

## **Representing Women: The Adoption of Family Leave in Comparative Perspective**

Miki Caul Kittilson

Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science

Arizona State University

P.O. Box 873902

Tempe, AZ 85287-3902

Miki.Kittilson@asu.edu

I am grateful to Kim Fridkin, Pat Kenney, Mark Gray, the three anonymous reviewers and the Editor of the *Journal of Politics* for their feedback and advice on earlier drafts.

This research was completed with the assistance of an American Fellowship from the American Association of University Women and a Carrie Chapman Catt Award for Research on Women and Politics, Iowa State University.

## **Abstract**

A critical justification for heightening the number of women in elective office is that women will promote policies that improve women's equality and autonomy. When and how does women's descriptive representation matter for policy outcomes? The focus on policy outcomes offers an essential test of whether having more women in office makes a difference for citizens' daily lives. Systematic analyses of 19 democracies from 1970-2000 reveals that women's parliamentary presence significantly influences the adoption and scope of maternity and childcare leave policies. Women's political presence trumps the ideology of the party in power.

Several international organizations, including the United Nations, have suggested strategies to heighten women's representation in parliaments. Some advocate gender quotas, which have spread rapidly around the world. Further, a rich body of research investigates the factors that facilitate women's election to office. A critical justification is that more women in office will lead to policy outcomes that improve women's equality and autonomy. Yet democratic theorists have long debated the importance of descriptive representation for the quality of the democratic process (Pitkin 1967; Sapiro 1981; Phillips 1995; Mansbridge 1999; Dovi 2002).

This research empirically addresses one assumption upon which many demands for greater representation of women are based. Does descriptive representation matter for policy outcomes? How and when does women's representation in national legislatures affect policy? I examine the relationship between the proportion of women in parliament and a set of policies that target women and families: national maternity and childcare leave provisions. This focus on policy outcomes offers an essential test of whether having more women in office makes a difference for citizens' daily lives.

Few studies address this question from a cross-national perspective, and even fewer account for changes over time. One advantage of this approach is to go beyond static relationships, to address whether the proportion of women in parliament one point in time has a significant influence on policy at a later stage. Another advantage is that it allows for the introduction of a host of theoretically important influences.

Systematic analysis of 19 OECD democracies from 1970-2000 will improve our understanding of the dynamic relationship between women's political power and policy outcomes, and the institutional structures that mediate this relationship. The findings

suggest that across post-industrial democracies over the past three decades, women's heightened presence in parliament significantly influences the adoption and scope of maternity and childcare leave policies. Women's political presence proves more important than the ideology of the party in power.

### **Comparative Theories of Women, Politics, and Policy**

Past research suggests two basic categories of explanation for the cross-national variance in family policy. The first set of studies focus on women's presence in political decision-making processes as an essential ingredient in achieving policy gains for women.

Another set of studies emphasize the role of political parties and organizations.

#### *Women's Political Power*

Women in decision-making positions may raise and support a set of issues that are shaped by their life experiences. Given that legislatures have been dominated by men, the lack of women's voice in the debate may lead legislators to ignore the gendered nature of policies. Thus, policies that favor women's equality may be more likely as more women achieve elected office, or when women gain political power more generally.

The bulk of the evidence suggests women elected officials support distinct issues, relative to their male counterparts. In the U.S., evidence from state legislatures reveals gender differences in support for welfare programs, and pronounced differences among Republicans (Poggione 2004). Similarly, research on Congress shows that although women members tend to vote along party lines at the same rate as men, women raise new issues that target women as a group, and show greater commitment to these issues throughout the legislative process (Thomas 1994; Dodson 1995; Reingold 2000; Dolan 1997; Burrell 1994; Carroll 2002). Swers (2002) examines the impact of women in

Congress on bill sponsorship and legislative votes, and shows that women's influence on policy is conditioned by party affiliation and the political context.

Gender differences also surface in attitudes among elected officials. Interviews with women in the national legislatures of the U.S., Britain, Argentina, Colombia and Costa Rica reveal female MPs place greater value on women's rights and family issues than male MPs (Carroll 2001; Lovenduski and Norris 2003; Schwindt-Bayer 2006). Surveys in the Swedish Riksdag in the early 1990s suggest that both sex and partisanship influence politicians' attitudes toward gender and social policy (Wangnerud 2000).

Comparative studies also consider legislative behavior and outcomes. Schwindt-Bayer (2006) finds significant gender differences in bill initiation in Argentina, Colombia and Costa Rica. Women initiated more bills targeting women's issues than male legislators, controlling for ideology. Bratton and Ray (2002) examine the percentage children covered in childcare programs across Norwegian municipalities from 1975-1991. They find that women's presence matters more than partisan affiliation. Likewise, a significant number of women in the Norwegian parliament—both Conservative and Social Democratic-- raised the issue of quality daycare in the legislature (Skjeie 1991).

Few scholars address the relationship between women in parliament and policy across a large number of countries. O'Regan's (2000) cross-national study finds that the higher the proportion of women in office, the more likely there are stronger employment and wage protection and equal wage policies. The analyses center on the presence or absence of policy, giving short shrift to the scope and timing of the policy. Further, O'Regan's research needs updating, as the numbers of women in office and their seniority has grown considerably since the early 1990s.

Second, as part of a comprehensive model of women's representation, Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005) test the influence of women in parliament on social rights and maternity leave in 31 democracies in 1995. Women's presence in parliament matters, even after controlling for gender equality attitudes. To build upon these findings, it is necessary to investigate the scope of these policies over time.

Earlier research suggested the relationship between women's parliamentary presence and policy may not be linear, but instead if a "critical mass" enters parliament, this will lead to collective efforts, alter the workplace norms, and further strengthen women's power. Some empirical research does not support the idea of critical mass. Although they do not focus on substantive policies, Studlar and McAllister (2002) find that a 'critical mass' has little impact on future gains in descriptive representation.

Indeed, the overall number of women may be less critical than the presence of a few women who actively pursue certain policies. A few token women may find it easier to achieve policy gains, and may see more need to 'act for women' given their severe under-representation (Crowley 2004). Drude Dahlerup (2006), long credited with introducing the concept of critical mass to the study of women and politics, points out that the theory of critical mass has often been misapplied, and adds that achieving a critical mass of women may not be the most important factor in advancing women's interests and equality. Similarly, Childs and Krook (2006) argue for increased attention to critical actors—individual women in any given situation who initiate and pursue specific pieces of legislation. Thus, if our research finds that the percentage of women in parliament is not important for the adoption and expansion of family leave policies, this would suggest that research may be better aimed at specific events and processes.

Recent findings also suggest that timing is crucial to explaining the spread of policies that target women. Investigating childcare, Bratton and Ray (2002) theorize that identifying periods of policy innovation improves our understanding of policy adoption. “Some public policies are subject to natural life cycles which are characterized by substantial variation when the policy is introduced, and increasing homogenization as the policy innovation spreads, and the policy matures” (429). The central period for childcare policy in Norwegian municipalities occurred in the 1970s, and municipalities converged by the early 1990s. Bratton and Ray’s findings lead us to question whether the adoption and expansion of family leave is concentrated in a particular period of time, and whether countries have converged toward a common level of provision.

In addition to the efforts of women in elected office, women’s political power is also rooted in organizational strength. In the 1960s and 1970s, feminism resurged as a strong social movement in most post-industrial societies (Gelb 1989). While comprising diverse ideologies, forms of action and organization, one common theme has calls for women’s equality in social and political life (Jenson 1995). Women’s movement groups often lobby for policies to improve women’s equality in the workplace. Several studies identify the key role played by women’s movements (Berqvist 1999; Stetson and Mazur 1995; Randall 1987; Gelb 1989; Katzenstein and Mueller 1987). Examining the issue of violence against women, Weldon (2002) argues that a strong, independent women’s movement with connections to a women’s policy agency is critical to reaching successful policies. Women’s policy agencies in government may shape policies that target women as a group (Stetson and Mazur 1995). These state agencies promote women’s equality and rights, and are present across industrialized democracies (Lovenduski 2005).

Women's steady entrance into the paid workforce has not only created demand for policies to support women's employment, but also boosted women's power in the public sphere. Henderson and White (2004) find that women's labor force participation boosts maternity leave in the 1980s, but this effect dampens significantly in the 1990s.

*Ideology, Political Organizations and Women*

An alternative (but plausibly complimentary) set of forces emphasizes the ideology of the dominant political parties, and the role of political organizations. These studies share roots in the welfare state literature, which largely focuses on macro-level political and economic forces in shaping social policies. Dominant theories of the welfare state expect that strong leftist parties and unions drive the expansion of social welfare benefits (Esping-Anderson 1990). By extension, the sub-set of gender and welfare studies expect leftist governments provide the most fertile soil for adopting women's policies.

Huber and Stephens (2000) stress the primacy of leftist parties, and recognize connections with unions, women's mobilization, and women's labor force participation. Likewise, O'Connor (1999) credits more gender egalitarian employment policies to the success of Labor-based parties, a centralized wage negotiation system, and the strength of the labor and women's movements (68). In an in-depth, cross-national study of several feminist policies, Mazur (2002) reaches similar conclusions, linking feminist policies and leftist governments. Mazur concurs that both ideology and women's efforts shape policy outcomes, noting the "particular way in which a long list of determinants actually combines in feminist policy formation remains an open question" (195).

However, because greater attention to women's issues may detract from the traditional class-based concerns, leftist parties may not uniformly push for more

extensive leave policies. Elman (1996) finds the Swedish Left resisted policies on domestic violence. Historically left-dominated welfare states diverge on family policies (Gornick, Meyers and Ross 1996; Sainsbury 1996). For example, the Netherlands is a strong welfare state on most accounts, yet offers minimal family policies.

Welfare states may differ on the degree of consultation among unified business and labor groups, and in their interaction with government. Employers often play an essential role in the policymaking process (Mares 2000). Coordination among business and government on employment policies may shape the opportunities for the adoption of maternity leave and childcare services (Lambert 2004). Where bargaining is conducted at a national level between employers and employees, attention to and engagement in national politics is heightened. Thus, because this research examines national leave policies, a higher level of bargaining may be associated with these policies.

Trade unions also play an important role in shaping policies that relate to the support of paid employment. On the one hand, trade unions may be important advocates for maternity and childcare leave policies. In 1919 International Labor Organization (ILO) drafted the “Maternity Protection Convention”, intended to pressure countries to adopt guaranteed leave for mothers after childbirth. In 1965 the ILO made its first recommendation on Female Workers with Family Responsibilities, and by 1981 extended this recommendation to men and women alike.

On the other hand, these recommendations may serve as window dressing. Huber et al. (2001) point out that unions do not consistently support policies to promote gender equality in the labor market. They reason that although unions serve to “promote the interests of low wage workers, they have also been defenders of the male breadwinner

wage and have opposed part time work and other measures...which encourage women's employment". Similarly, Gelb (1989) points to the historically male culture within trade unions, which is often hostile to feminist demands, and to new issues that might compete with the prominence of class divisions.

### *Opportunity Structure*

A cross-national examination allows us to examine the conditions under which women's political power may be most important. Political institutions mediate the relationship between women's parliamentary presence and policy outcomes. Opportunity structure has been identified as critical to understanding the adoption of family policies across the U.S. states (Bernstein 2001).

The effects of federalism may vary substantially according to the type of policy. Bernstein (2001) argues that policies with broader coalitions of support are more likely to succeed in federal systems like the U.S. In addition, federalism may create more potential veto points in the legislative process (Immergut 1992). Huber and Stephens (2000) find that a greater number of veto points in a country's constitutional structure dampens welfare state expansion because it creates more opportunities for interest groups to block the legislation. In contrast, Lijphart (1999) argues that decentralized systems encourage "kinder, gentler" policies. Dispersion of power may encourage broad coalitions that improve welfare benefits more generally. Further, Elman (1996) and Gelb (1989) argue that federalism creates more points of access for the women's movement to press for policy response. These competing hypotheses are born out in mixed evidence from federal systems. Two of the most federal countries in our study, Switzerland and the U.S. do not have national maternity policies, yet the U.S. has a childcare leave policy while

Switzerland does not. Similarly, countries with proportional representation (PR) election rules are more likely than single-member district systems to produce policies with a leftward tilt (Lijphart 1999; Huber, Ragin and Stephens 1993).

Political culture may also condition the likelihood of policies that target women. Public support for gender equality has been shown to affect the presence of women in parliament (Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Inglehart and Norris 2003), and greater support for women's equality may also provide a fertile soil for laws that support this goal. However, Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler's (2005) cross-national study finds attitudes towards gender offer little explanation for social and political rights for women.

Although social policies largely represent domestic policy choices, international forces may also play a role. Specifically, membership in the European Union may lead to similar family leave policies. Although each EU member state had unpaid maternity leave before the 1996 directive advocating parental leave (Gauthier 2000; Henderson and White 2004), we must control for EU membership in the expansion of leave policies.

### **Variation in Childcare and Maternity Policy**

This research considers a set of policies that target the gendered division of labor in society. Following Carroll (1994), women's issues are those "where policy consequences are likely to have a more immediate and direct impact on significantly larger numbers of women than of men"(15). Given the number of nations and years under examination, it is necessary to concentrate on a few policies. The focus of this research is on maternity and childcare leave. There is debate over whether these policies advance women's equality. Although some argue that longer leaves may encourage women to take a longer break from the workforce than they might otherwise, it seems more likely that expanding

leave policies discourages women from dropping out of paid employment altogether. Long-term workforce participation enhances women's autonomy and pay levels.

Gauthier and Bortnik (2002) published a database on family leave policies, which is unique in its cross-national and longitudinal scope. The national-level focus excludes local policies such as those in Switzerland and the U.S., which exist at the canton/state level. Five American states offer paid leave, and several others offer unpaid leave (Gauthier and Bortnik 2002).

Maternity leave is granted in connection with the birth of a child. In Sweden, this leave is extended to both parents, yet is categorized as maternity leave. Sweden's gender-neutral policy is designed to promote greater equality. To be consistent, this research uses the term "maternity" leave to emphasize the connections with childbirth and to clearly differentiate from childcare leave.

National maternity leave policies have a long history, and many initial policies passed in the early 1900s as part of worker protection plans. The early policies were minimal, allowing a few weeks of unpaid leave immediately before and after birth (Gauthier 1996). At this stage, women's presence in parliaments was minimal. Thus, for early maternity leave policies, women's presence in office was not a necessary condition. Since then, maternity leave policies have expanded substantially. The scope of maternity leave is captured by duration and benefits. These dimensions mirror those in traditional studies of decommidification policies. Maternity leave duration measures in weeks the maximum amount of leave time granted by national law from employment. Maternity leave benefits measures the percentage of a parent's earnings received during leave.

Childcare leave is taken separately for an extended period of time, usually after maternity leave by one or both parents. In 1977, France adopted a policy of up to two years unpaid leave for caring for a child. Most nations offer separate maternity and childcare leave policies. By 1999 Italy had a five month maternity leave, which paid 80% of the parent's earnings, plus a childcare leave of up to six months, which paid a 30% of the parent's earnings. Others, such as the U.S., offer no national maternity leave policy, just childcare leave. Gauthier and Bortnik categorize the Family and Medical Leave Act as a childcare leave because the 12 weeks leave can be taken any time over the course of a year. In addition, it may be applied to leave to care for a sick relative, including children. Thus, it is not limited to the period around childbirth. Like the previous indicators, childcare leave duration is measured in weeks, and benefits reflect the percentage of income replacement during leave.

Gauthier and Bortnik (2002) point out that in some countries the distinction between maternity and childcare leave has blurred, as more countries extend leave to fathers and allow for flexibility of the timing of its use. In an effort to be sensitive to the fact that these two policies are not always clearly distinguishable, a measure of the total weeks of duration of leave, both maternity and childcare, is added to capture the overall duration of family leave in any one country.

Table 1 presents summary statistics for this series of dependent variables. Importantly, childcare leaves normally last much longer than maternity leaves. For example, Finland, France, Germany and Spain offer parents up to 156 weeks of leave. In contrast, Canada offers only 10 weeks of leave, and the US only 12 weeks of unpaid leave. In some cases longer leave duration is accompanied by a lower wage replacement

level, or none at all. In other cases, generosity in time and pay increase together. These policies covary to a moderate degree, but are also separable. The correlations are .50 for maternity indicators and .40 for childcare.

-Table 1 here-

The summary statistics allow for a test of whether family leave policies show signs of convergence. The final two columns of Table 1 present the standard deviation for each indicator in two different periods of time: 1970-1985 and 1986-2000. With the exception of maternity leave benefits, the standard deviation grows considerably in each instance. Thus, there is greater cross-national variance in family policies at the end of our time frame than at the beginning. The greatest variation is in childcare leave policies, which are rapidly expanding and often longer and more flexible than maternity leaves. In terms of change over time within a country, the expansion of leave policies, especially maternity leave, is periodic. Concomitantly, the pace of change in women's numbers in office is often more gradual, and at other times takes large leaps in a given election.

### **Explaining Variation in Leave Policies**

Given that extensive case studies offer alternative explanations, systematic examination of a broad set of cases is necessary. Cross-national, cross-temporal analysis can provide powerful evidence for or against some key propositions, and can provide some leverage over the 'problem of many variables' by allowing for a large number of cases.

I created a pooled-stacked database for 19 continuously democratic industrialized countries since 1970.<sup>1</sup> By limiting the investigation to this set of nations I can control for a host of potentially confounding factors such as democratic experience. The baseline is 1970 because in the late 1960s/early 1970s, to varying degrees, women across

industrialized democracies dramatically stepped up pressures on government for gender equality (Jenson 1995; Lovenduski and Norris 1993: 5).

To compare complex policies across countries and over time requires careful attention to a common framework. Gauthier and Bortnik's Comparative Maternity, Parental and Childcare Leave and Benefits Database provides standardized comparative data. These data are publicly available, and Table 3 details where they can be found. The data cover the countries and years under study. The structure of the data allow for examination of: 1) whether a leave policy exists at all, and the year in which the initial policy was adopted; and 2) the generosity of the policy.

The definitions and sources of variables for the multivariate models are detailed in Table 3, and derive from the expectations of past research, outlined above. The first set of measures of women's political power includes the percentage of women in parliament.<sup>2</sup> We expect that as the proportion of women MPs rises, the likelihood of adopting and expanding leave policies increases as well.<sup>3</sup> In addition, one expects that a greater proportion of women among the paid labor force is positively associated with leave policies. Concomitantly, the birth rate may affect family policy. On the one hand, with more women in the workforce, a higher birthrate may generate a need for maternity and childcare leave. On the other hand, a low birthrate may spur government officials to pursue pro-natalist policy. Henderson and White (2004) find mixed effects for birthrate.

-Table 3 here-

The second set of explanations focuses on political organizations. The degree of leftist party power is measured as Left party control of government. One may also expect extensive leave policies where unions are stronger. The strength of unions is measured as

the proportion of the labor force that is unionized. Finally, we consider the level at which wage bargaining is conducted. Nations that score higher have a more centralized system of wage coordination, while those that score lowest primarily coordinate wages at the plant-level. We expect that the higher the level of bargaining, the more likely and the more extensive the leave policies. Further, countries that spend more on social programs in general can be expected to support more extensive family policies as well.

The models also account for mediating factors that make up the opportunity structure—political institutions. The effects of federalism likely vary by policy type. Policies that encourage broad coalitions are more likely to succeed in federal systems (Bernstein 2001). Childcare leave policies create a broad base of support because they include both parents, and some (as with the U.S. Family Medical Leave Act) also encompass leave to care for sick relatives more generally. In contrast, maternity leaves may be less amenable to federal systems because they are more specifically tied to the period around childbirth. Systems vary in the degree of decentralization, and an additive index of federalism is employed. More decentralized countries score higher on the scale. Similarly, because PR systems are linked with leftist policy outcomes, by extension we may also expect that more proportional electoral systems favor leave policies. The more proportional the translation of votes to seats, the higher the score.

### **Statistical Models**

The complexity of the research question calls for two different statistical techniques. First, to model the timing of the adoption of the first leave policy I employ Event History Analysis (EHA). Second, to explain the variation in the duration and benefit level of leave policies I employ time series cross-sectional (TSCS) with fixed effects.

### *Event History Analyses*

The adoption of childcare leave policies is modeled from 1970 to 2000, and the key independent variable will be the proportion of women in parliament.<sup>4</sup> First, to address the question of timing and periods of policy innovation, Figure 1 displays the cumulative number of countries adopting childcare leave policies from 1970 to 2000. Adoption rose consistently over time. In 1970, Austria was the first to adopt a childcare leave policy. By 2000, 17 countries had adopted. The positive linear slope does not suggest a limited period of policy innovation within this time frame.

-Figure 1 here-

EHA is the best method to analyze the timing of the initial adoption of childcare policies. Standard linear regression models do not appropriately account for change in the probability of policy adoption across time, within each country. At any point in time, a country possesses a particular probability of policy adoption. Standard regression models do not incorporate past probability into the future probability of policy adoption, which is necessary here. Furthermore, within each country, EHA techniques allow us to account for left censoring (a policy already in place) and right censoring (a policy was never observed to have been adopted) (see Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 1997; 2004).

To assess the correlates of adoption, the EHA technique utilized is the Cox Proportional Hazards Model. The Cox Model asks, for any country, what determines the probability of adoption? This probability is based on the likelihood that adoption will occur at a certain time, given that it has not yet occurred (Yamaguchi 1991). The models produce maximum likelihood estimates that yield information about the propensity of adoption that each case incurs over time.

The results of the Cox model are presented in Table 3.<sup>5</sup> The dependent variable is the year of the first adoption of a childcare leave policy. The two statistically significant explanatory variables are the percentage of women in parliament and the degree of union density.<sup>6</sup> The signs of the coefficients indicate whether the variable increases or decreases the hazard rate. For the significant coefficients, I transform the  $\text{Exp}(B)$  to interpret as predicted probabilities. The coefficients reveal that for each percentage point gain in women MPs, the likelihood that the country will adopt a childcare leave policy rises by 12%. For every percentage point increase in union density, a country is 5% less likely to adopt a childcare leave policy. All things equal, trade unions do not appear to effectively press for a childcare leave policy. Perhaps this reluctance stems from a tendency to prioritize class-based issues over family issues. It is also likely that where there are stronger unions, the pressure for childcare policies occurs within union bargaining structures, and not within the federal government.

-Table 3 here-

#### *Time-Series Cross-Sectional Analyses (TSCS)*

In addition to examining policy adoption, it is important to establish whether women's presence in parliament affects the expansion of policies over time. This section considers the scope of maternity and childcare leave policies, both duration and wage replacement.

Figure 2 displays the average total number of weeks of leave for all of the countries in this study at five year increments. The average rises linearly over time. In 1970 the average is 14 weeks, by 1985 we witness a 42 week average, and by 2000 the average is 82 weeks. The steady expansion of leave duration shows that expansion of leave is not limited to a particular period of policy innovation.

-Figure 2 here-

In order to account for the extensiveness of maternity and childcare leave policies, which are measured as continuous variables, I utilize cross-sectional time-series regression techniques. For this set of analyses, each observation represents an election year, totaling of 204 cases. The two primary variables of interest, women's share of parliamentary seats and leftist government, can only be expected to change at each election. Given that the number of national panels (N=19) is larger than the number of observations over time within the panels, ordinary least squares with fixed effects is the best technique for the type of data used here (Stimson 1985; Beck and Katz: 635).<sup>7</sup> In addition to the theoretical explanatory variables, a set of country dummy variables is entered into each multivariate model.<sup>8</sup>

Table 4 presents the models for each policy dimension.<sup>9</sup> Models 1 and 2 address maternity leave duration and benefits, respectively. Both reveal that the proportion of women in parliament is a significant predictor. All things equal, for a 10 percentage point increase in women MPs, maternity leave increases by about three weeks, and average wage replacement rates rise by nearly 10 percentage points.

-Table 4 here-

A few control variables emerge as statistically significant. Women's participation in the paid labor force is negatively related to wage replacement levels. Higher levels of unionization are associated with longer maternity leaves. In addition, a greater degree of federalism hinders the expansion of maternity leave, both in duration and benefits. Membership in the EU enhances maternity leave duration. Social expenditures overall

significantly increase the amount of leave time, and the compensation. Finally, the lower the birthrate, the greater the wage replacement levels.

Models 3 and 4 estimate childcare leave duration and benefits, respectively. A greater proportion of women in the parliament is associated with longer leaves and higher wage replacement levels, and these coefficients are highly significant. With a 10 percentage point increase in women MPs, childcare leave increases by 25 weeks (childcare averages longer leave than maternity). Consistent with previous models, a few control variables are statistically significant. Members of the EU afford more generous childcare leave, both in duration and benefits. Higher social expenditures and lower birth rates also heighten the duration of childcare leave.

The final model examines the total number of weeks of leave, both maternity and childcare. Women in parliament emerges as statistically significant, as do lower levels of union density, EU membership, greater social expenditures and a lower birthrate.

Taken together, the models strongly support the importance of women's parliamentary presence to encourage more generous leave policies. Across a variety of specifications, the proportion of women in parliament is statistically significant, and it is the only consistent predictor of the scope of leave policies identified in the models.

Higher levels of overall social spending are also significant in four of the five models: Countries with more generous social programs tend to be the ones that expand their family leave policies.<sup>10</sup> The finding that EU membership boosts the scope of leave policies considerably suggests that EU directives on family leave have had an impact on national policies. The effects of unionization levels are mixed. Unions seem to encourage longer maternity leaves, but hamper the adoption of childcare policies and the

total number of weeks of leave. From these aggregate analyses it is difficult to disentangle the mechanism at work, but one might speculate that greater unionization takes some of the pressure off of the national government in furthering these policies because leaves can be negotiated within union bargaining structures.

Further, although federalism hampers the expansion of maternity leave, when it comes to childcare leave, federalism has little impact. This finding is consistent with the expectation that maternity leave, as a policy with a narrower base of support, is less likely to succeed in federal systems, relative to childcare leave, which is more often broadly aimed at men and women caretakers of children and sick relatives.

Contrary to the expectations of past research, left party power does not emerge as statistically significant in any model.<sup>11</sup> Even after removing social expenditures, left party power is not statistically significant. These findings are consistent with Henderson and White's (2004) finding that social democratic governments are not more likely to produce longer maternity leaves, and Weldon's (2002) findings that leftist parties are not associated with greater policy responsiveness to violence against women.<sup>12</sup>

## **Conclusions**

The results of these cross-national, longitudinal models reveal that women's descriptive representation in the national legislature consistently and significantly influences both the rate of adoption and the scope of maternity and childcare leave. This relationship holds across a number of specifications and tests. Further, women's impact is not limited to a certain period of policy innovation. Overall, women's political presence trumps the ideology of the party in power.

Boosting women's numbers in office is certainly not sufficient for policy gains. A

wealth of in-depth studies show that women's movements, organizations and policy units are critical to getting new women's issues on the policy agenda. Yet in order to get these policies passed, the analyses presented here suggest that women also play a vital role as policymakers. The conclusions of this research are not intended to ignore the role of agency or strategy. Certainly coalition building and framing strategies are important to the process. Further, it is also possible that the activities of one woman may inspire more change than the inactivity of a critical mass. Yet critical acts and actors require support to pass policies. Support for adopting and expanding family leaves is often rooted in an environment in which women have greater political power. It is also important to note that this research examines a sub-set of social policies designed to enhance the work/family balance. One may expect the influence of women's parliamentary presence to vary across policy areas.

In order to fully explain cross-national variation in family policies, women's political power must be considered. Properly specified models must go beyond standard demographic and macro-economic indicators. As the influence of organized class-based interests such as unions has often proved important in traditional studies of welfare state policies, family policy studies require consideration of not only the gendered nature of the policies themselves, but also the gender balance of power among decision-makers.

The findings of this research improve our understanding of representation in the democratic process. For family leave policies, descriptive representation yields substantive outcomes. The results underscore the importance of having more women in elective office for the effects on public policy, and thus, for the quality of representation.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, US.

<sup>2</sup> Models with women in cabinets substituted for parliament yield similar results.

<sup>3</sup> Although the strength of women's movements and organizations is theoretically influential, there are no cross-national, cross-temporal measures.

<sup>4</sup> The EHA examines childcare leave only. Most nations in this study already had a maternity leave policy by 1970. In response to the ILO in the early 1900s, the initial policies afforded a bare minimum of unpaid leave following the birth of a child.

<sup>5</sup> Cox models assume proportionality. I split the sample into two time periods: 1970-85 and 1986-2000. The covariates remain relatively stable across the models, confirming the impact of women in parliament is consistently positive over the course of this study.

<sup>6</sup> To test for non-linear effects, I also added the square of the percentage of women in parliament, following Bratton and Ray (2002). The effects of a critical mass suggest that higher proportions of women have accelerated effects on policy outcomes. With both the percentage and the squared variables in the model, neither is statistically significant.

<sup>7</sup> Random effects (RE) models constrain each nation to the same intercept. Fixed-effects (FE) modeling effectively sets nation-specific intercepts for n-1 cross-sections. Johnston and DiNardo (1997:403) state that even where RE models are preferred, FE estimators still provide consistent parameter estimates. RE estimations are often biased in overstating the effects of the explanatory variables, while FE tend to understate their importance. Thus, the more conservative approach in this instance is to utilize FE. I ran a Hausman test, which evaluates the null hypothesis that the coefficients estimated by the more efficient RE estimator are the same as the ones estimated by the more consistent FE

estimator (Hausman 1978). For each dependent variable, the test is statistically significant, indicating that FE is the appropriate technique.

<sup>8</sup> There is considerable debate over whether FE is the best approach for the structure of this data, which includes variables that change considerably over time, and rarely-changing variables (controls). Plumper, Troeger and Manow (2005) argue unit dummies are inappropriate when rarely-changing variables are added to a TSCS model because country dummies soak up much of their variance. Without FE women in parliament remains positive and significant, and its magnitude is similar. The statistical significance of a few control variables change. I also ran GLS Random models with clustered robust standard errors. Women in parliament is statistically significant in each model, except maternity leave duration. In most models, it is the only significant indicator.

<sup>9</sup> To conserve space, country dummy variables are not reported. Statistically significant: Model 1-Canada, Denmark, Ireland, NZ, Norway; Model 2- Austria, Germany, NZ, UK, Spain; Model 3- Austria, France, Ireland, UK, Spain; Model 4- Austria, Canada.

<sup>10</sup> The Scandinavian countries are leaders in family leave policies. In models without Scandinavian countries, women in parliament is a positive and statistically significant indicator for childcare weeks, benefits, and total weeks, but not for maternity leave.

<sup>11</sup> The proportion of leftist women MPs is not statistically significant. Instead, the overall percentage of women matters for policy outcomes. This finding is consistent with Schwindt-Bayer's (2006) in Latin America and Bratton and Ray's (2002) in Norway.

<sup>12</sup> An index of attitudes towards gender equality (World Values Survey 1995) is statistically insignificant in a cross-sectional model. A lack of longitudinal data precludes time series analysis. This supports the findings of Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005).

## References

- Beck, Nathaniel and Jonathan Katz. 1995. "What to do (and not to do) with Time-Series Cross-Sectional Data". American Political Science Review 89(3).
- Bergqvist, Christina. 1999. "Child Care and Paternal Leave Models". Equal Democracies? Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Bernstein, Anya. 2001. The Moderation Dilemma: Legislative Coalitions and the Politics of Family and Medical Leave. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M. and Bradford S. Jones. 2004. Event History Modeling Cambridge University Press.
- Bratton, Kathleen A. and Leonard P. Ray. 2002. "Descriptive Representation, Policy Outcomes and Municipal Day-Care Coverage in Norway". American Journal of Political Science 46(2): 428-37.
- Burrell, Barbara. 1994. A Woman's Place is in the House: Campaigning for Congress in the Feminist Era. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Carroll, Susan J. 2002. "Representing Women: Congresswomen's Perceptions of their Representational Roles". In Women Transforming Congress. Cindy Simon Rosenthal, ed. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Carroll, Susan J. 2001. The Impact of Women in Public Office. Indiana University Press.
- Carroll, Susan. 1994. Women Candidates in American Politics. Indiana University Press.
- Childs, Sarah and Mona Lena Krook. "Should Feminists Give Up on Critical Mass? A Contingent Yes". Politics & Gender 2(4): 522-530.
- Crowley, Jocelyn. 2004. "When Tokens Matter" Legislative Studies Quarterly XXI:109-35

- Dahlerup, Drude. 2006. "The Story of the Theory of Critical Mass". Politics & Gender 2(4): 511-522.
- Dodson, Debra, et al., eds. 1995. Voices, Views, and Votes: The Impact of Women in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress. New Brunswick, NJ: Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers.
- Dolan, Julie. 1997. "Support for Women's Interests in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress: The Distinct Impact of Congressional Women". Women and Politics 18(4): 81-94.
- Dovi, Suzanne. 2002. "Preferable Descriptive Representatives: Will Just Any Woman, Black or Latino Do?" American Political Science Review 96(4): 729-44.
- Elman, R. Amy. 1996. Sexual Subordination and State Intervention: Comparing Sweden and the United States. Oxford: Bergham.
- Erickson, Lynda. 1997. "Might More Women Make a Difference? Gender, Party and Ideology among Canada's Parliamentary Candidates". Canadian Journal of Political Science 30(4): 663-688.
- Esping-Anderson, Gosta. 1990. Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism Cambridge: Polity.
- Estevez-Abe, Margarita and Torben Iversen and David Soskice. 2002. "Social Protection and the Formation of Skills". In Varieties of Capitalism. Peter A. Hall and David Soskice, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gauthier, Anne Helene. 1996. The State and the Family. Oxford University Press.
- Gauthier, Anne H. and Bortnik, A. 2001. Comparative Maternity, Parental and Childcare Database (University of Calgary). <http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca/FYPP>. 6/12/2006.
- Gelb, Joyce. 1989. Feminism and Politics: A Comparative Perspective. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Golden, Miriam, Peter Lange and Michael Wallerstein. "Union Centralization among Advanced Industrial Societies: An Empirical Study." Retrieved 6/1/05.
- Gornick, Janet C., Marcia K. Meyers and Katherin E. Ross. 1996. "Supporting the Employment of Mothers: Policy Variation Across Fourteen Welfare States". Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) Working Paper #139.
- Hausman, J. 1978. "Specification Tests in Econometrics". Econometrica 46(6): 1251-71.
- Henderson, Alisa and Linda A. White. 2004. "Shrinking Welfare States? Comparing Maternity Leave Benefits and Childcare Programs in European Union and North American Welfare States". Journal of European Public Policy. 11(3): 497-519.
- Huber, Evelyne and John Stephens. 2001. Development and Crisis of the Welfare States: Parties and Politics in Global Markets. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Huber, Evelyne and John D. Stephens. 2000. "Partisan Governance, Women's Employment, and the Social Democratic Service State". American Sociological Review 65: 323-342.
- Huber, Evelyne, John D. Stephens, David Bradley, Stephanie Moller and Francois Nielsen. 2004. "The Welfare State and Gender Equality". Luxembourg Income Study Working Paper No. 279.
- Huber, Evelyne, Charles Ragin and John D. Stephens. 1997. Comparative Welfare Data Set. Updated 2004 by David Brady, Jason Beckfield and John Stephens.  
<http://www.lisproject.org>
- Immergut, Ellen. 1990. "Institutions, Veto Points, and Policy Results: A Comparative Analysis of Health Care". Journal of Public Policy. 10(4): 391-416.

- Inglehart, Ronald and Pippa Norris. 2003. Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World. NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Jenson, Jane. 1995. "Extending the Boundaries of Citizenship: Women's Movements of Western Europe". In Women's Movements in a Global Perspective Amrita Basu, ed. Westview Press.
- Johnston, Jack and John DiNardo. (1997). *Econometric Methods*. New York: McGraw.
- Katzenstein, Mary and Carol McClurg Mueller. 1987. The Women's Movements of the US and Western Europe. Philadelphia, Penn.: Temple University Press.
- Lambert, Priscilla A. 2004. "The Comparative Political Economy of Family Policy: the Effect of Business, Labor, and Institutions on Policy Outcomes". Paper prepared for the Institute of Labor and Employment Graduate Conference.
- Lawless, Jennifer. 2004. "Politics of Presence? Congresswomen and Symbolic Representation". Political Research Quarterly. 57(1):81-99.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1999. Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Lovenduski, Joni and Pippa Norris. 2003. "Westminster Women: The Politics of Presence". Political Studies 51: 84-102.
- Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'". Journal of Politics 61(3).
- Mares, Isabela. 2000. "Strategic Alliances and Social Policy Reform: Unemployment Insurance in Comparative Perspective". Politics and Society. 28(2): 223-244.
- Mazur, Amy G. 2002. Theorizing Feminist Policy . Oxford University Press.
- O'Connor, Julia S. 1999. "Employment Equality Strategies in Liberal Welfare States". In

- Gender and Welfare State Regimes. Diane Sainsbury, ed. Oxford University Press.
- O'Connor, Julia S. and Ann Shola Orloff and Sheila Shaver. 1999. States, Markets, Families: Gender, Liberalism, and Social Policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the U.S. Cambridge University Press.
- O'Regan, Valerie. 2000. Gender Matters: Female Policymakers' Influence in Industrialized Nations. Westport CT: Praeger.
- Orloff, Ann Shola. 1993. "Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship". American Sociological Review 58(3): 303-328.
- Philipps, Anne. 1995. The Politics of Presence. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pitkin, Hanna. 1967. The Concept of Representation. Berkeley: University of California.
- Plumper, Thomas and Vera E. Troeger and Philip Manow. 2005. "Panel Data Analysis in Comparative Politics". European Journal of Political Research 44: 327-354.
- Poggione, Sarah. 2004. "Exploring Gender Differences in State Legislators' Policy Differences". Political Research Quarterly. 57(2): 305-314.
- Randall, Vicky. 1987. Women and Politics: An International Perspective. Macmillan.
- Reingold, Beth. 2000. Representing Women: Sex, Gender and Legislative Behavior in Arizona and California. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Sainsbury, Diane. 1999. Gender and Welfare State Regimes. Oxford University Press.
- Sapiro, Virginia. 1981. "When Are Interests Interesting? The Problem of Political Representation of Women". American Political Science Review 75(3): 701-716.
- Schwindt-Bayer, Leslie. 2006. "Still Supermadres? Gender and the Policy Priorities of Latin American Legislators". American Journal of Political Science 50(3): 570-85.
- Schwindt-Bayer, Leslie and William Mishler. 2005. "An Integrated Model of Women's

- Representation”. Journal of Politics 67(2): 407-428.
- Skjeie, Hege. 1991. “The Rhetoric of Difference: On Women’s Inclusion into Political Elites.” *Politics and Society*. 19: 233-63.
- Stetson, Dorothy and Amy G. Mazur. 1995. Comparative State Feminism. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stimson, James. (1985). “Regression in Space and Time: A Statistical Essay.” American Journal of Political Science. 29 (4): 914-947.
- Studlar, Donley T. and Ian McAllister. 2002. “Does A Critical Mass Exist? A Comparative Analysis of Women’s Legislative Representation Since 1950”. European Journal of Political Research 41: 233-53.
- Swank, Duane H. “Comparative Parties Dataset.” Marquette University. Retrieved 6/1/05.
- Swers, Michele. 2002. The Difference Women Make: The Policy Impact of Women in Congress. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Thomas, Sue. 1994. How Women Legislate. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tremblay, Manon. 1998. “Do Female MPs Substantively Represent Women? A Study of Legislative Behavior in Canada’s 35<sup>th</sup> Parliament”. Canadian Journal of Political Science 31(3): 435-465.
- Wangnerud, Lena. 2000. “Testing the Politics of Presence: Women’s Representation in the Swedish Riksdag”. Scandinavian Political Studies. 23(1): 67-91.
- Weldon, S. Laurel. 2002. Protest, Policy and the Problem of Violence Against Women. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Wolbrecht, Christina. 2000. The Politics of Women’s Rights. Princeton University Press.
- Yamaguchi, Kazuo. 1991. Event History Analysis. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Table 1. Women's Policy Outcomes: Dependent Variable Descriptive Statistics

	Minimum ( <i>freq.</i> )	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total Cases	Std. Dvn. 1970- 1985	Std. Dvn. 1986- 200
Maternity Leave Duration (weeks)	0 (39)	64	16	13	204	10	16
Maternity Leave Benefits (wage replacement level)	0 (47)	100	60	38	204	37	38
Childcare Leave Duration (weeks)	0 (111)	156	36	51	204	29	57
Childcare Leave Benefits (wage replacement level)	0 (157)	72	7	16	204	5	20
Total Weeks Duration of Leave Matern.+Childcare	0	164	47	50	204	29	56

**Table 2. Variable Definitions and Sources**

	<b>Definition:</b>	<b>Sources:</b>
Maternity and Childcare Leave Duration and Benefits	Maternity/Parental and Childcare Leave duration in weeks and wage replacement levels.	Gauthier and Bortnik (2001) <a href="http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca/FYPP">http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca/FYPP</a> .
Female Parliament (%)	Female percentage of representatives in lower house	Data provided by Pippa Norris; International Parliamentary Union
Female Ministers (%)	Female ministerial positions as a percentage of total	Keesing's Record of World Events; supplemented with Davis (1997)
Female Participation in Labor Force	Female % of the labor force.	Huber, Ragin and Stephens (1997); Brady, Beckfield and Stephens (2004)
Left Party Government	Left party control government by a majority of cabinet portfolios for the majority of the time in a given year	Swank (2005)
Union Density	Percentage of workers in the labor force who are members of unions	Golden, Lange and Wallerstein 2005, Ebbinghaus and Visser 2000
Wage Bargaining	Level at which collective bargaining of wages is conducted (scale, 1= plant level, 5= centralized)	Golden, Lange and Wallerstein 2005
Federalism	Measure of government dispersion of power- Federal/Unitary (scale, 1=unitary/centralized, 5=federal/ decentralized)	Lijphart 1999
Electoral System Proportionality	Measure of degree of proportionality in translations of votes into seats, scale: 1=plurality, one round system	Lijphart 1999
Birthrate	Fertility rate, total, births per woman	2000 World Development Indicators
GDP	Gross Domestic Product, Billion US dollars, current prices and PPPs	OECD Factbook 2006
Social Expenditure	Gross public social expenditure (SOCX) as a percentage GDP	Huber, Ragin and Stephens (1997); Brady, Beckfield and Stephens (2004)

**Table 3. Factors Influencing the Adoption of Leave Policies, 1970-2000 (Event History Analysis)**

	<b>Childcare Leave Policy, first adoption. Full Model, 1970-2000 (Standard Error)</b>	
	B	Exp(B)
% Women Parliament	.14* (.042)	1.12
Women's Labor Force Participation	.06 (.105)	
Left Party Power (% left cabinet)	.02 (.007)	
Union Density	-.05* (.022)	.948
Wage Bargaining Level	.32 (.320)	
Federalism	-.36 (.235)	
Electoral System Proportionality	.00 (.085)	
EU member	.18 (.640)	
Birth rate	.24 (1.14)	
GDP	.00 (.000)	
Number of Cases	557	
-2 X log-likelihood	180.8	
X <sup>2</sup>	18.1*	

Note: table entries represent coefficient estimates from Cox Regression Model. Standard errors are in parentheses.

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

**Table 4. Factors Influencing Scope of Leave Policies, 1970-2000 (Time Series Cross-Sectional Analysis)**

	Model 1 Maternity Duration	Model 2 Maternity Benefits	Model 3 Childcare Duration	Model 4 Childcare Benefits	Model 5 Total Weeks Leave
% Women Parliament	.32** (.081)	.97** (.235)	2.5** (.539)	.77** (.190)	2.6** (.497)
Women's Labor Force Participation	.42 (.257)	-2.3** (.819)	-2.1 (1.64)	.05 (.581)	-2.1 (1.52)
Left Party Power (cabinet)	.00 (.012)	.05 (.033)	.01 (.077)	.01 (.027)	.00 (.071)
Union Density	.23** (.040)	-.18 (.114)	-.81** (.261)	-.24 (.092)	-.73** (.240)
Wage Bargaining Level	-.04 (.559)	2.8 (1.62)	1.8 (3.72)	1.7 (1.31)	1.7 (3.42)
Federalism	-1.5* (.725)	-4.9* (2.10)	1.1 (4.83)	2.1 (1.70)	-1.9 (4.44)
Electoral System Proportionality	.06 (.149)	-.04 (.434)	-.58 (.996)	-1.6** (.351)	-.77 (.92)
EU member	4.4** (1.65)	4.5 (4.81)	41.4** (11.04)	8.6* (3.89)	38.4* (10.16)
Social Expenditures	2.3** (.679)	5.9** (1.97)	12.9** (4.52)	2.9 (1.69)	10.1* (4.17)
Birth Rate	-1.6 (1.38)	-13.8** (4.00)	-23.0* (9.18)	2.2 (3.23)	-22.6* (8.55)
GDP	.00 (.001)	.00 (.001)	.00 (.003)	.00 (.001)	-.02 (.003)
<i>Summary</i>					
Adj. R-Square	.85	.85	.56	.38	.61
Number of Observations	204	204	204	204	204

Table entries are unstandardized fixed-effects regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses. To conserve space, coefficients for country dummy variables are not reported in the table.

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

Figure 1. The Rate of Adoption of Childcare Leave Policies





