

## **Inclusive and Women-friendly in a time of Diversity? The Scandinavian citizenship regime – the ‘childcare lesson’<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

In this article, I ask: Is the Scandinavian citizenship regime inclusive and women-friendly in a time of diversity? I approach this question by addressing the intersection of gender and ethnicity in relation to social citizenship with the main concern being childcare. I emphasize Norway as a case but also see Norway in comparison with Sweden and Denmark. In comparative studies, the Scandinavian citizenship regime is presented as being the most ‘women-friendly’. However, faced with an increasingly multicultural population, a pertinent question is whether this citizenship model is able to accommodate diversity. I explore two tensions that are basic to the inclusiveness and women-friendliness of the Scandinavian citizenship regime in diverse societies: 1) The tension between principles of gender equality and cultural diversity, and 2) the tension between liberating and controlling aspects of the welfare state. This article discusses the Norwegian family policy ‘hybrid’, which combines dual-earner support with traditional breadwinner elements. One might say that the Norwegian family ‘hybrid’ can be a solution to the tension between, on the one hand, a specific gender-equality family norm, and, on the other hand, the respect for other family norms. However, I argue that there is a double standard with regard to minority women, and it can be understood in light of a discourse about Norwegianness. Parental choice is considered a good thing – as long as the mother in question is considered ‘fully’ Norwegian. However, assumed cultural and ethnic differences – often

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on my trial lecture for the degree of PhD in Political Science, which was held on October 24, 2013 at the University of Oslo.

based on stereotypical collective categories of difference – are used as boundary-markers between the majority and minorities. I conclude that, despite variations, all the Scandinavian countries grapple with the same tensions, and that there is a Scandinavian double standard regarding minority women.

**Keywords:** Scandinavian citizenship regime, social citizenship, child care, Norwegianness, minority women

## Introduction

In comparative studies of citizenship regimes, the Scandinavian citizenship regime is presented as the most ‘women-friendly’ (Lister et al., 2007; Sümer, 2009).<sup>2</sup> The contemporary Scandinavian citizenship regime is known for women-friendly politics, including affordable day care and paid parental leave. Nevertheless, some researchers have argued that immigrants and ethnic minorities pose a challenge to gendered citizenship in Norway and other Scandinavian countries (Lister et al., 2007; Lister, 2009). Today, the burning question is how to include immigrants in the national community and the welfare state.

In this article, I ask: *Is the Scandinavian citizenship regime inclusive and women-friendly in a time of diversity?* A central concern is which women benefit from a women-friendly welfare state, and this is of importance regarding the inclusion of minority women. I shall approach this question by addressing the intersection of gender and ethnicity in relation to social citizenship – and my main concern is childcare. Research on welfare-state regimes often emphasizes either a gender perspective or a minority perspective. My aim is to combine these two perspectives. Norway is the main focus in this article, but I shall also briefly make comparisons with Sweden and Denmark.

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<sup>2</sup> *Citizenship* is translated into Norwegian and used in in different ways. Cathrine Holst (2002), with reference to Helga Hernes (1998), defines the term *medborgerskap* as ‘the rights and duties that a citizen has, both in relation to the state and between citizens’ (Hernes 1998, 85, cited in Holst 2002, 62, my translation).

First, I shall take a closer look at social citizenship within the Scandinavian citizenship regime. The idea of social citizenship is highly valued in the Scandinavian tradition, and universalist social policies usually have been regarded as beneficial for working mothers and their children (Siim, 2000, p. 122). Nevertheless, there have been two different political lines concerning childcare: an expansion of childcare centres (the Left) and an increase in support to women caring for children at home (the Right) (Skjeie, 1992, in Siim, 2000, p. 134-135). However, the issue of childcare has reappeared in the debate about the integration of ethnic minority women. In this article, I shall outline two tensions that are basic to the inclusiveness and women-friendliness of an increasingly multicultural Norway: 1) The tension between principles of gender equality and cultural diversity, and 2) The tension between liberating and controlling aspects of the welfare state. These tensions will be thoroughly described, and I shall discuss whether the case of childcare – and especially the debate about ‘cash for care’ – sets up a double standard regarding ethnic minority women.

### **Social citizenship in Scandinavia**

In his famous book, *Class, Citizenship and Social Development*, T. H. Marshall (1965) expanded the liberal concept of citizenship beyond civil and political rights to include social rights. Marshall defined modern citizenship in 1950 as ‘full membership of community’ (Marshall, 1965, p. 76). In addition to *civil* (the rights necessary for individual freedom) and *political* (the right to participate in the exercise of political power) rights, Marshall also introduced *social* citizenship, including economic equality and security (Marshall, 1965, p. 78). Social citizenship can be defined as ‘the nexus of rights and responsibilities underpinning individuals’ welfare (...)’ (Lister et al., 2007, p. 3).

In the following, I shall take a closer look at the case of childcare in the Scandinavian welfare states. The provision of state childcare is an essential part of social citizenship precisely because it offers parents, especially mothers, the opportunity to combine parenthood, paid work, and political participation. Nevertheless, the case of childcare also brings out the two tensions previously mentioned: the tension between

principles of gender equality and cultural diversity – as well as the tension between liberating and controlling aspects of the welfare state. The Scandinavian citizenship regimes<sup>3</sup> are known to have the most generous social citizenship rights. They are universal rights. However, social rights have not been gender neutral. The citizen-worker was framed as a male worker, whereas the citizen-mother was protected and supported by a paternalistic state (Hernes, 1987, p. 140). In the 1970s and 1980s, social and cultural changes were taking place in Scandinavia. These were partly due to economic development, partly because of the mobilized women's movement, and partly because of government policies (Hernes, 1987, p. 140). Helga Hernes has called this development 'the story of "reproduction going public"– the way in which advanced Nordic welfare states, through their politics, have "pulled" women into the public sphere, and how women have begun to "push" developments in accordance with their own interests' (Hernes, 1987, p. 9).

### **Scandinavian citizenship and women-friendliness**

In 1982, Helga Hernes outlined a potential possibility for a women-friendly polity in the Scandinavian countries. According to Hernes, 'a woman-friendly state would enable women to have a natural relationship to their children, their work, and public life' (Hernes 1982, pp. 32-40). Hernes coined the term 'state feminism' – the interplay between women's mobilization 'from below' and political integration 'from above'. The mobilization of women from the 1960s and 1970s onwards challenged the public-private divide. The 'new' feminist movement at that time claimed that 'the personal is political' – and in Scandinavia, the private and the public mixed when the welfare state expanded their responsibility for reproductive tasks. They thereby strengthened their women-friendly potential (Borchorst, 2006, p. 115, with reference to Hernes, 1987; Siim, 2000). State feminism resulted in a specific gender regime 'founded on high levels of education and labour participation, extensive public care, relatively generous maternity/paternity politics, a comparatively strong gender equality

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<sup>3</sup> The Scandinavian countries – Norway, Sweden and Denmark – are usually grouped together, sometimes also with the other Nordic countries (Iceland and Finland) (Lister et al., 2007, p. 24). The concept 'regime' is used to group countries together based on certain commonalities in 'institutional patterns and policy logics' (Lister et al., 2007, p. 2).

legislation, plus high levels of political participation and inclusion into state political institutions (...)' (Siim & Skjeie 2008. p. 323).

This link between political and social citizenship together with welfare politics is a central feature of a women-friendly state, and the combination of political and social citizenship – for both men and women – has been a distinguishing aspect of the Scandinavian citizenship regime (Hernes, 1987). This is partly why the Scandinavian states have been perceived as friendlier than states in other citizenship regimes. Moreover, there is a positive perception of active citizenship that is founded on social movements. According to Helga Hernes (1987), Scandinavian citizenship was in fact constructed 'from below'. It was based on an 'activist, participatory and egalitarian ideal' (Hernes, 1987, p. 139). Thus, the Scandinavian citizenship regime has emphasized both citizens' political participation and their social welfare. In other words, there has been a combination of political and social citizenship, which has been an important aspect concerning the tension between liberating and controlling aspects of the welfare state. In Norway, the women's movement fought for state-sponsored childcare in the 1970s, and women's political inclusion led to an expansion of childcare facilities (Skjeie, 1992, in Siim, 2000, p. 133). Hence, welfare reforms have been initiated from below and have been part of women's liberation.

In Anne-Lise Ellingsæter and Arnlaug Leira's words (2006), '[t]he Scandinavian welfare states pioneered the transformation of parenthood into political issues' (Ellingsæter & Leira, 2006, p. 2). Since the 1970s, gender equality has been an important part of the Scandinavian citizenship regime. The politicization of parenthood and gender equality were closely linked. In particular, the care of young children has been central to the promotion of gender equality in order to improve opportunities for working motherhood and caring fatherhood (Ellingsæter & Leira, 2006, pp. 6-7).

Thus, the boundaries between the public sphere and the private sphere have been negotiated and altered several times over the years. The Scandinavian welfare states have adjusted politics according to women's changing needs, and welfare-state intervention in gender and family arrangements has been accepted, or even expected, according to Leira (2002). As an example, mothers entered the labour market in the 1960s and 70s before generous state sponsoring of services and benefits for childcare came into being (Leira, 2006, p. 33). Parental responsibility for children's care has

been translated into social rights of mothers and fathers, and public services for childcare have been made universally available (Leira, 2006, pp. 28, 31).

Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1999) has called the Scandinavian parenthood and childcare politics and policies 'defamilization'. According to Esping-Andersen, 'social democracies differ from liberal and conservative welfare states in providing more services and benefits for families and households, and therefore in lessening the burdens on families' (Esping-Andersen cited in Leira, 2006, p. 27). However, according to Leira (2006), Scandinavian parenthood policies since the early 1970s have also been characterized by 'refamilization' – not only 'defamilization' (p. 28). These policies offer parents long periods of parental leave. Thus, the welfare state has promoted the caring father as the companion of the working mother. Moreover, the dual-earner / dual-carer family model has set new standards for gender relations in families with young children (Ellingsæter & Leira, 2006, p. 7).

Leira (2006) describes two different family models:

- 1) *The dual-earner / dual-carer family* is characterized by an egalitarian partnership between mothers and fathers. There are public policies for childcare. State-sponsored childcare and paid parental leave advances care-sharing parenthood. This is the family model that came to dominate Scandinavian parenthood politics in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, there is political disagreement over this model. The social democrats and parties to the left have supported the dual-earner / dual-carer family, whereas the centre and right have been the main supporters of more traditional family forms.
- 2) *The gender-differentiated family model* presumes a specialization of parental roles. There is a gendered division of labour. Women are responsible for childcare and men provide for the family. This model is also called the male-breadwinner / female-carer family. Cash benefits for parental childcare (called *kontantstøtte* in Norwegian) assume a main breadwinner who is not the carer. Thus, cash benefits for childcare – also called 'cash for care' – are generally interpreted as furthering a traditional gender-differentiated family model. (p. 29)

Since the early 1990s, the Scandinavian welfare states have pursued wide-ranging parenthood policy reforms. Policy innovations like the 'father quota' have been introduced, parental leave has been prolonged, and childcare services are approaching universal coverage (Ellingsæter & Leira, 2006, pp. 265-266). Scandinavian work-family policies thus support working motherhood and caring fatherhood. However, the ideal of the combined dual-earner / dual-carer model is only partially realized (Ellingsæter & Leira, 2006, 267-268). There are still gendered norms concerning childcare and different images of 'good motherhood' and 'good fatherhood'. Also, gender-neutral parental leave schemes serve to reproduce gender inequality in the care of young children, confirming mothers as the primary carer, since fathers generally have better-paid jobs (Leira, 2006, pp. 45-46). Scandinavia is rightly characterized as a situation of 'gender equality light' (Rønsen & Skrede, 2006).

Also important to notice are the changes in the gender-equality profile in parenthood policies over time, following various political shifts in the Scandinavian governments (Ellingsæter & Leira 2006, p. 266). Therefore, the public-private mix is not a given. Gender equality does not necessarily mean the same thing for everyone, and it is up for political debate.<sup>4</sup>

### **Scandinavian welfare states in diverse societies**

In her seminal book, Helga Hernes stated that '[a women-friendly state] would be, in short, a state where injustice on the basis of gender would largely be eliminated *without an increase in other forms of inequality, such as among groups of women*' (Hernes, 1987, p. 15, my italics). The Scandinavian citizenship regime described by Hernes has since been criticized because it is based on the assumption of an ethnic homogenous community (Holst, 2002). Since the 1980s, the Scandinavian countries have become more ethnically diversified. Post-colonial feminists have criticized the notion of 'women-friendliness' (Mulinari et al., 2009) and claimed that it hides the diversity between women of different races and ethnicities (de los Reyes et al., 2003, cited in Siim, 2009, p. 151). The post-colonial

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<sup>4</sup> A recent example is the present government in Norway, which has reduced the father's quota from 14 to 10 weeks. Erna Solberg's Government was elected in 2013 and represents the Conservative Party and the Progress Party.

critique, mainly from Sweden, has asked whether Hernes' vision of women-friendly societies is based on the living conditions of white middle-class women and excludes minority women. Moreover, research from Sweden shows that migrant women experience a strong ambivalence in the relationship with the welfare state owing to experiences of gendered racism (Mulinari, 2009). As mentioned in the introduction, a central concern is which women benefit from a women-friendly welfare state, and this is of importance regarding the inclusion of minority women.

In their book *The Limits of Welfare. Immigration policies and Welfare State in Scandinavia 1945-2010*, Brochmann and Hagelund (2010) have called the development of a universal Norwegian welfare state both an integration project and nation-building project. The notion of 'integration' then refers to the inclusion of all social classes in one national community (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2010, p. 20). Economic redistribution and the idea that economic equalizing contributes to integration and solidarity are central elements in this citizenship model. National identity and solidarity have both been conditions for, and consequences of, the development of the welfare state. The notion of 'integration', however, was reintroduced in a new version when Norway began to face increased immigration from the late 1960s onwards. Since then, the problem of adhesion in a multicultural society has been increasingly articulated (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2010, p. 23). In the 2000s, the 'glue' was defined as basic values in society: human rights and gender equality.<sup>5</sup> Ethnic minorities are offered rights and cultural tolerance in exchange for accepting these basic values (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2010).

The welfare system has provided an important framework for the incorporation of immigrants and refugees into Scandinavia (Olwig, 2012, p. 2). However, when facing an increasingly diverse population with regard to ethnicity and religion, the Scandinavian citizenship regime grapples with the tensions described at the beginning of this article: The tension between principles of gender equality and cultural diversity – as well as the tension between liberating and controlling aspects of the Scandinavian welfare state. Olwig (2012) points to efforts to assist immigrants to become equal members of society, which are positive aspects of the universal welfare state (p. 6).

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<sup>5</sup> From St. meld nr. 49 (2003-2004) *Mangfold gjennom inkludering og deltagelse*. [White Paper No. 49 (2003-2004) Diversity through inclusion and participation] (Brochmann and Hagelund 2010:262).



However, despite good intentions, the Scandinavian welfare societies' integration projects also have problematic aspects. These aspects include 'active intervention in the private lives of refugees and immigrants by professionals within Scandinavian welfare system seeking to shape these population groups – socially, culturally, physically and psychologically – according to Scandinavian norms' (Olwig, 2012, p. 6). Moreover, as Olwig (2012) notices, the term 'integration' does not just denote participation in, for example, employment and education. 'The term integration has become a powerful notion, designating who belongs – and by implication who does not belong – in society' (Olwig, 2012, p. 2).

In the Norwegian context, 'being integrated' indicates that you have 'become fully Norwegian', not only legally, but also concerning identity and belonging (informal membership criteria). In multicultural societies, negotiations of informal membership aspects – in addition to formal membership criteria – become important because they include recognition or misrecognition of various identities and belongings within the notion of Norwegianness (Thun, 2013). Being a legal citizen is in Norwegian called *statsborgerskap*, which is a formal membership. However, being a Norwegian also includes an informal membership, which is what Brochmann (2002) calls the social dimension of citizenship, or *medborgerskap* in Norwegian (p. 59). This social dimension is about 'being a part of society', which often means being part of the nation. It is about 'identity, loyalty, belonging, trust and participation' (Brochmann, 2002, p. 59, my translation). Negotiations of informal membership, which take place in the intersection between gender, ethnicity and religion, result in symbolic as well as institutionalized boundaries between the majority and minorities (Thun, 2013). A recent thesis on majority and minority women's political citizenship found that categories of differences – like gender, ethnicity, and religion – intersect and lead to inclusion within or exclusion from Norwegianness, or both, have consequences for opportunities for political citizenship. Thus, a narrow and exclusive Norwegianness makes it harder for those defined as 'not fully Norwegian' to participate politically (Thun, 2013).

In the following, I shall discuss whether the case of childcare – and especially the debate about 'cash for care' – brings up the issue of Norwegianness and a double standard regarding ethnic minority women.

## **The case of care politics / childcare: Norwegian ambiguity**

The Norwegian childcare model combines dual-earner support with traditional breadwinner elements. State-sponsored childcare (*barnehage*) and paid parental leave advances care-sharing parenthood, but cash transfers to families are more in line with a traditional gender-differentiated family model. Thus, Norway is described as 'a family policy "hybrid"' (Ellingsæter, 2006, p. 121). Seen in light of the hegemony of the dual-earner / dual-carer family model and a strong norm of gender equality in Scandinavia, this 'family model hybrid' is called the Norwegian 'ambivalence' or 'double-track' (Leira, 2006). It has also been called the Norwegian 'puzzle' (Sainsbury, 2001).

One might say that the Norwegian family 'hybrid' can be a solution to the tension between, on the one hand, a specific gender-equality family norm, and, on the other hand, the respect for other family norms. The Norwegian childcare scheme actually provides two different models of motherhood of young children: First, it provides working motherhood through state-sponsored childcare (*barnehage*), in combination with parental leave, which supports the dual-earner / dual carer family. Secondly, it provides the stay-at-home mom, at least when the children are under the age of two, through cash-for-care benefits (*kontantstøtte*), which is in line with a gender-differentiated family model.

Thus, families can choose according to their own family values, and the emphasis on choice or the freedom to choose has been stressed by the non-socialist parties in particular. However, there seems to be a hidden premise behind this 'parental-choice' argument. One might ask if the mother making the choice to stay at home with young children better be an ethnic majority woman.

One example that illustrates this point is the discussion about cash-for-care benefits in Norway. This debate brings out political disagreements regarding childcare – and gender equality. In her analyses of the political debate since 1998 concerning cash-for-care benefits, Irene Hovde (2010) identifies three main frames: 1) Gender-equality frame, 2) Freedom of the family frame, and lastly 3) Public childcare services (*barnehage*) as necessary care for vulnerable children (*utsatte barn*). In the political debate, ethnic minorities were

only mentioned with regard to the third frame concerning 'vulnerable children' (p. 79).

The cash-for-care debate indicates a *double standard*: The same action – receiving cash for care – is interpreted differently depending on whether the person involved is assumed to belong to the ethnic majority or an ethnic minority. Cash for care is interpreted as an individual choice – and a symbol of freedom for the family – when it is discussed in relation to the ethnic majority. However, in relation to minority women, cash for care is interpreted as an obstacle for helping vulnerable children. Hence, public childcare services are seen as a positive measure to help minority children. An ethnic majority woman who receives cash-for-care benefits and stays at home with her children may be seen as less gender equal than those women who work and choose childcare services. Nevertheless, her decision is seen as her autonomous choice, and not determined by her culture. Contrary to this, an ethnic minority woman who receives cash for care is likely to be understood as not having freely considered this option. She is rather seen as choosing it owing to different family norms and values in her culture. In addition, her culture is usually seen as less gender equal.

The case of childcare – and this example of cash for care – exemplifies a discourse about differences in Norwegian society today. The Norwegian ambivalence regarding childcare – the dual track with both elements of the dual-earner / dual-carer family model and the gender-differentiated family model – is not new. However, it is not developed and implemented in order to accommodate more traditional gender roles in ethnic minority families. Rather, it is a result of different views on motherhood and care within the majority population. According to Lister (2009), this is a distinctive equal-opportunity strategy, which grafts the right to make a claim at the basis of difference onto a policy based on equal treatment (p. 249). Earlier, the discussion of gender difference versus sameness had brought up differences concerning class. Today, the discussion is framed differently when ethnic minorities are also part of the picture.

What is new in the present discussion of childcare in regard to ethnic minorities is that the question of cultural and religious differences has become pertinent. And that is an entirely different discourse which concerns whom we consider to be fully members of the Norwegian society.

This double standard brings up the issue of Norwegianness. I would argue that this is a key to understanding this double standard. The concept Norwegianness refers to identity and belonging as an informal aspect of citizenship (Thun, 2013). Identity and belonging are not about formal, legal citizenship status, which of course is important. This informal dimension of citizenship is about 'being a part of society', which often means being part of the nation or the 'imagined community' in Benedict Anderson's (1991) words. The notion of Norwegianness is central because it addresses negotiations regarding whom we consider full members of the Norwegian society. It refers both to personal feelings of self-identification and to recognition and inclusion in the national Norwegian community.

In the case of social citizenship and childcare, this discourse about Norwegianness is evident. Decisions and choices are understood differently depending on whether one is considered to be 'fully' Norwegian or not. Parental choice is considered a good thing – as long as the mother in question is considered 'fully' Norwegian. However, assumed cultural, ethnic, and religious differences – often based on stereotypical collective categories of difference – are used as boundary-markers between the majority and minorities.

This brings me over to the second tension, namely the tension between liberating and controlling aspects of the welfare state. For many mothers, both majority and minority, state-sponsored high-quality childcare makes it possible to have a paid job and to be economically self-sufficient. Thus, the welfare system is empowering for many women.

Integrating immigrant and minority women in the labour market has been a long-standing issue on the policy agenda and a political goal in Norway (OECD, 2009a). One important determinant of immigrant women's labour-market participation is the presence of children in the household. A recent OECD report advises that Norway abolish the 'cash-for-care' subsidy since it hampers the labour-market integration of immigrant women (OECD, 2009a). The amount saved through the abolition of the subsidy should be used to create more places in formal institutions in those parts of the country where there are still shortages. This would be a win-win situation; minority women can enter the labour market and their children would especially benefit from more participation in kindergarten (*barnehage*) before the age of four.

The incentives to send young children to kindergarten are furthermore increased by the fact that there is a maximum fee on day care generally. In addition, the government is funding so-called 'free core time in day-care centres' for all four- and five-year-olds in areas with a high proportion of immigrant children (OECD, 2009b).

These childcare schemes are based on good intentions – and they facilitate the liberating and inclusive aspect of social citizenship in caring welfare states. However, the welfare state can be also described as Janus-faced, which means that welfare politics, including childcare policies, also include elements of control, and even discrimination (Melby et al., 2009, p. 15). Childcare policies can mean empowerment and inclusion of some women, and marginalization and exclusion of other women (Melby et al., 2009).

On the basis of the examples previously mentioned, one can argue that the aspects of control are present concerning minority women. The importance of paid work (*arbeidslinja*) is highly emphasized in Norway. This is particularly evident when it comes to minority women. State funding of 'free core time in day-care centres' is an illustration of the state's encouragement of minority mothers' participation in the labour market. According to the recent White Paper on Comprehensive Integration Policy (2012-2013), '[e]mployment is the key to participation, financial independence and equality. (...) Participation in working life is the key to achieving equality between women and men' (pp. 4-5). However, the double standard concerning cash for care indicates a paradox where minority women may experience stronger pressure from the majority society when it comes to labour-market participation. They need to prove that they are gender equal – even more gender equal than the majority population. This has a parallel to research on the Muslim women in Norway, where gender equality is associated with Norwegianness, who constantly have to prove that they are not like the stereotypical 'Muslim woman' (Thun, 2012).

## **A quick glance at Sweden and Denmark**

As previously described, there are many similarities between the Scandinavian countries. They are grouped together in the notion of the Scandinavian citizenship regime; however, it is interesting to compare Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. Differences between these

countries have inspired the paradoxical claim that the Scandinavian model is a model with three exceptions (Brochmann & Hagelund 2010). There are also national differences with regard to childcare policies, which I shall now briefly address (Leira, 2006, pp. 43-44).

*Sweden* has been at the forefront with respect to parental leave and strong support for fathers as carers, as well as childcare services supporting working motherhood. Thus, Sweden has been closest to supporting the dual-earner / dual-carer family model. Sweden did introduce a cash-for-care benefit in 2008. However, unlike Norway, Sweden leaves it up to the municipalities whether or not to offer cash-for-care benefits. One in three municipalities offers it (Ellingsæter, 2012). Another difference is the timing of when this cash benefit was introduced. In 2008, Sweden already had good coverage of institutions for child day care. Thus, the proportion of parents who receive the benefit is very low. When Norway introduced cash for care in 1998, the coverage of childcare services for children under three was very low.

Despite the national differences, the characteristics of those who do receive cash-for-care benefit are quite similar in the two countries: Most of them are mothers, and most of them have low income and low education. Women with immigrant backgrounds are overrepresented among the recipients. In Sweden, immigrant mothers have a much lower employment rate, and the cash-for-care benefit is considered a 'trap' (Ellingsæter, 2012).

*Denmark* does not have cash-for-care benefits. Municipalities may offer it, but it is very marginal and cannot be compared to the Norwegian scheme.<sup>6</sup> Denmark has had a strong support for working motherhood through state-sponsored childcare. However, policy for support of fathers as carers has been the weakest in Scandinavia, and parental leave is premised on mothers' responsibility for small children (Borchorst, 2006). The integration of women in the labour force has been central to governmental policies since the 1970s, and public childcare facilities were expanded drastically. The father's leave was abolished shortly after it was introduced in the early 2000s. This debate addressed the public-private split, and father's leave was argued to be an invasion of people's privacy. However, as Borchorst (2006) notices, family regulations have been introduced, for instance,

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<sup>6</sup> Thanks to Anne-Lise Ellingsæter for providing updated information about the cash-for-care benefits in the Sweden and Denmark.

by setting an age limit for marriage between Danish citizens and non-citizens.

According to Borchorst (2006), gender equality is strong as an informal norm in Denmark, but weak as an explicit policy norm (p. 102). Denmark has also experienced a gender-equality paradox where right-wing parties have articulated strong concern for gender equality among ethnic minority groups. The relationship between the public and private arena became re-politicized in the 1990s in Denmark, and migrant families became the target of political regulation (Siim, 2009, p. 153). In Danish official discourse, gender equality has already been achieved and patriarchal oppression is primarily a problem for minority women (Siim, 2009, p. 154). This approach to integration denies migrant women autonomy and agency because they are perceived as potential victims of their culture and religion.

Also in a Swedish context, gender equality 'has developed as the central ethnic signifier of national belonging and the most important boundary between "us" and "them"' (Mulinari, 2009, p. 180). According to Mulinari, migrant women are represented as different and in need of institutional support. This continues to guide state intervention in migrants' family lives through social workers, teachers, and the health profession in Sweden. 'Central to these policies is the construction of "other" cultures as patriarchal and in opposition to Swedish cultural values on gender' (Mulinari, 2009, p. 172).

Feminist research has identified similar tensions in different gender models between principles of gender equality and cultural diversity in Scandinavia. According to Birte Siim (2009), 'gendered conflicts between the cultural values and norms of the majority and ethnic minorities, including family norms, have contributed to constructing a barrier between "them" and "us"' (p. 151). The official gender-equality discourse has a strong normative power (Borchorst & Siim, 2002), which tends to exclude, marginalize, and assimilate minority perspectives on the family and gender equality (de los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005).

According to Trude Langvasbråten (2008), 'A high-profiled ideal of gender equality has certainly been an important ingredient in the construction of a homogenous "Scandinavian-ness"' (p. 33). There are national differences in approaches to gender equality as well as in gender (equality) discourses. However, gender equality is viewed as a

central value in integration efforts in all the Scandinavian countries (Langvasbråten 2008). The discourse of gender equality is one in which a boundary is drawn between 'us' and 'them' (Lister, 2009; Siim, 2007), and this boundary is at the core of the discourse on nationhood in Norway and in the Nordic countries generally (Berg, Flemmen, & Gullikstad 2010; Mulinari et al., 2009, p. 5; Skjeie & Teigen, 2003; Hagelund, 2003; St. meld. nr. 49, 2003-2004).

### **Concluding discussion**

Initially in this article, I asked whether the Scandinavian citizenship regime is inclusive and women-friendly in a time of diversity. I have approached this question by addressing the intersection of gender and ethnicity in relation to childcare, and by emphasizing Norway and Norwegianness. The same action – receiving cash for care – is interpreted differently depending on whether the person involved is assumed to belong to the ethnic majority or an ethnic minority. On the basis of these findings, I would argue that minority women might experience a double standard.

Parental choice is considered a good thing – as long as the mother in question is considered 'fully' Norwegian. However, choices are understood differently depending on whether one is considered to be 'fully' Norwegian or not. This double standard concerning cash for care indicates a paradox; namely, that minority women may experience stronger pressure from the majority society when it comes to labour-market participation. They need to prove that they are gender equal – even more gender equal than the majority population.

Social citizenship rights – which I have exemplified with childcare – can be both liberating and disciplinary. The provision of cash-for-care benefits is a politically disputable issue; however, stereotypical images of ethnic or religious minority women as not being gender equal indicate the existence of stronger pressure for labour-market participation compared with ethnic majority women. Thus, one consequence of the double standard concerning childcare may be that minority women experience more control whereas individual choice is a privilege reserved for the majority.

I have also briefly looked at Norway in comparison with Sweden and Denmark. I found that the idea of a single Scandinavian citizenship



regime needs to be more nuanced with regard to childcare. However, despite the differences, all the Scandinavian countries grapple with the tension between principles of gender equality and cultural diversity. In Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, gender equality is constructed as a core value and as a value which separates 'us' from 'them'. This could imply that there is a Scandinavian double standard regarding minority women.

I have addressed the tension between principles of gender equality and cultural diversity – and the normative power of the Scandinavian gender-equality discourse. However, by emphasizing such tensions, one may also contribute to a reproduction of the differences between the majority and minorities with regard to gender equality. When gender equality is constructed as a Norwegian, Swedish, or Danish value, it hides the fact that there are differences of opinion within both the majority and minorities regarding gender equality. The gender equality discourse in relation to ethnic and religious minorities in all three Scandinavian countries contributes to concealing different views and practices regarding gender equality. These differences exist both among the majority and among minorities.

Childcare policies in the future need to acknowledge the diversity within the group of ethnic minority women, as well as within the group of ethnic majority women. Such policies would benefit from intersectional analyses, including perspectives such as gender, ethnicity, and social class (see NOU, 2012, p. 15).

Helga Hernes (1987) addressed the ambiguity and duality of social polity – as both liberating and disciplinary – within the welfare state in the 1980s (p. 27). Today, this is still an important concern. The legitimacy of the Scandinavian citizenship regime requires that everyone has a say. Ethnic and religious minorities must be included on an equal basis in order to avoid welfare paternalism and double standards. Thus, it is essential to pay attention to political as well as social citizenship. According to Birte Siim and Hege Skjeie (2000), 'social rights without access to politics is paternalism, and political rights without social rights cannot secure an equal citizenship for women and men alike' (p. 358). This obviously applies to both ethnic majorities and minorities.

Social citizenship in combination with political citizenship is not achievable without the recognition of complex identities and belongings. In my opinion, inclusive notions of Norwegianness,

Swedishness, and Danishness are important in order to avoid double standards regarding minorities.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Beatrice Halsaa and Hege Skjeie for useful and constructive comments to an earlier version of this manuscript. Also thanks to the editors and anonymous reviewers for valuable feedback.

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