From the defamilialization to the "demotherization" of care work [1]

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Abstract

This article adds to the debate on how to "genderize" comparative analysis of welfare states by building from mainstream and feminist research. It introduces a new conceptual tool—the "demotherization" of care work to convey the extent to which mothers can transfer part of their caregiving responsibilities to the state, grand-parents, their partner, or paid caregivers. The concept of demotherization allows shifting the focus of the analysis from the role of "families" to the role of "mothers" in social reproductive work. The combination of motherization/demotherization and familialization/defamilialization yields four types of maternalism: "implicit," "traditional," "state-funded dematernalism," and "familialized dematernalism." Although the demotherization of care work leads to increased gender equality, it does not systematically challenge the gendered division of care work.

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