activity. This decline of the male breadwinner model in Europe, both East and West, propelled issues of care to the fore. The communist re-

gimes of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) responded in similar fashion with an array of social provisions (e.g. maternity leave, public nurseries) geared towards facilitating women's labour force participation. Meanwhile, across Western Europe, social policy evolved in and outside the parameters of the European Union (EU), yielding a range of practices. With socialism's demise and the more recent (and/or impending) entry of several CEE countries into the EU, Pascall and Kwak consider the contemporary nature of their welfare regimes, particularly that of Poland. While the EU advocates for a more supportive 'social contract on gender' among its member states, the post-1989 retrenchment of the state throughout CEE seemingly challenges this agenda.

At the core of Pascall and Kwak's inquiry is the question of whether or not the 're-traditionalisation' of gender assumptions and practices is occurring in CEE. Their query seeks to reconcile scholarly debate on the nature of contemporary CEE gender dynamics in and outside (e.g. in employment) the household. While some scholars have labelled current trends in the post-socialist states as re-traditional, others have suggested that a 're-inventing' of household gender arrangements – outpacing those in Western Europe – may be under way. Pascall and Kwak's fundamental contention is that claims of increasing gender inequality and of 're-traditionalization towards a male breadwinner model' in CEE have been 'overstated'. Quantitatively, Pascall and Kwak rely heavily on TRANS-MONEE data (from UNICEF) and EURO-STAT structural indicators, both of which enable cross-national comparisons. Qualitatively, they draw on 72 interviews with Polish working mothers (currently employed or on maternity leave) in order to 'see transition from within, to gain insights into the experience of transition from communism through the accounts of some of those most powerfully affected by it.' Citing Poland's neoliberal economic policies

and ideological factors such as Poles' strong religiosity (i.e. Catholicism), they contend that 'if anywhere [in CEE] we could find evidence of re-traditionalization ... we might expect to find it in Poland.'

In their second chapter, Pascall and Kwak consider how the CEE states and the EU-15 compare on a variety of gender equality measures such as employment (full- and part-time), unemployment, wages, and social policy provisions (e.g. childcare leave). Many of their findings on the CEE states have already been established elsewhere (for example, see UNICEF [1999]; Paci [2002]), rendering few empirical surprises here. In theoretical terms, however, they make a compelling case for conceptualising current CEE gender regimes as 'dual earner', with a 'dual earner/dual carer' model emerging as a compensatory strategy to grapple with welfare state retrenchment. Paradoxically, cutbacks in long-supposed, equality-enhancing state supports may actually bring about greater gender equality

In the following chapter, Pascall and Kwak detail the transformations in family policy in Poland from the socialist era to the present. They dispute the notion that contemporary family policy in Poland principally reflects 'traditional' or 'male breadwinner' ideals. Instead, they contend that current policies are a contradictory mix, with some policies geared towards a male breadwinner family model and others towards a dual-earner arrangement. Their conclusion, however, that 'reconciling employment and family responsibilities means leaving traditional models – whether Roman Catholic or communist – and turning to a new partnership model of the family' feels somewhat trite. At the chapter's outset, they readily acknowledge that the 'distinctive meaning of the family' has been 'bound up with the history and tradition of Polish society.' Yet, by the chapter's close, the deeply entrenched nature of family and more specifically of gender in Poland as

the 'sacred terrain of the national' (to invoke a recent characterisation by Alexandra Gerber [2010: 31] seems somewhat lost.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6, 'Mothers and the State', 'Mothers and Their Households', and 'Mothers and Social Policy', draw heavily on Pascall and Kwak's qualitative data, revealing the views of Polish women with children about their state's support of family and the division of labour in their households. Their interviews reveal a heart-wrenching portrait of Poles who are grappling with the insecurities of market liberalism and who feel abandoned by their state. Though these voices echo those heard in other studies of social welfare in the post-socialist world (for example, see Caldwell [2004]), they are no less stirring. However, Pascall and Kwak do find an upside. In many of these accounts, the women describe their male partners as taking part in carework. In the authors' estimation, these cannot yet be characterised as dual-earner/dual-carer households, but they are moving towards 'equal partnerships'.

In the final two chapters, Pascall and Kwak consider the implications of EU accession for gender equality in the post-socialist states. They highlight the discord between EU social ideals and economic aspirations, as a 'social model based on social solidarity and social cohesion' clashes with 'an economic model based on liberal markets'. They aptly recognise that this tension finds its parallel in the CEE states' transition process. To date, the 'market model' has largely trumped the social model throughout Europe. They further note the contestation surrounding the EU's gender equality agenda in Western Europe in terms of both its meaning and importance, undercutting its capacity to shore up gender equality in the post-socialist, new EU member states. Amid these realities, Pascall and Kwak still find 'hope' in the value placed on women's labour in the European Union, the success of the Scandinavian case, and the European Commission and Council's

awareness of the inadequacy of the reigning economic model to achieve Europe's goals.

Overall, both quantitatively and qualitatively, this book is packed with data. At times, however, the discussion of findings seems a bit redundant. For instance, Chapter 6, 'Mothers and Social Policy', reiterates much of the substance of the two previous chapters. In a broader sense, for those already engaged in the debate about gender politics in the post-socialist states, much of what Pascall and Kwak have to impart proves rather familiar. The novel discovery for scholars interested in gender, welfare regimes, and/or post-socialism can be found in their qualitative finding on the increasing involvement of men in care work. Although hearing the confirmatory (or not) voices of men – ideally the partners of Pascall and Kwak's Polish female interviewees – would have made for an even more compelling story. Furthermore, a more nuanced analysis of their respondents in terms of other axes of difference such as class might have revealed less coherence in Poles' expectations of their state. For those readers unfamiliar with the gender politics of post-socialist states, this book is definitely a useful primer on the economic and social upheaval incurred in the transition from socialism to capitalism (and democracy). Perhaps most importantly, it draws attention to the new transition under way – that of East European states' accession to the EU – and to its ensuing unknowns, particularly in terms of how the EU will 'balance' its economic and social values. Consequently, the 'transition' of 'gender regimes' in CEE has yet to reach an end. In this sense, questions with answers not yet fully known remain.

*Elaine Weiner*  
*McGill University*

#### *References*

- Caldwell, Melissa. 2004. *Not by Bread Alone: Social Support in the New Russia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.