

PARENTAL LEAVE SEMINAR

TINE ROSTGAARD
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Scandinavian model - Gender equality in labour market, political participation and representation and in family life.

Sharing of care work encouraged but ideology and social constructions of the role of the mother and father differ in Norway, Sweden and Denmark

Improvement of leave rights have in Denmark mainly been implemented to secure women an equal right to participate on the labour market.

Father's right to have time to care for his children implicitly been seen as being less important – seen to be question of assisting the mother rather than establishing his own relationship with his child.

Sainsbury notes (1999): Danish policies distinguish themselves from those of the other Scandinavian countries in two ways.

- 1.) no policies to advance men's roles as carers in the home
2.), there are hardly any statutory rights based on fatherhood.

Little public and political concern whether the father spends time with the child.

Compared to Sweden and Norway, where only the first 4 to 6 weeks are reserved for the mother, the emphasis on the importance of motherhood in the early weeks after birth is especially strong in Denmark

The exit of the Danish father's quota

Introduction of 2 weeks father's quota in 1997 – general support across all parties

2001 election debate: proposal to extend it to 1 month sparked huge debate. Within Social-Democratic government great disagreement and lack of support from opposition. Right-wing parties also. More in favour of extending the overall length of parental leave.

Majority of MPs against what they saw as forcing fathers to stay at home.

The Social Democrat Chairperson for Social Issues: “Whether or not to introduce an extension to the leave period has nothing to do with gender equality, but should be concerned only with the needs of children”.

Opting for voluntary agreements at home

Extending leave backed up in the public, and few thought that the employers opposition was of importance.

The Liberal Party thus argued that voluntary work place agreements were sufficient for ensuring fathers' right to take leave.

Liberal-Conservative government came into power and abolished the father's quota in favour of an extension of parental leave, to 32 weeks to be shared, but with individual right, in addition to the 4 weeks before birth and 14 weeks maternity for mother and 2 weeks paternity

Lack of flexibility in the placement of the Danish father's quota emphasises the way fathers' leave rights are considered: to serve as an extension of the time the child can stay at home.

During its five years in existence, it could only be taken at the end of the parental leave when the child was 6 months old – only.

The main motive behind the father's quota was thus to ensure that the child could spend time with either parent, not specifically to ensure equality in the division of care work.

Also voluntary agreements at work place in terms of flexibility

Lack of flexibility in the Danish leave schemes striking when compared to Sweden and Norway.

Today, under the new scheme from 2002 possibility for flex:
64 weeks of half-term leave rather than 32 weeks of leave-time
leave

Depends on the agreement of individual employers, no right to
take part-time leave

Tabel 3.5 Modtagere af dagpenge ved graviditet, fødsel og adoption i løbet af året 1995-2007

	Danmark ¹⁾	Finland	Island ²⁾	Norge	Sverige
No. of days (1.000)					
1995	14.385	16.947	688	10.699	52.212
2000	13.150	15.232	698	11.152	37.100
2006	20.615	15.927	1.150	11.513	45.567
2007	20.874	16.104	..	11.789	47.548
Men as % of recipients					
1995	4,4	3,6	0,1	5,8	10,3
2000	5,5	4,1	3,3	7,2	13,7
2006	6,0	5,7	32,6	10,4	20,9
2007	6,2	6,1	..	11,4	21,2

1 Opgørelsesmetoden er revideret fra og med 2002.

2 Indtil 2000 bortfaldt retten til dagpenge under barselsorlov, hvis moderen var berettiget til fuld løn fra sin arbejdsgiver.

Diversity in leave take up

Survey study by Bente Marianne Olsen, evaluating the use of flexibility in leave

4 weeks pregnancy leave taken by 89 % of women.

99 % of entitled women use the maternity leave of 14 weeks

90 % of men take 2 weeks paternity leave

26 % of men and 94 % of women take parental leave

Average leave length

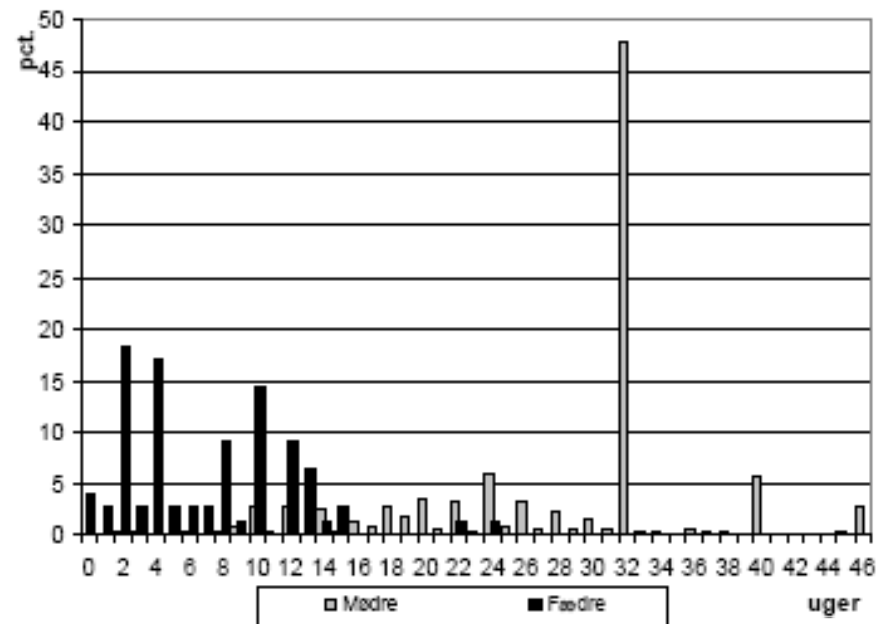
Average leave length, weeks:

	Pregnancy	Maternity	Paternity	Parental
Men	--	--	2	7,8
Women	5,5	14	--	27,9

Distribution of leave weeks

Figur 2.1

Afholdte ugers forældreorlov, særskilt for mænd og kvinder



Kilde: SFI rapport 07:29. Evalueringen af den fleksible barselorlov.

Women and men use the 32 weeks parental leave very differently

Children are on average cared for at home until they are 11 months.

Women use 92 % of available leave weeks after birth and men 8 %.

94 % of entitled women use the parental leave, but only 26 % of entitled men

68 % of all entitled couples use the parental leave.

Among single parent families, 72 % take 32 weeks parental leave – contrary to other Nordic research which shows that single women take shorter leave because of financial reasons (eg Brandth og Kaul, 1988; Christoffersen 1990)

Agreement on division of leave THE DANISH NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

Men (98 %) and women (99 %) agree on the division of leave.

Most parents are opposed to father's quota

But somewhat more men (37 %) than women (23 %) are in favour

Women stand to loose if introduced.

Among men in favour, similarities in socio-economic back ground. Need support and legitimation at work place

Diversity acc. occupation

Civil servants more likely to take leave.

67 % male leave takers are civil servants (funktionærer/tjenestemænd) while only making up 48 % of all those entitled

Might have better job conditions and/or labour market agreements entitling them to full wage during leave. Eg all public employees are entitled to 12 weeks of full or partly full wage during leave

Or they may be working in gender mixed workplaces

Among self-employed men much lower proportion of leave takers

Gender difference in compensation

More men (85 %) than women (63 %) receive full compensation (former wages) during leave in general

During parental leave it is 55 % of men and only 9 % of women

Reason: women take longer leave periods and exhaust the right to compensation under labour market agreements (typically 10 weeks). They receive flat-rate sickness benefit thereafter (Euro 470 weekly)

51 % of women and 34 % of men have only received sickness benefit during parental leave.

No parents are on leave without having a benefit

Parents acc to souce of income

	<i>Pregnancy</i>	<i>Maternity</i>	<i>Paternity</i>	<i>Parental women</i>	<i>Parental men</i>
Full pay	69	63	85	9	55
Only Sickness Benefit	25	30	13	51	34

Leave alone with child

54 % of men on parental leave have some periods of leave alone with the child, ie leave is used to extend the period without day care. They on average take 8,7 weeks.

Skilled workers take the longest leave without the mother (on average 12 weeks)

Self employed take the shortest leave periods without the mother (5 weeks on average)

Civil servants like unskilled take 8 weeks on average

Leave acc. to education

Women's share of the total no of weeks of parental leave, is increasing the lower her educational background.

Women with no education besides primary and secondary school, take on average 96 % of leave days. Women with higher educations take on average 84 %

In accordance with other Nordic research it is the mother's educational background which is decisive for whether he takes leave or not.

Only men with university degrees are overrepresented among the men on parental leave

But his level of education is decisive for how great a share he takes – men with longer education thus takes the greatest share of leave (12 %)

Tabel 2.12

Andel af mænd og kvinder, som afholder forskellige typer af fleksibilitet. Procent.

	Postpone ment	Extention 8/14 weeks	Returning to work with/without extending leave
Mænd	4,0	3,5	4,4
Kvinder	20,9	12,1	8,4
Procentgrundlag for mænd	427	113 ¹	113 ¹
Procentgrundlag for kvinder	316	315 ¹	299 ¹

Kilde: SFI rapport 07:20. Evalueringen af den fleksible barselorlov. Fædre og mødre delen.

1) Procentgrundlaget er her kun de fædre og mødre, der har taget forældreorlov, da det ikke giver mening at spørge om fleksibilitet, som knytter sig til, at man har afholdt en forældreorlovsperiode.

Assumption of equality of gender

Father and mother in DK are seen to have an equal power position in the family

Negotiation of time to care is considered a private matter.

Danish policies for leave to a great extent based on gender neutrality where freedom to choose is a central element. This takes for granted that men and women negotiate on equal terms who should take leave

It presupposes that the sharing of care work is not particularly influenced by norms and ideologies of motherhood and fatherhood; that mother and father have in theory the 'same' gender functions (see e.g. Dahlerup, 2001 for a further discussion of the concept of same/different/complementary).

No specific political or organisational back up of fathers' rights to care.

Trade unions have been notoriously silent in the debate on leave

Concern has mainly been the fear that extensions in leave will put women at disadvantage in terms of their employment careers and lifetime incomes.

Freedom of choice is voiced as a reason not to introduce the father's quota

Scandinavian's alike?

Differences in the social construction of the role of the father and the mother and in ideas about parenthood.

Fatherhood and the modern father stand very strong in Sweden.

In Denmark, the sharing of care work and prolongation of the period of time where the young child can be cared by parents seems to imply a view of parenthood based on the conception of neutral gender relations.

In contrast, Norwegian leave rights are characterised by difference in the political agendas of different governments, but safeguarding motherhood seems to be a central issue regardless of political orientation.

Bente Marianne Olsen: Evaluering af den fleksible barselsorlov, SFI 2007

Tine Rostgaard: *'With Due Care – Social Care for the Young and the Old across Europe'*. PhD Thesis. The Danish National Institute of Social Research/Southern Danish University, 2004

The argument on freedom of choice, which has been voiced so heavily in Denmark as a reason for not introducing a father's quota, has similarities with the Norwegian debate, despite – or perhaps because – of the more traditional division of care work which characterises Norway from Denmark and Sweden. The norm of the housewife has been more persistent in Norway and most people still consider it most appropriate that women stay at home to look after their pre-school children. Gender segregation in organisational life has been more marked than in other Scandinavian countries, and traditional women's associations are still influential. One claim of these organisations has been the legitimization of unpaid care work through the introduction of care allowances (Sainsbury, 1999).

The right to choose - whether this concerns the right for the family to choose who should take parental leave or to choose between Cash-for-care and a publicly-funded day care place - here serves to reproduce the traditional gender pattern of the housewife and the working male breadwinner. Men and women have more complementary gender functions compared to e.g. Denmark, in that men and women have different functions in the family qua the gender-biased division of paid work and caring. Despite the emphasis on achieving equality for men and women in the home and for women to participate in the labour market, the right to take leave has thus not resulted in any considerable take-up of leave by fathers – that is before the introduction of the father's quota which has generally been well used. Still, as already mentioned, the father's quota was not really a hot political issue, and as Leira (1999) notes, this may be because it did not really interfere too much with norms concerning masculinity, either in the family setting or in the field of employment. Perhaps the father quota was not regarded as an important challenge to the gender balance in paid and unpaid work.

That motherhood is the main focus of Norwegian policy is apparent from the right to leave for fathers being, until very recently, a derived right. The apparent gender neutrality in the schemes thus served mainly as a statement of political intention. Norwegian legislation has, to a larger degree than in the other countries, “enshrined the conception of the mother as the natural caregiver whose rights are then transformed to the father” (Sainsbury, 1999, p. 92). Other elements in the Norwegian scheme do however support fathers making use of leave. In particular, the relatively high compensation rate in the parental leave scheme enables Norwegian families to decide that the father will stay at home.

This contrast between an emphasis on choice, which implicitly favours motherhood, and the emphasis on good entitlements, which favours a more equal sharing of care responsibility, has its roots in different party politics. The improvements in the parental leave in length and compensation rate and the introduction of a father's quota were key issues for the Social Democrat government. Overall, the target group has mainly been women with higher levels of education and with strong links to the labour market, for whom the provision of day care and secure rights to return to the labour market were essential. In contrast, the freedom of choice implicit in the Cash-for-care scheme introduced by the centre coalition government has mainly been aimed at women with lower education and weaker links to the labour market (Berven et al, 2001). The centre coalition government thus voiced a seemingly orthodox emphasis on social equality between different groups in society but like in Denmark the most important ideological issue was the achievement of freedom of choice.

In contrast to Denmark and Norway political support of fathers' rights has been remarkable in Sweden. Commissions, trade unions and local social insurance offices have repeatedly underlined the importance of fathers making use of the right to take leave. From an early stage, the importance of creating a close relationship between father and child was underlined. Several major firms now even offer additional leave rights for fathers in order to attract employees. The first father's quota in 1994 may have been introduced as a part of a response to an economic crisis, but quickly gained an important place in Swedish promotion of fatherhood. And in contrast to Denmark and Norway, fatherhood stands very strong in the leave policies, whereas equality goals now stand more in the background. The father is considered to be able to bring something different into the child-parent relationship. Compared to Denmark and Norway, Swedish parenthood is therefore more influenced by the concept of difference between genders, not so much in function as in their characteristics. The emphasis is thus on the achievement of a stronger relationship with the child and the individual gains for the father as a human being and an employee when he takes leave, in addition to focussing on the benefits for the family and the child.

The Scandinavian countries are in many ways alike, especially seen from the rest of Europe. The concept of a Scandinavian model captures the essence of these similarities, such as high quality and universal access to benefits. But the implementation and use of leave entitlements, however, indicates that emphasis may be placed differently in the three countries, reflecting some differences in the social construction of the role of the father and the mother and in ideas about parenthood. Fatherhood and the modern father stand very strong in Sweden. In Denmark, the sharing of care work and prolongation of the period of time where the young child can be cared by parents seems to imply a view of parenthood based on the conception of neutral gender relations. In contrast, Norwegian leave rights are characterised by difference in the political agendas of different governments, but safeguarding motherhood seems to be a central issue regardless of political orientation.