In *Gendered Tradeoffs*, Becky Pettit and Jennifer L. Hook attempt to unveil the paradoxical effects of seemingly egalitarian social policies in 21 countries. The seven chapters, which follow an introductory section, integrate life course theories with microeconomic and comparative explanations for gender inequality among women, men, and families in the home and the workplace. The authors rely on data spanning the years 1969–2000 from the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS), which consists of a collection of over hundred household surveys.

After decades of scholars proclaiming the positive effects of social policies, the authors trace the unintended consequences of employment and work–family policies on gender inequality within, and across, countries. These include a decline in work hours and female wages through reduced female labor force participation, the formation of non-egalitarian gender roles and domestic responsibilities, and tradeoffs in long-term economic security. The authors examine gender inequalities in terms of employment and hours worked (Chap. 3, 4, and 7), occupation (Chap. 5), and pay (Chap. 6). They ask is there a tradeoff between women’s inclusion in the labor market and gender equality within it. The main asset of this book is the integration of cross-national variability in economic outcomes over the life course (e.g., Chap. 3, p. 50, or Chap. 5, p. 99), as well as an analysis of variability in women’s economic standing across twenty-one countries. Each chapter contains a special “spotlight section” using the United States and Germany as examples of different types of policies (e.g., Chap. 3, p. 59, or Chap. 5, p. 114). Chapter 7 provides an in-depth analysis of the heterogeneity and dynamics of gender inequality within the two single-country settings, the United States and Germany (Chap. 7).

The authors review arguments to explain economic inequality from the perspective of human capital and preference theories as well as life course and...
welfare state literature (Chap. 2) and link these arguments to findings from a cross-
national perspective. Using OECD data, they identify variations by gender in
college attendance, gender segregation in higher education, and the gender gap in
domestic work as major sources of economic inequality between men and women.
Integrating those arguments and findings, they offer an “inclusion-equality
tradeoff” framework that guides the empirical analysis to explain tensions between
women’s labor market inclusion and their equality within that market.

Chapter 3 focuses on employment rates of men and women in order to measure
economic inequality. Interestingly, the authors find that national-level conditions
moderate the effects of individual characteristics on women’s employment. For
example, the provision of public childcare fosters employment primarily among
higher educated women (p. 56) and part-time working opportunities contribute to a
cleavage between mothers with very young children and other mothers. Chapter 4
focuses on full- and part-time work and concludes that policies that relieve the
domestic demands of childrearing not only foster mothers’ employment but also
enable them to secure full-time jobs, especially for higher educated mothers.

Moreover, the authors find indications of a positive effect of unionization on
integrating women into full- and part-time employment. Nevertheless, high rates of
women’s labor market involvement do little to remedy the occupational sex
segregation (Chap. 5, p. 93) and the persistent gender wage gap (Chap. 6, p. 134)
unless gender inequalities in domestic work are not relieved. For instance, Nordic
countries, like the Netherlands or Sweden, enable women to combine work and
family, but foster mothers’ selection into female-dominated, mostly less-paying
jobs, whereas Italy’s married women and mothers in employment are a highly
selective and committed group that earns wages nearly commensurate with those of
men. In this context, an account of the public sector size would have offered a
welcome addition to the interpretation of the results in this analysis (well
documented in the methodological Appendix).

Applying these cross-national findings, chapter 7 looks at the dynamics of labor
market inclusion in two single-country settings, the United States and Germany (i.e.,
Germany as a whole after reunification). Despite being restricted to a two-country
setting and the limited generalizability of the findings, the chapter pinpoints the
class cleavage in inequality in the United States through a focus on race and
ethnicity (e.g., among non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, and Hispanic
women), and in Germany with a focus on groups by nationality (e.g., Turkish and
other foreign nationals). They offer additional details on previous cross-national
results, for example, explaining a higher homogeneity in distribution over
occupations among minority groups in Germany as compared to the United States
to be traced back to Germany’s immigration policy and the guest workers
recruitment treaties between 1955 and 1968 (p. 148). It might have been valuable to
discuss these single-country findings in a larger comparative perspective in the
concluding section, thus offering a broader reflection on the diversity of
institutionalization mechanisms of gender inequality. Hence, a concluding chapter
evaluating how specific policy conditions in different case-specific settings can
produce disparities between labor market inclusion and within-market equality for
women would have nicely complemented this book.
Despite the mentioned limitations, *Gendered Tradeoffs* advances our thinking about the complex relationships among gender, employment, and public policy and succeeds in illustrating the underlying forces behind gender inequality. Hence, this book provides an important reference for any scholars who are interested in economic inequality, comparative work–family and life course research, and in the American and German cases, in particular.