

**Enhancing gender equity through evidence-based policymaking?
Theorizing and tracing the use of systematic knowledge in family and tax
policy reforms**

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Abstract

How can evidence—systematically generated substantive knowledge—be used to reach policy outcomes that promote gender equity? Initial hypothetical answers to this question are derived from three distinct theories of the policy process: the Rational Policy Cycle (RPC), the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), and the Multiple Streams Approach (MSA). With the help of these theoretical frameworks, we trace the use of evidence in four case studies in the fields of family and tax policy in Swiss Cantons. These empirical studies reveal that, within a policy process which follows the Rational Policy Cycle, evidence documenting existing deficits and studies indicating the efficiency of proposed measures are crucial for a progressive outcome. Attempts to promote policies that enhance gender

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equity by linking them to dominant topics like economic competitiveness are not successful as long as no strong evidence is provided and such a linkage can also be used for promoting policies that undermine gender equity. Finally, in a battle between rival advocacy coalitions, evidence that indicates the correspondence between a proposed policy and constitutional norms seems to be most powerful.

Keywords: *Evidence-based policymaking, Gender equity, Rational Policy Cycle, Advocacy Coalition Framework, Multiple Streams Approach, Family policy, Tax policy, Congruence analysis*

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