TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY IN PARENTING? A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PARENTAL LEAVE AND CHILD SUPPORT SCHEMES

Mara A.Yerkes
Laura den Dulk

Jana Javornik









Erasmus University Rotterdam



THIS PROJECT HAS RECEIVED
FUNDING FROM THE EUROPEAN
RESEARCH COUNCIL (ERC) UNDER
THE EUROPEAN UNION'S
HORIZON2020 RESEARCH
INNOVATION PROGRAMME (GRANT
AGREEMENT NO 771290).



Parental leave policies: key role in facilitating transition towards dual-earner/dual-carer societies

Policy improvements, yet shared parenting a long way off

Key mechanism sustaining gender inequality: complex family policy landscapes / policy interplay

BACKGROUND (II)

Shared parenting? Family policies (e.g. leave) and child support

• Parental leave targets couples; yet one in two marriages ends in divorce.

Relationship dissolution? Need to negotiate parenting roles and responsibilities

 Potential for shared parenting as well as gender unequal parenting.

Limited evidence (Claessens and Mortelmans, 2018) suggests family policies (e.g. parental leave policies) can be inconsistent with child support schemes.

- Study based on 2012 categorization of family policies
- Recent developments in leave policies changing policy landscape

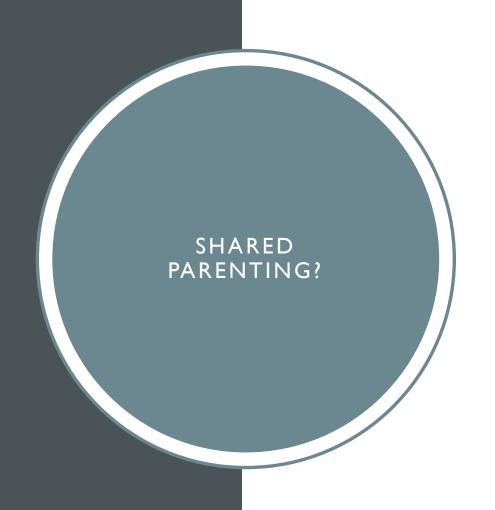
OUR AIMS

Shared parenting=gender equality?

To what extent are policy principles of gender equality in parenting maintained when relationships dissolve?

To evaluate shared parenting across multiple policy domains in two European countries (UK/NL)

Identify coherence and tensions among policy domains, evaluating what this means for gender equality in parenting



- Concept of shared parenting unclear
 - Academic definition
 - Policy definition
- Equality in what:
 - Access to policy instruments?
 - Time?
 - Types of care?
 - Subjective perceptions?
- Equality when...
 - Parents are together (in a relationship)
 - Parents are separated (relationship dissolution)



- Family policies, e.g. parental leave /child support, play a key role in creating the conditions for shared parenting (Javornik 2014: 247; Kurowska, 2016; Javornik and Kurowska, 2017; Yerkes et al., 2019).
- Yet policy landscapes more complex than generally recognized (Javornik and Oliver, 2019; Yerkes et al., 2019)
- Interaction of policy domains important for what individuals are able to do/be (capabilities) – also in relation to shared parenting

CAPABILITY FOR SHARED PARENTING

Capabilities

Functionings: valued, achieved

Means

Conversion factors

Agency

Sources: Sen, 1992, 1999; Robeyns, 2005, 2017; Kurowska, 2017; Kurowska and Javornik, 2019; Yerkes, Javornik and Kurowska, 2019.

POLICY
LANDSCAPE
UK:
PARENTING
WHEN
PARENTS
TOGETHER

- Children and Families Act (2014) and Shared
 Parental Leave (SPL; 2014, available since 2015)
 - Fathers could previously access 'additional paternity leave' via mothers
 - SPL similar: mothers can 'share' maternity leave with fathers
 - Pay is arranged separately (Shared Parental Pay), with different entitlements and definitions

POLICY
LANDSCAPE
UK:
PARENTING
WHEN
PARENTS
SEPARATE

- Children and Families Act (2014) also consequences for divorced couples
 - Consideration of 50/50 care presumption (not enacted);
 involvement of both parents in best interest of child
 - Rather: 'loose endorsement' of idea of shared parenting
 - Emphasis on individual/private arrangements
- Cuts to public services (incl. legal aid), so diminishing families' abilities to get help in making postseparation parenting arrangements
- Child Maintenance Service (replaced Child Support Agency; 2014)
 - Withdrawal of the state

POLICY
LANDSCAPE
NL:
PARENTING
WHEN
PARENTS
TOGETHER

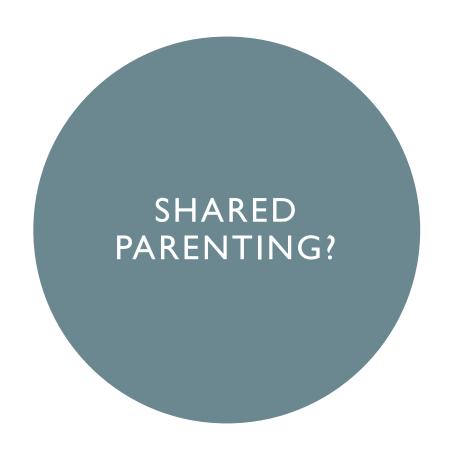
- Modernization of Leave and Working Time (2015)
 - Fathers/partners 3 extra days; expansion of rights for adjustment of working hours; more flexibility in take-up of parental leave (when, duration, etc).
- No discussion of shared parenting / gender equality
 - Policy sees leave as part of employer relationship; legislation plays a facilitating role
- Birth Leave (2019)
 - Replaces/extends paternity leave: I week paid, no ceiling
 - An extra 5 paid weeks available from 1 July 2020
 - Equal sharing of work and care explicitly mentioned in legislation

Sources: Yerkes and Den Dulk, 2015; Den Dulk and Yerkes, 2019; Memorie van Toelichting, 2019.

POLICY
LANDSCAPE
NL:
PARENTING
WHEN
PARENTS
SEPARATE

- Joint legal custody long history in NL: introduced 1998; sole custody an exception
- Promotion of Continued Parenting and Proper Divorce Act (2009)
 - Children whose parents have joint legal custody: "the right to equal care and upbringing by both parents" (Poortman and van Galen, 2017: 532; Staatsblad 2008)
 - 50-50 care is encouraged but not required (Nikolina, 2015)

Sources: Poortman and van Galen, 2017: 532; Staatsblad 2008; Nikolina, 2015.



Leave take-up:

- UK: no national statistics. Take up of SPL estimated 2-8%
- NL: no statistics yet on newest leave forms, but:
 - 86% of eligible fathers took paternity leave in 2017
 - More fathers take holidays/paid annual leave
 - 22% of mothers vs 11% of fathers take parental leave (average duration 14 vs 19 months respectively)

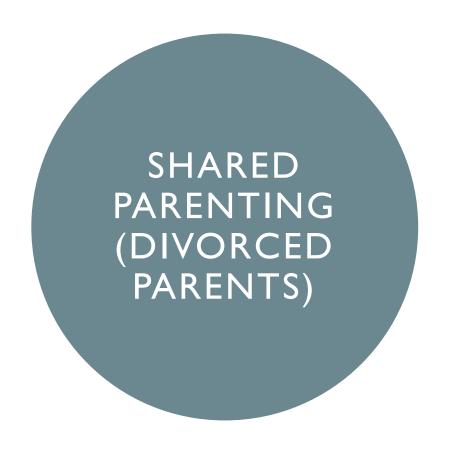
Sources: O'Brien and Koslowski, 2018; den Dulk and Yerkes, 2019.

SHARED PARENTING?

		2006	2011	2016
Netherlands	Fathers	6.1 hours	5.8 hours	6.2 hours
	Mothers	10.7 hours	8.4 hours	9.8 hours
UK*	Fathers			1.9 hours
	Mothers			4.7 hours

Source: Roeters, 2017; ONS/HETUS, 2015.

^{*}Data are for 2015.



• UK:

- Less than 1% of children in 50-50 care
- 'Shared care' between 3 and 7% (Haux et al., 2017)

• NL:

Anywhere between 20-28% of parents choose for 'co-parenting'/shared residence (Poortman & van Galen, 2017; Portegijs & van den Brakel, 2018)



- Family policy: complex and interrelated sets of policies with potential to facilitate gender equality in parenting
 - Conceptualisation of shared parenting remains unclear
- Shared parenting ideals rhetorically promoted in parental leave and child support policies
 - Significant policy reforms in UK and NL show evidence of shared parenting ideals
 - Parental leave explicit about 'shared' parenting but parents' choice
 - Child support explicit about 'shared' parenting (NL) but not 50-50; UK 'loose endorsement' of idea
- Parents capabilities for shared parenting restricted
 - Particularly when accounting for socio-economic differences



- Work in progress
- Claessens and Mortelmans (2018) highlight a crucial gap in our understanding of gender equality in parenting
- But need for nuanced understanding of family policy context
 - Underlying policy principles
 - What this means for parents' capabilities for shared parenting within these contexts



Keep in touch:

• Mara: M.A.Yerkes@uu.nl

Laura: <u>dendulk@essb.eur.nl</u>

• Jana: J.Javornik@Leeds.ac.uk

: www.worklifecapabilities.com



#ERC_capable