



Parental leave and classed fathering practices in Norway

12th LPR Network Seminar, Trondheim
1-2 September 2015

Berit Brandth and Elin Kvande

What do fathers do when on leave?



Two aspects of fathering practice:

1. How fathers use the leave
2. What fathers do when on leave, ie how they practice childcare



Fathering practices as classed

- Family practices/fathering practices
 - Regular, everyday practices linked with historical and social meanings (David Morgan 1996)
 - Fluid: fathering practices are also gendered practices and classed practices
- Classed – 'the micro processes of doing class', a cultural focus



Data

- Interviews with 30 couples
- 8 working class, 16 middle class (+ 6 mixed)
- Pragmatist definition of class: education and occupation
- Analysis compares working- and middle-class fathering

The Norwegian parental leave period. Length of the different parts (weeks)

	Total	For mother	Shared	For father
1993- 2005	42/52	3 + 6	29/39	4
2014	49/59	3 + 10	26/36	10




Working-class fathers' parental leave practice

- Took part of the quota or no quota
- Mothers were at home with the father on a part- or full-time basis
- Mothers took all sharable leave, unpaid leave, reduced their working hours or quit work after their leave was over

Middle-class fathers' parental leave practice

- Took the whole father's quota
- Many took more (share)
- Mother back to work on a full time basis






Care practices – middle-class

Children's needs define practices

'Slow time' – children's needs determine the content of the every-day caring

Building competence

"Sure, I believe the fact that when you have so much time with your kids, you virtually learn how to read how they tell you stuff which you maybe would have lost if you didn't have so much time."



Care practices – working-class

Father as a supporting player

"Because she was home and had been home and knew everything and had the routines, I just continued the same routines. I did a bit more with the kids, but basically; it was all on her terms."

More comfortable with older kids

"It's more challenging and that sort of thing when they're older. It's more enjoyable and more important"



Conclusion

- What fathers do during leave depends on how they take the leave. Class differences are distinct in the material
- Parental leave for fathers represents a move in fathering practices for both classes, but in different ways
- ‘Home alone’ – a cutting edge

Postscript

- Changes in the parental leave system since 2005
 - Longer father's quota
 - More flexible leave
 - Eligibility for fathers: independent on mothers' working hours
- This has influenced fathers' care practices
 - Mothers more rarely at home during the whole quota
 - Flexible use of the quota in most occupations
 - Full-time leave alone – still important