Family Policy in a Global Perspective: Integrating Care Responsibilities with a Career in Science

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1 Introduction

Women are underrepresented in scientific fields, whether it is in the social sciences (Abels/Woods 2013; Ostendorf 2009) or in the natural sciences (Kahlert 2012; Dautzenberg et al. 2011), and one factor in women's slower ability to enter and advance their careers has been the responsibilities of care work at home. Family obligations affect women differently to men, as women spend on average more time caring for children and the elderly. Indeed, across almost all countries women tend to spend at least twice as much time on care work as a primary activity than men, and in some countries it can be up to six times as much (OECD 2011: 3). In this sense, as more women have been pursuing careers, reconciling work and family life has become a bigger (political) issue: bolstering care commitments has been recognised as improving women's opportunities in employment and as a way to support women in scientific careers. Workforce regulations are increasingly allowing both men and women to take off time to care, and governments often have extended programmes and services which help with care, such as child care and flexible time measures in order to reconcile care duties with employment.

This article examines the development of family policy in the last 20 years on an international scale and what implications this change has had for women's integration of family life and their work in science. Family leave policies for the care of children and the care of the frail elderly have been undergoing a global transformation, especially for parents. While work regulations for parental family leave have grown at an incredible pace across nations, some inequality in access can be observed. Also, although parental policies are flourishing, paid leave for elderly care is still in its early stages. This progress in leave regulations

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has several implications for women in science. With advancements in parental leave policies, parents and their employers are more able to predict time away from work, and because of the increase in paternity leave, parents are able to share care for children more readily. These policies reduce some of the precariousness of employment for parents in the beginning years of children's care. However, because (paid) elderly care leave and care supports for the frail elderly are still scant, the careers of women can be in jeopardy if they are faced with elder care responsibilities. These care responsibilities might especially affect women at the later stages of their scientific careers.

This article first explains family policy functions and instruments, and the ways in which family leave programmes are globally comparable. In the next section, I trace the global trends in paid maternity, paternity and parental leave. After examining forms of family leave for the care of children, I analyse family leave for the care of the frail elderly and their consequences for women in science. Country examples of family leave in Germany, South Africa and the US illustrate in more detail the ways in which leave affects women and their career ambitions. Finally, in the last section, I discuss developments in leave for child and elderly care with respect to women in science and their future perspectives in reconciling work and family life.

2 What is family policy?

Generally, family policy is defined as policy which affects families and helps to alleviate their problems. This definition could theoretically encompass all policy because of the wide scope of policy that affects families, although family policy usually describes programmes and services which have direct transformative power to organise a better life for women, men and children (see Woods 2012). Such broad policy entails cultural variety across countries according to the starting points where families find themselves as well as the goals they hold for the future. For example, South Africa focuses its family policy on issues such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, housing, HIV and AIDS, absentee fathers, crime, substance abuse, gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy and 'moral degeneration' (DSDRSA 2012: 22). Goals for family policy for the present German government are somewhat different; the family minister states that policy is meant to support men and women in the fulfilment of their familial responsibilities by giving them the freedom to do this in the best way families see fit. The

government presumes that this requires that men and women have equal opportunities to balance family and their careers, and have the possibility to decide how they wish to divide employment and care responsibilities (BMFSFJ 2012: 3).

With this article I narrow the definition of family policy to encompass programmes that help combat overarching problems for families that result from what some scholars have called 'new social risks'[2] (see, for example, Taylor-Gooby 2004). In particular, risks associated with caring activities have been a major issue for family policy. Family policy is especially challenged to help families adapt to the shifting social organisation of care and employment because of these new social risks. Care issues become a challenge in the both the growing necessity of women's employment and women's desire for fulfilment outside the home. Additionally, governments' legitimisation of much of the innovation in family policy rests on helping integrate care with employment. In the narrower sense I thus define family policy as 'a group of social policies that directly or indirectly affect families with respect to their responsibilities due to the care of small children and the frail elderly'. I focus on the challenge of work-life balance measures in family policy because families increasingly face new social risks globally.

Family policy has several instruments, according to Gabel and Kamerman (2006), which can be used to lessen family problems and to help families balance their care and employment obligations:

1. Family allowances
2. Family leave or flex-time measures
3. Benefits-in-kind
4. Other family in-kind services

The first instrument of family allowances usually entails pure money transfers in the form of cash or tax benefits. These are relatively easy to administer and can be either means-tested, universal, or based on specific criteria (such as single parenthood or low-income employment). The second type of family policy in-

2 Social risks describe risks which come from demographic change, such as an aging population, lower fertility rates, changing family forms such an increase of single parent-headed households. Social risks are also said to come from employment change – increased irregular forms of employment, insufficient social insurance because of gaps of unemployment, pressure for a mobile workforce, large-scale unemployment, decline in traditional blue collar labour and union membership, increasing importance of education for employment.

struments are employment leave and flex-time measures which contain regulations set by the government for the workforce. Such rules can address certain kinds of employment and employees or they can apply universally. Leave can also be paid or unpaid, based on work history or types of employment. The third type of instrument is benefits-in-kind services, such as early childcare education, child and elderly care, and home-help services. These are harder to administer than family allowances or work regulations because such services not only need to be funded, but the government is required to set a framework and regulate duration and quality. Other family in-kind services refer to specific supports that might not provide direct caring services, but provide individual supports for specific clientele, such as counselling or information services (for more, see Gabel/Kamerman 2006).

Of these instruments, the second policy mechanism, family leave, can provide comparable data and its expansion can be measured over time more easily than the other instruments listed above. This is because the amounts of payment and the weeks involved are applicable to comparison, even when examining requirements. Comparing leave is easier than comparing family allowances because allowances are distributed for different groups with different goals – so much so, that these policies are prone to have 'functional equivalents', that is, policy instruments that are different but are attaining similar results. Leave is also easier to compare than services. Services are largely the hardest to compare globally because of the many variables which make up these policies, such as the professional requirements for those offering the services, the range of hours available, the facilities and regulations for these services, the eligibility for those receiving services, and the actual numbers of these recipients. Measuring services and change in services of one country is dependent on many factors so that a global comparison is difficult. On the other hand, data on family leave has remained stable over time, and will be used as a comparable source for this article. By tracing global developments and explaining differences through case studies, the article considers eligibility, issues of equality, and the implications for women in science at various levels of their career. The country examples of Germany, South Africa and the US present an additional overview of expansions and illustrate differences in inequality.

3 Family leave for parents

Family leave allows an employee a set amount of time away from their employment and guarantees that an employee can come back to his or her job (or its equivalent) after an allotted time. Such policy can be paid or unpaid but most countries have adopted some sort of paid arrangement for various circumstances where a parent might need to take time off from employment to care for a child. These job protections are widespread for parents and maternal leave is the most traditional and readily available type of parental leave. Maternity leave usually contains guaranteed leave for a mother at the birth (or adoption) of her child and subsequent weeks or months of care for the beginning of the child's life. Paternity leave, designated for fathers at the early stages of a child's life, was developed on a global scale later than maternity leave and is often shorter in length. Parental leave as a general term is applied to both mothers and fathers, and it can encompass shared leave at the beginning of a child's life or designate policy in the later stages of a child's life, such as guaranteed time off from work for parents who need to care for a sick (older) child.

3.1 Maternity leave

Maternity leave protects mothers from dismissal from employment after birth and the first few weeks or months of a child's life. As one can see from Figure 1, almost all countries provide some kind of paid maternity leave. There is a range of time allowed off from work: from fewer than 14 weeks to more than 52 weeks. The only countries that do not provide paid maternity leave are the US, Liberia, Guinea, Swaziland and Papua New Guinea, although some unpaid leave is available. Russia and many European countries provide the most extensive paid leave weeks for mothers with up to a year or more.

While maternity leave is extensive across countries and most leave is paid, the adequacy of payments and the universality of eligibility impact on women in science differently. Data on wage replacements show that leave might be less of an option if its rates are low. Low rates do not ameliorate job security for low-paid women in science and so risks associated with care responsibilities hit them harder. Indeed, where maternity leave is unpaid, as it is in the United States, women might either choose to stay in employment in suboptimal conditions or they might take more radical steps to leave their careers completely. Eligibility

for paid leave for these mothers is also important to note. Unpaid leave in the US covers only 66% of the workforce – wage replacements are available only in a few individual states. South Africa's employment insurance is also not universal and covers from 31 to 59% of wages.

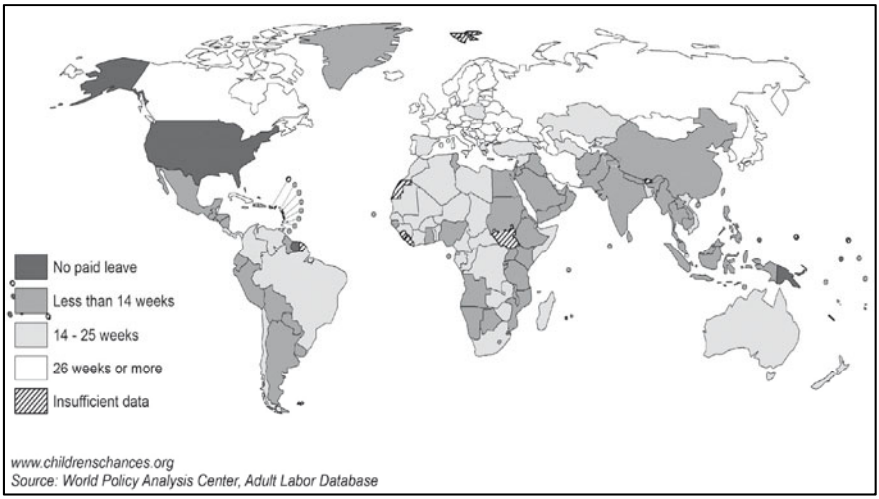
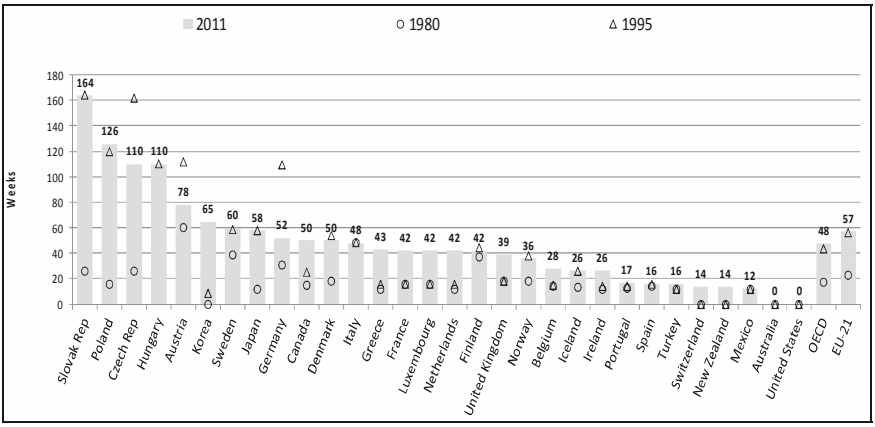


Figure 1: Is paid leave available for mothers of infants?

While maternity leave is universally available in Germany, wage replacements of 67% often cannot cover living expenses of low-income earners. Poor and non-working mothers and students receive a flat rate of 300 euros per month.

Paid leave for mothers has greatly improved in the last 30 years, as an overview for OECD countries shows in figure 2.

The continual expansion in paid leave (and lengths of time) has been extensive. Almost all countries have experienced some kind of increase in leave duration since the 1980s. For the noted few countries that have undergone a drop in lengths of leave (sometimes from the 1990s), these countries have done so in conjunction with their re-evaluation of the reimbursement and employment goals for the leave policy. For example, Germany reduced the duration of its parental leave in 2007 with a trade-off to include higher amounts of paid leave for some employed parents. This was in the hope that women would return to well-paid jobs faster, and better-paid men might consider taking more time off to care for their children.



Notes: Weeks of maternity and parental leave that women can take after maternity leave are included. Weeks of childcare or homecare leave have also been added where relevant. When there are several payment options, the shortest period with highest payment is taken into account. Source: OECD Family database.

Figure 2: Total weeks of paid leave granted to mothers in 1980, 1995 and 2011. Countries ranked by number of paid weeks available in 2011. Source: Thévenon/Solaz (2013: 16).

On the other hand, adequately paid extended periods of maternity leave are not always helpful in promoting equality between men and women or for women's careers, especially when there are no paternity leave alternatives. Lengthy periods of leave time reflect expectations that mothers will take the full extent of this leave. The longer women are away from the labour market, the more difficult it is for women to re-enter it. This is especially the case if mothers have additional children where they might extend this leave period even further. In order to consider this issue further, it is necessary for maternity leave to be examined together with the other leave available in a country, that is, paternity leave and general parental leave for both parents in order to obtain an overall picture of support for women to combine employment and care. Below I will discuss these other leave forms for parents.

3.2 Paternity and other parental leave

Paternity leave, specifically for fathers or a second caring adult in the family, has developed more recently. Such leave is not as extensive as maternity leave and is

often used in conjunction with other leave forms for children. Of the 182 countries viewed by the World Policy Analysis Center, just 74 countries granted paternal leave (WPAC 2013). The Russian Federation, the Nordic countries and some continental European countries offered the most extensive paternity leave with 52 weeks or more, usually in exchange for maternity leave. Australia, Canada, Japan and most of the other continental European countries had a paid leave policy for fathers from 14 to 51 weeks. Roughly a third of the rest of the countries offering paternity leave provided less than two weeks of paid leave.

In terms of wage replacements, however, often the countries providing less paid leave were also able to reimburse the parent with a higher rate. For example, the African and Latin American countries were in the highest brackets of reimbursement rates, even if they could only offer up to two weeks. High rates of wage replacement (75–100%) were also covered by the Nordic countries, Britain, France, Spain, Iceland, Poland, Romania and the Baltic countries, to name a few. Wage replacement rates from 50 to 74% were offered by Canada, Germany and Cuba. The Russian Federation, Italy and Japan had a rate below 50% and some countries, like Australia and some Central European countries, had a flat rate (WPAC 2013).

In comparison to maternity leave, paternity leave is generally less extensive and its wage replacement rates are lower. In light of these policy options, couples who must make a choice for one parent to stay at home are more likely to opt for a woman to stay at home to care for children. Nevertheless, with the establishment of paternity leave at least in some countries, we see goals for gender equality with respect to sharing care and employment among men and women. Reforms in family leave that have targeted fathers specifically have been shown to encourage them to care for children, although the take up of such mandated leave usually falls below the maximum allowed time – usually 20 to 30% less than their entitlements (Thevenon/Solaz 2013: 15).

Other parental leave covers both maternity and paternity leave not only for early childhood care but also for the care of an older sick child. Relatively few countries have paid parental leave of this kind, nor is it usually extensive. The US, Latin and South American countries generally have no federally mandated paid parental leave. Similarly, the African countries, Middle East and South Asia countries (outside of Japan and Korea) have no paid forms of leave. On the other hand, some Western European countries, especially the Nordic countries, as well as the Russian Federation, have generous lengths of paid parental leave with 52 weeks or more. A handful of countries with paid leave have an annual wage

replacement of between 75 and 100%, which was provided again by the Nordic countries, some Baltic countries, and also Spain, Portugal, Iceland, Romania and New Zealand (WPAC 2013). In general, parental leave is important not only for new parents (in the form of maternity and paternity leave) but for parents at later stages of a child's development should they need to take time off from work in emergencies when their children need extra care.

4 Family leave for frail elderly care

Family leave for adult care or for the frail elderly has been expanding but has advanced not nearly as fast as the leave policies for the care of children. The right to leave employment in order to care for an adult family member, other than a child (in the most cases, frail elderly spouses or parents), is underdeveloped to say the least. Far fewer countries have leave legislation for the care of adult family members. If countries offer caregivers short-duration leave from employment to deal with emergencies or unexpected care needs, more often than not this leave is unpaid. The majority of longer leave is restrictive in eligibility requirements and is usually conditional on approval of the employer, especially in the private sector. In addition to leave schemes, some countries, but only a few, offer caregivers the option of reducing working time while needs persist, or guarantee the right to switch to flexible working time, but this flexible time is also recent.

In the Americas there are just three countries which have paid leave: Nicaragua, El Salvador and Canada. Namibia, Burkina Faso and Angola are a further three countries in Africa which have paid leave for the care of adults. Many European countries provide either paid or unpaid leave, except for Greece, Latvia, Switzerland, Slovenia and Romania, which have no such leave.[3] Further east, countries such as the Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Japan and New Zealand also offer paid leave for adult care.

3 Paid leave is available in Spain, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Slovakia, Estonia, Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria and Australia.

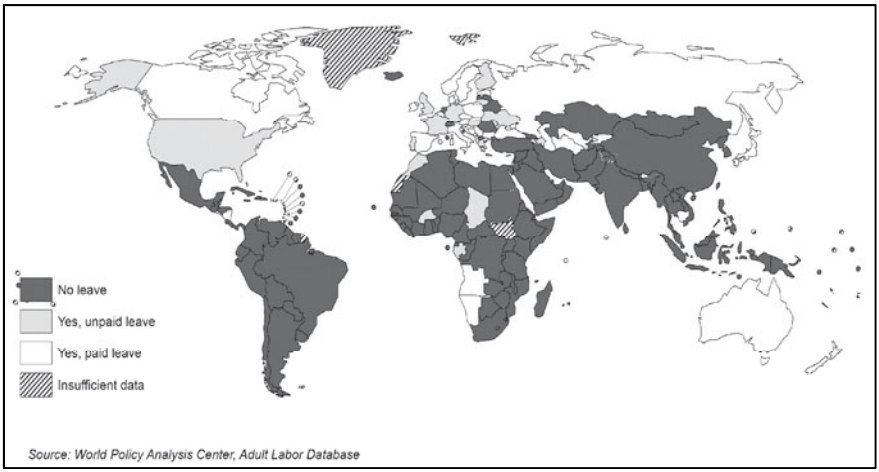


Figure 3: Leave to care for adult family members

Because of the demographics of an aging population and because of the influx of women in employment, the issues around time off from employment to care for adults has become pressing. For the most part, the care of the frail elderly is still performed overwhelmingly on an informal basis by family members. An OECD report on long-term care finds that family and friends remain the most important group of providers and the majority of these carers are women, although rates of male carers have been increasing (OECD 2011b: 93). In Germany, for example, two-thirds of the frail elderly who receive benefits from care insurance rely on care from friends and family members (Destatis 2013). Unfortunately, the take-up rates of available leave from employment for the care of the frail elderly are not known, nor are the gender differences between the take-up rates. According to the study, however, women tend to leave employment instead of enter into part-time work or flexible working times (OECD 2011b: 96).

Policy changes reflect caring issues for the elderly, but legislation has focused more on those in need of care rather than the carers. European countries, for example, have reformed cash transfers for the elderly in order to help finance their care. From 2008 to 2010 thirty-three countries passed reforms in cash payments that aimed to increase the affordability of care (EU 2010: 164-169). With these cash payments many seniors then in turn pay for care informally, as the cash amounts cannot completely cover formal arrangements. Family members often benefit but, as the elderly stay longer outside of formal care structures, these family members might end up caring for longer periods of time or support-

ing more serious care needs. Employment leave and available flexible working schedules for carers, however, tend to be scarce and non-binding.

5 Country examples of family leave

Forms of family leave have become for the most part more explicit in Germany, South Africa and the US, and these policies were expanded during the 1990s and early 2000s. A comparison of these outlines possible policy effects for women in science and illustrates problems in universal eligibility, pay equality, lengths of time, and the feasibility of their take-up.

Of the forms of family leave available in Germany, maternity leave is obligatory, with six weeks before and eight weeks after the birth, paid in full from health insurance funds. After this, Germany provides a parental leave option at 67% of wage replacement for up to a year with an additional two months if the father also takes paternity leave or a parent is raising children alone. The lowest leave pay available for non-employed mothers/fathers and students is a flat rate of 300 euros. Family leave for the care of adults and the frail elderly is less well developed. There is no paid elderly care leave in Germany. The family long-term care law (Familienpflegezeitgesetz) in Germany creates incentives for employers to allow employees to reduce up to 15 working hours within 24 months if employees need to care for adult family members. The government supplies an advancement of wages for an employee for the missed work time, so that pay will not be otherwise drastically reduced. After 24 months, employees must agree to work full-time to make up for the advanced income. These employees will be paid at a reduced rate until the advancements in wages in the initial 24 months are paid in full. Research is unclear as to the take-up rates.

In South Africa parental leave includes four months of paid maternal leave through the federal Basic Conditions of Employment Act 1997 and the Employment Act 2002. A mother can leave up to four weeks before the due date of her child and may not work for six weeks after the birth. The federal law does not stipulate payment, but the Unemployment Insurance Fund and Unemployment Insurance Contributions Act regulate guaranteed payment for some employees with a previous work history of four months, with a minimum of 24 hours a month. Students, public servants, foreigners working on contract or employees who get monthly state pensions or only earn commission are not included. The scale of payment ranges from 31 to 59% of earnings depending on the level of

earning (Moss 2011: 205). Extended unpaid leave is possible for public servants, and some Bargaining Council Agreements have sought additional leave rights as well. Family responsibility leave allows for three annual paid days. Fathers are not entitled to paternity leave but can use these three annual paid days. Public service employees can also use three days for taking care of adult family members, and in the event of a death in the family, employees are entitled to five days a year and this is usually paid. Some special conditions apply to companies with fewer than 10 employees. There is no statutory entitlement to flexible work time or longer leave periods to care for adults.

Wage replacement for family leave is only available in the US in the states of California and New Jersey. Federal parental leave includes a general non-paid childbirth and sickness leave for an annual 12 weeks. Fathers and mothers can take this unpaid leave interchangeably, as well as spouses or children who need to take care of elderly relatives. Flexibility of the leave, however, is limited because it must be applied for in advance – so it usually covers larger periods of care. The law covers only mid-sized to large employers with 50 or more employees (within 75 miles). Some individual states have extended eligibility of unpaid leave by including smaller companies, but generally only about 66% of the workforce is covered under the law (IWPR 2013: 8). Larger sized companies also might have benefit plans that cover absences due to care or provide payment which would supplement the federal law, but only 35% of employees work for an employer that provides paid maternity leave and 20% of employees work for an employer that offers paid paternity leave (IWPR 2013:1). There is no statutory entitlement to flexible work time.

Leave coverage is varied in the US, Germany and South Africa. Of the three countries, Germany has the most generous leave policies for parents, both in lengths of time and in the rates of wage replacements for those who are employed in well-paying jobs. But leave for low wage workers or for students, for example, is not well paid. Leave for elderly care is not guaranteed and payments for family members to leave employment are only partially covered in Germany. Similarly, South Africa has a maternal leave policy which covers women unevenly. Here payments are not universal, nor is there paternity leave for fathers. Those persons needing to care for the frail elderly are covered for just three days annually. The US has neither parental nor elderly care paid leave. Flexible working schedules are underdeveloped in all three countries.

6 Lessons to learn for women in sciences

Family leave is one instrument of family policy among many of the growing government programmes to help women (and men) better balance the responsibilities of care and employment. This article summarised leave for the care of children and for the elderly, and traced this policy's development globally. The article also presented three country case study examples in more detail. The article found that paid forms of family leave for the care of children have grown immensely since the 1980s and almost all countries have some sort of paid parental leave. However, not all policy is universally available or generous in wage reimbursement. In addition, family leave for the care of (elderly) adult family members is less readily available and is in need of improvement – in the expansion of the leave forms, in their flexibility, and in wage replacements.

This survey of global family policy presents many lessons for women in the sciences. First, family policy creates structures which promote a work-life balance. Equal opportunities are provided for men and women to enter into and advance in the scientific fields, if risks are also covered for caring responsibilities in the family. These policies have a particular impact on gender equality. For example, in terms of gender, when maternity leave is more readily available than paternity leave or women's wage replacement covers more than men's, internal family pressures will push women out of their careers to care and cause men to remain employed. With less work experience, and more hurdles to re-enter the workforce, women will not be able to advance as quickly as men in their careers. Interestingly, leave policies that support longer spells away from work might in fact also reinforce gender differences because the longer a woman is away from the science field, the more she has to 'catch up' when re-entering the field.

Certain leave characteristics also reinforce other problems. For example, leave is hardly an option for many women in science if they have low incomes. If paid policies are based on the percentage of wages earned, low earners or those receiving unpaid leave will find their position even more insecure if they are constrained by caring responsibilities. Policies might easily exacerbate the precarious situation of these women in entering or establishing themselves in their field. Another hurdle is the unavailability of elderly care leave. This affects women later in life, and might pose a threat to women's careers if their lifework has already been delayed through the care of children. On the one hand, women could be more established in their field in this phase of their life, and thus be cushioned by this security. On the other hand, care of elderly parents or spouses

is more unpredictable than the care of children in terms of intensity and time. It also requires more flexibility in employment. At critical juncture points in their careers, either in the establishment stage of their careers or later in the advancement stages of their careers, women in science will be affected by government policies to balance family and employment.

Family policy has been changing on a global scale and there has been an integration of care and employment issues across countries. Family policy has become more explicit and such measures have grown, especially around a work-life balance for families with children. However, family policies have been developing unevenly, and more disadvantaged families as well as those who have care responsibilities for adult family members are especially at high risk in the labour market. Policies that serve to equalise opportunities and life chances across society need to address inequality among family types, family members and life phases of individuals. There is hope for women's advancement in scientific careers if governments can promote and expand policies around care responsibilities and attempt to reach as many families as possible to alleviate the social risks of care work.

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