Fathers and Parental Leave Policies: International comparisons

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The paper

  - Annual audit data International Leave network
  - Father-sensitive typology of current policy measures

- Utilization Patterns

- Child quality of life theme.
Culture(s) of fatherhood

- ‘The father we live by’ (Gillis, 1996)
- Fathers in transition - transformation from a cultural script of ‘father right’ to ‘father love’?
- Fathers in crisis - unable to care or provide cash?
"Real men aren’t afraid to take paternity leave."
Father-care Sensitive Parental Leave typology

- Concept of “father-care sensitive” leave - the extent to which leave policy context enables fathers to exercise caring at/ around childbirth and in the early years.

- Other leave models have focused on ‘breadwinning’ concept / men’s labour market activity.
Meanings: paternity leave and parental leave?

**Policy**

- *Paternity leave* a statutory entitlement to enable a father to be absent from work for a period of time when a child is born.

- *Parental leave* a statutory entitlement to be absent from work after initial early maternity and paternity leave.

**Psychological**

- Macro/ distal context to enhance *paternal availability* to infant with the potential for direct *paternal interaction* (Lamb, et al 1987) and financial *paternal capital* (Pleck, 2007)

- Macro/ distal context for optimal “infant quality of life”.
Father-care Sensitive Parental Leave typology

- **Leave Duration:**
  the amount of time fathers are allowed away from the work-place.
  ‘Extended’ time covers those provisions of more than 14 days.
  ‘Short’ is reserved for countries where time away from the work place is 14 days or less.
Father-care Sensitive Parental Leave typology

- **Level of Income replacement**: the extent to which a country provides income substitution during the leave period.

  ‘High income’ replacement is defined as an entitlement paid to all eligible fathers at more than 50% of earnings.

  ‘Low income’ replacement is defined as an entitlement paid to all eligible fathers either at a low flat rate, or earnings related at less than 50% of earnings, or for less than the full period of leave.
Statutory Father-care Sensitive Parental Leave Models by Selected Countries

Extended father-care leave with high income replacement:
Finland, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Portugal, Quebec, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

Short father-care leave with high income replacement
Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands.

Short/ Minimalist father-care leave with low/ no income replacement
Australia, Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Poland, UK.

No Statutory father-care sensitive parental leave
USA
Utilization Patterns- fathers’ utilization of both paternity and parental leave

- is higher under the ‘Extended father-care leave with high income replacement’ model.
  - > 70% eligible fathers
- is lower under the ‘Short/ minimalist father-care leave with low/ no income replacement’ model.
- Financial incentives+ father targeting vital
## The impact of public policy: the Nordic Case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of fathers who use leave</th>
<th>Number of weeks of paid parental leave available for fathers*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>29 + 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>29 + 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>29 + 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of weeks at 100 percent of ordinary wage; may be extended with proportional wage reduction

Short Father-Care Leave with High Income Replacement

Utilisation of Paternity and Parental Leave by Fathers

Utilisation of paternity leave by eligible fathers (%)
Utilisation of parental leave by eligible fathers (%)

Country:
- Belgium
- Canada
- Denmark
- France
- Greece
- Hungary
- Netherlands
Short/ Minimalist Father-Care Leave with Low/ No Income Replacement

Utilisation of Paternity and Parental Leave by Fathers

Utilisation of paternity leave by eligible fathers (%)

Utilisation of parental leave by eligible fathers (%)

Country

Australia  |  Austria  |  Czech Republic  |  Estonia  |  Ireland  |  Italy  |  Poland  |  United Kingdom
Impact- benefits of leave

- Methodologically complex- a black box of diverse arrangements. Process and impact studies underdeveloped.

- Job protected *paid* parental (mostly maternal) leave associated with lower rates of infant mortality, controls for birth weight and public expenditure on families and children (Tanaka, 2005) 18 OECD countries.

- Job protected *paid* parental (mostly maternal) leave is associated with higher rates of breast-feeding (Ruhm, 2000; Galtry, 2003).
Impact- benefits of leave taking- for some?

- Daddy quota ‘home alone’ parental leave Norwegian fathers report more awareness of infant life ‘slow time’ than fathers having ‘home together’ leave (Brandth and Kvande, 2001)

- Paternal leave taking boosting father involvement at 9 months (Tanaka and Waldfogel, 2007) and in reading to child at 3 years (Dex, 2007).

- Low access for parents with insecure work histories prior to childbirth.

- Potential for ‘parental leave rich’ and ‘parental leave poor’ polarisation – infants in poor households may receive less maternal and paternal investment (caring and economic).
Conclusions

• Infant care is no longer a private “mother-only” family matter- governments are becoming involved too.
• Implementation of father-care sensitive leave more successful when schemes do not subtract from support to mothers.
• Men’s behaviour very receptive to public policies to enhance their availability to infants - birth + 13-15 months.
• Financial incentives + explicit father targeting vital.
• “Parental leave poor” + “parental leave rich” nations and children – another inequality.
Is being a good dad ruining your career?

10 PAGES OF
SUMMER SHOPPING
40 BEST BIKINIS
BEACH ESSENTIALS

PHOTOGRAPH
JAMIE BAKER
UK- Current leave policy (2008)

- **Paternity Leave (from 2003)**
  - 2 wks @ £117 /wk
  Future: Additional ‘paternity’ leave APL up to 26 weeks in child’s second 6 months, contingent on mother returning to work- by April 2009.

- **Maternity Leave (from 1977)**
  - 52wks: 6 wks @ 90% earnings, 33 wks @ £117/wk; 13 wks unpaid
  - Future: extension of payment to 52 wks.

- **Parental Leave (from 1999)**
  - 13 wks per parent unpaid, for under 6yr child