THE FUTURE OF LEAVE POLICIES –
ADVANCING THE GENDER REVOLUTION?

LINDA HAAS, 8TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK ON LEAVE POLICIES AND RESEARCH, REYKJAVIK, 2011
A “stalled revolution” since the 1970s

Women enter the labor market but men’s roles do not change ➔

• Gender segregated labor market
• Gender gap in pay
• Women’s work-family conflict
• Marital discord, divorce, low fertility
Can social policy make a difference?

If women want time off to bear children, they can’t expect to be treated as equals.

Okay, give men time off to bear children.
Preview of questions to be raised

- What nations provide good models for the future?
- What lessons do we learn from them?
- What barriers to leave sharing need more attention in the future?
- Does globalization provide a threat and/or opportunity to the future of leave policies?
What should the future look like?

What nations are good models?

- Iceland
- Norway
- Sweden
What 10 lessons can nations learn?

1. Mandate generous, flexible father’s quota
2. Generously compensate leave
3. Centralize financing & administration
4. Don’t wait for attitudes to change first
5. Depict leave as a responsibility not a choice
6. Portray fathercare & mothercare as alike
7. Emphasize fathers’ taking solo care
8. Mandate educational campaigns
9. Reform professional education
10. Recognize leave policy is not enough
Future of leave policies
- reduce barriers to implementation

- Lack of education regarding fathers’ rights and responsibilities
- Lack of attention to what mothers gain from fathers taking more leave
- Resistance of gendered work organizations
- Negligence of trade unions
- Slow progress in developing new ways of working to accommodate leave
Is globalization a threat?
Economic expansion and integration

• More jobs become nonstandard/informal, outside system of benefits/laws

• More transnational companies that can evade national legislation

• More subcontracting to nations with weak family policies

• Corporate culture affected by expansion of “transnational business masculinity,” focused on profit and lack of concern for others

• Availability of immigrant nannies reduces pressure on men to share childcare
Globalization opportunity? Political integration

Emergence of supra-national political institutions such as EU

- expands the field where women and men can make claims and engage in lobbying for gender equality
- establishes standards to force nations to offer gender-neutral leave
- national governments retain influence
Globalization opportunity?
Flow of ideas and images

The New York Times

In Sweden, Men Can Have It All
Globalization opportunity?
Flow of ideas

Aims of the International Network on Leave Policies and Related Research:

• exchange of information about leave policies adopted in individual countries and by international organisations
• cross-national analysis of such policies
• exchange of information about research on leave policies, including findings and conclusions
• cross-national discussion of issues and trends in policy and research
The future of leave policies - advancing the gender revolution?

Cautiously optimistic –

• If policies are structured to promote equal sharing by fathers and mothers
• If implementation barriers are addressed
• If political institutions (e.g., EU) step up to spread Nordic model
• If our network keeps up its good work!
References


