Parental leave: supporting male parenting? A study using longitudinal data of policy variation across the European Union.

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Abstract

Can parental leave arrangements promote equal sharing by men and women of both paid employment and childcare, and if so, which types of arrangements? This is the broad question examined. The European Union directive on parental leave (96/34/EC) came into force in June 1996 (though parental leave arrangements were already in place in some member states). There were several aims behind the directive, the primary consideration being to reconcile work and family life for men and women (EC Network 1998). However there is little systematic knowledge of the practical significance of the parental leave arrangements in Europe with respect their increasing the amount of time that men spend with their children. Given this situation, the focus of the paper is on empirical issues. Women are still responsible for the majority of childcare in all countries and the vast majority of leave takers are women. The aim here is to discover whether despite this being the case, there are still significant differences in male participation in childcare between member states. Firstly, a father-friendly policy index is created in order to construct a typology of types of parental leave provision. Secondly, the paper looks at the number of hours a week spent by men caring for their children. In order to present comparative data, the European Community Household Panel is used to calculate these estimates of the time men spend with their children in different member states. Finally the relationships between the amount of time men spend caring for their children and different forms of parental leave policy are examined.

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SECTION 1

1.1 Introduction

The study of parental leave and equal parenting is becoming increasingly important. One of the major socio-economic transformations of the last twenty-five years in Western Europe is that of women's increased participation in the labour force (Crompton 1999:2). Thus as production in society changes, so new solutions have to be found for reproduction. There has been much emphasis on the study of how mothers are managing to combine both domestic and work responsibilities (e.g. Saurel-Cubizolles et al 1999, Dex and Joshi 1999, Gornick et al 1997). However, much less on the agenda has been the counter flow of fathers progressing from the sole role of breadwinner to the dual role of breadwinner and carer. This is beginning to change. The recent resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Ministers for Employment and Social policy (2000/C 218/02), on the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life, is one such example.

The central question to be addressed in this paper is whether social policy can promote equal sharing by men and women of both paid employment and childcare? The European Parental Leave Directive (1996) requires EU member states to ensure the legal entitlement of fathers (and mothers) to a minimum of three months, unpaid leave after the birth of a child. Adoptive parents of children up to eight years old must have the same right. However, most EU member states already had parental leave schemes in place by 1996 that mostly exceeded the minimum provisions set out in the directive (NFPI 2000: 1). Bruning and Plantenga (1999: 196) find considerable variance in parental leave legislation across European countries. Sweden was the first country to implement a parental leave scheme and this legislation embodied the ideology of shared roles in parenting. This strategy for equality through transforming the strict division of labour between the sexes so that the tasks of earning and caring are commonly shared by women and men has been called "gender reconstruction" (Chamberlayne cited in Sainsbury 1996: 173). Not all parental leave policy has had this rationale however. Assuming that parental leave is a strategy to influence gender relations, then according to Chamberlayne (1993) it could be cast as one of five types. With reference to her typology (Table 1), it could be that some parental leave programs actually reinforce traditional gender roles and

do not encourage male parenting at all. Others may be cast in gender neutral language but still be inaccessible to fathers in practical terms.

Table 1. Typology of strategies to influence gender relations

Gender neutrality	Reformulating laws in gender neutral terms for formal equality.
Gender recognition	Equality can only be achieved by taking differences between men and women into account and compensating the disadvantage sex accordingly.
Gender reinforcement	Based on separate roles gender ideology, proposing to upgrade wifely and motherly labour.
Gender reconstruction	Strives for equality through transforming the strict division of labour between the sexes so that the tasks of earning and caring are commonly shared by women and men.
Individualisation	Advocates the individual as unit of legislation rather than family or household.

Source: Chamberlayne cited in Sainsbury 1996: 173.

Parental leave programs are not necessarily part of a strategy to affect fathering behaviour at all, but part of a wider discussion about how to create a better balance between work and family life. This debate could also benefit those not responsible for dependent children especially in cases where parental leave is developed into a more general career break system such as that in Denmark or Belgium. The balancing of family and work is increasingly moving from private choice to state remit but it is only in the Scandinavian countries that there has been reform with the specific aim of equal parenthood (Haas 1992: 12). Other rationales for the government action of introducing parental leave include; maintaining economic productivity by retaining women in the labour market (Harker 2000: 1), concern for the welfare of mothers and infants (Harker 2000: 2), maintaining birth rates (Haas 1992: 220), reducing unemployment (Wilkinson 1997: 84) and relieving the parenting deficit caused by the rise of dual earning households and long working hours (Wilkinson 1997: 11). Different countries have a different priority of rationales for action. The question is whether the rationale is important with respect to increasing male parenting.

1.2 Theoretical context

The study focuses primarily on empirical data and a quantitative approach is adopted, but framed by two theoretical perspectives. Welfare state restructuring is the primary theoretical context for this study. The welfare states of the European Union are in

"crisis" (Sainsbury 1996: 173). This is not surprising given that the stable, one (male) earner family was the model on which post-war welfare state expansion rested and is still the linchpin of policy although no longer the dominant model (Esping-Andersen 1999: 49). A re-appraisal of the work-family nexus is necessary to assess welfare state sustainability and to update social policy. A study of parental leave contributes to this process. Since the mid 1970s, mainstream scholarship on the welfare state has been characterised by a growing interest in comparing welfare states and social policies in an effort to distinguish between types of welfare state and to identify key dimensions of variation (Sainsbury 1996: 9). The term "welfare state regime" refers simply to a particular category within a welfare state typology. Esping-Anderson (1990) identifies three welfare state categories in what is perhaps the most notable welfare state typology: the Nordic social democratic welfare state, the Continental European welfare state and the Anglo-Saxon liberal welfare state. He uses the quality of social rights as measured by decommodification (eliminating dependence on the market), the pattern of stratification resulting from welfare state policies, and the nature of the state-market nexus to distinguish between the three regimes (Sainsbury 1996: 12). Analysing most of the EU member states allows for the measurement of convergence or divergence of parental leave policy with respect to his typology. It has been argued that the Mediterranean countries should be considered distinct from Continental Europe (Castles 1996). Therefore, this will also be considered in the analysis. Orloff (1993: 312) and Sainsbury (1996: 33) among others find that mainstream typologies are flawed due to their inattention to gender and so it will perhaps not be surprising if my findings do not correspond to Esping-Anderson's typology.

Feminist theory is the secondary theoretical context. The underlying assumption of this study is that the inequality of the division of labour in the family, and particularly women's disproportionate responsibility for child rearing, is the cornerstone of gender inequality (Chodorow 1978). Indeed Swedish policy makers have explicitly recognised that equality for women cannot be realised unless the roles and responsibilities of men are transformed (Haas 1992: 217). Employers might give women workers more respect and become more willing to invest in their occupational potential if they know women were not the only ones who would take time away from work to care for small children (Haas 1992: 9). Despite this, few studies have

considered male access to parenting as an explicit policy goal. The only study to-date tackling the broad question of the kind of social arrangements that can promote equal sharing of both employment and childcare is Haas (1992). Analyses of women's increased participation in the labour market have attracted more attention than the subsequent impact on the well-documented unequal division of domestic responsibilities and segregation of occupation by gender (Anderson, Bechofer, and Gershuny 1994, Lewis 1997, Jenson 1997). Also, as noted by O'Connor (1993: 501), there is an absence of gender analysis in almost all comparative research while most studies that focus on gender are not comparative. The proposed study aims to redress that imbalance, and contribute to the comparative literature that integrates gender issues more explicitly into research on welfare-state regimes.

1.3 Outline of research

The central hypothesis of the paper is that different policies contribute to different outcomes of male parenting, thereby demonstrating that social policy can make a difference. There are two stages of analysis: the comparative analysis of a) the nature of implementation, and b) the outcomes of parental leave policy with respect to male parenting. Theoretical implications can then be drawn from empirical findings.

- Firstly, I detail the provision of parental leave policy across the European Union (and Norway for completeness), construct a father-friendly policy index and a typology of parental leave programs for the years 1994 – 1996.
- Secondly, using the European Community Household Panel (ECHP), I present comparative data for the EU member states for the years 1994-1996. I look at the number of hours men spent caring unpaid for children. I would not expect to find large numbers of men caring. Recent research shows fathers in post-industrial societies are beginning to spend more time with their children, but there is little dispute that couples practising equal parenthood are few (Haas 1992: 2).
- Finally, I examine the relationships between the amount of time spend caring and the different forms of parental leave policy.

SECTION 2 - Parental leave arrangements across the European Union 1994-1996

Table 1 (see end of section) presents an overview of the minimum national provisions for parental leave across Europe. With the exception of the UK, Belgium, Ireland and Luxembourg, parental leave was a right of workers in all EU countries for the period 1994-1996. For the UK, Ireland and Luxembourg, the 1996 Directive implied the introduction of parental leave. Belgium did not have a parental leave scheme, but it did have a 'career break scheme' which could be used for various reasons, including the care of a child. The state allowed people to take leave up to one year at a time, with a maximum of five years of breaks over a working lifetime. Originally, Denmark had a parental leave scheme, but this was developed for broader use, resembling the scheme in Belgium. These career break schemes are counted as being equivalent to parental leave schemes in this analysis. Given that parental leave programs differ largely from country to country, there are various dimensions of variation between them. The only common element is that employees have the right to return to their previous job, with the exception of the Netherlands where this is not always guaranteed.

The aim is to construct a typology of parental leave programs with respect to these variations. This is done by first creating an index of how father-friendly national parental leave programs are. Countries are given a weighted score for each dimensions of variation. Those dimensions of variation considered more important to facilitating male parenting (after reference to the literature) are weighted more heavily. The sum of these scores reflects how father friendly a country's program is. The scores are of course subjective and will have a certain margin of error, but all judgements are based on information from the current literature concerning parental leave.

Wilkinson has constructed a regional typology of parental leave schemes (see Table 2). This has four categories, Scandinavia, Northern Europe, Southern Europe and Beyond Europe. Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999) only identifies three welfare state categories: the Nordic social democratic welfare state, the Continental European welfare state and the Anglo-Saxon liberal welfare state. Wilkinson's Scandinavian

grouping would concur with Esping-Andersen's social democratic category. Esping-Andersen would however fail to differentiate between the Northern and Southern Europe categories, not agreeing with Wilkinson or Castles (1996) that the Mediterranean countries should be considered distinct from Continental Europe. The other discrepancy is that the UK and Ireland would fall into the beyond Europe category if the typologies were blended.

Table 2. A regional typology of parental leave schemes

Region	Country
Scandinavia	Denmark Finland Norway Sweden
Northern Europe	Austria Belgium France Germany The Netherlands
Southern Europe	Greece Italy Portugal Spain
Beyond Europe	Australia Canada New Zealand The United States

(Source: Wilkinson 1997: 66).

2.1 Dimensions of variation

2.1.1 Family right or individual right

Parental leave can be organised on a family or individual basis. If the right is a family right, then parents must choose who will make use of the parental leave allocated to the family. In contrast, if both parents have an individual, non-transferable entitlement to parental leave, then both can claim a period of leave. If one parent does not take advantage of this entitlement, then the right expires. Between 1994-1996, parental leave was an individual, non-transferable right in only three EU countries – Denmark, Greece and the Netherlands, though the career break in Belgium is also an individual right.

Bruning and Plantenga (1999: 200) find that in countries with only a family right, it is always predominantly the woman that takes the leave. The share of Austrian fathers

making use of the option has never topped the 1% mark whilst the share of German fathers has hovered between 1% and 2% for years. Similarly, it is primarily French mothers who make use of the right to parental leave; only around 1% of the leave takers were fathers (Bruning and Plantenga 1999: 201). Where fathers can use an individual right, such as in Denmark, the number taking leave goes up to around the 10% mark (New Ways 1998: 7). In Norway after the introduction of the father quota, the take-up rates of men increased from 4% in 1993 to 70% in 1995 and this percentage seems to be rather stable (Bruning and Plantenga (1999: 202) citing Brandth and Kvande (1998)). Whether or not leave is a family right or an individual right is obviously influential for male parenting. Given this, a score of zero is given to those countries with no leave at all. A score of five is given to those countries with only a family right, and a score of 10 to those countries with some of the leave being an individual right.

Table 3. Family right or individual right.

Individual Score = 10	Combination Score = 10	Family Score = 5
Belgium Greece Netherlands	Denmark Finland Norway Sweden (as of 1996)	Austria France Germany Italy Portugal Spain

Source: Wilkinson (1997: 67,74,78) and Source: European Commission (1996).

There is a clear Scandinavian distinction but no differentiation between Southern and Northern Europe.

2.1.2 Paid or unpaid leave

In the Netherlands, Spain, Greece and Portugal leave was unpaid. In all other EU countries, leave takers are compensated more or less for their loss of earnings. Payments vary from fixed, flat rate amounts in Belgium, Denmark, France and Austria to (partial) continued payment of salary in Germany, Sweden, Finland and Italy. One of the barriers to men's electing to stay home from work to care for their babies in Sweden according to Haas (1992: 150) was a significant loss of income due the 90% rather than 100% compensation level. If this is the case, where leave is unpaid, we could expect very low rates of take up. Haas (1992: 208) found it clear

from the Swedish case that financial reimbursement is crucial to men's willingness to take leave. Whether or not leave is paid, and how much are very important factors in whether men take leave. Given this, a score of zero is given to those countries with either no leave or unpaid leave. Where a percentage figure of wage compensation is available, this is divided by 10. In Denmark wage compensation is a percentage of unemployment benefit. As unemployment benefit in Denmark is very generous, this figure is also used. Where a percentage figure is not available but wage compensation is known to be low, a score of 5 has been awarded. France is the exception and has been awarded a score of 2.5 as it is only for the second child.

Table 4 Paid or unpaid leave.

High level wage compensation	Score	Low level wage compensation	Score	Unpaid Score = 0
Denmark - Up to 80% of the max rate of unemployment benefit	**8**	**Austria** – Allowance available for working people, amount depends on age.	**5**	**Greece Netherlands Portugal**
Finland – 66% of recipients' earnings for 158 days. Low fixed rate for remaining period.	**6.6**	Monthly allowance for couples equivalent oc£280.	**5**	**Spain**
Norway – 100% of wages for 42 weeks. Extra 10 weeks available at 80% of wages.	**10**	**Belgium** –Flat-rate with higher payment for 2+ children Career break rate c£250/month.	**2.5** **5** **3**	
Sweden - 90% wage compensation for the two 30-day periods. 80% for next 210 days. Low fixed rate for last 90 days.	**9**	**France** – only for second child and thereafter. **Germany** – 600 DM per month is provided on a means-tested basis until the child is 2. **Italy** – 30% of normal earnings.		

Source: Wilkinson (1997: 67,74,78) and Source: European Commission (1996).

The Scandinavian countries again stand out as a group here. There is also an argument for making a differentiation between Southern and Northern Europe, with the exception of the Netherlands.

2.1.3 Duration of leave

There are wide variations across Member States in the duration of leave. In some countries the entitlement to parental leave is limited to three months, as in Greece; or to six months, as in Italy. In other countries, the duration can be extended up to 36 months, as in France and Spain. It should be noted that in some countries (notably Finland and Norway) after the initial parental leave period has expired, parents can

still benefit from further leave programs such as childcare leave. This is not being counted in the analysis and so may lead to some distortion in the father friendly score. Also, there is little information on how influential the leave period in encouraging male parenting so less weight is placed on this dimension of variation. Countries are awarded one point for each six months of leave time, the assumption being that the longer the better.

Table 5 Duration of leave

Up to 36 mths Score = 6	Between 1-2 years Score = 4	Less than one year.	Score
Finland France Germany Spain Sweden	Austria – 2 years full time or 4 years part time Belgium – 12 months each Denmark – up to 2 years	Greece – 6 months (3 mths per parent) Italy – 6 months Netherlands – 12 months (6 mths per parent) part time Norway - 42-52 weeks Portugal – 6 months (special circumstances not counted)	1 1 2 2 1

Source: Wilkinson (1997: 67,74,78) and Source: European Commission (1996).

There is no discernible regional pattern to which countries take longer periods of leave.

2.1.4 Flexibility

In some parental leave programs, leave can be taken part time or full-time and there is the possibility of dividing the leave into fragments, there being a number of years during which entitlement to parental leave remains valid. In the Netherlands, leave could only be taken on a part time basis. The premise for this legislation was based on the assumption that the problems surrounding women's re-entry into the workforce would be reduced by this approach (Bruning and Plantenga 1999: 204). Only in France, Finland and Sweden did parents have the legal choice between part time and full time, though in Belgium, Germany and Austria part-time work was possible, under the condition that the employer agrees. Staggered leave is on offer in only a limited number of countries. In Sweden, parents can for example, opt to take leave in one or more 'blocks'. Leave can also be taken in sections in Denmark, Belgium, Greece, Finland, Germany and France. As the total leave duration is limited by the age of the child, such a block approach can mean the loss of some part of the total leave entitlement. The most generous provision is in Denmark, where leave can be

taken until the child is nine. The assumption is that the more flexible leave is the better. Both types of flexibility were given a score out of five; with five being the most flexible and zero being the least flexible.

Table 6 Flexibility of leave

Part-time leave allowed				Fragmenting of leave possible		
Yes	Score	No	Score	Yes	Score	No = 0
Austria (a)	4	Denmark	0	Belgium – max of 5 years	5	Austria
Belgium (a)	4	Greece	0	in adult lifetime		France
Finland – reduction of	5	Italy (d)	2	Denmark – until child is 9	5	Italy
hours also allowed until		Portugal(e)	2	Finland – until child is 3	2.5	Netherlands
child is at school France	5	Spain (c)	1	Germany – until child is 3	2.5	Portugal
Germany (a)	4			Greece – until child is 2.5	2.5	Spain
Netherlands (b)	4			Norway – until child is 2	2.5	
Norway	5			Sweden – until child is 8	5	
Sweden	5					

(a) with employers consent (b)part time only

(c) Parent may shorten work by 2 hours a day during the baby's first year.

(d) Parents with children under 6 can reduce hours by up to a half.

(e) Employees with children below 12 may work a reduced schedule.

Source: Wilkinson (1997: 67,74,78) and Source: European Commission (1996).

The Southern European countries do cluster together in being less flexible in their provision of parental leave.

2.1.5 Conditions of eligibility

Where there are eligibility conditions to take leave are attached to the period of service in employment. In Denmark, Spain, Italy, Austria and Finland, there are no conditions for access to the leave, but in Belgium, Greece, France, the Netherlands and Portugal twelve months of prior employment is required. Variations are found in Germany (four weeks of service) and Sweden (six months of service). Restrictions in leave do occur; in some countries, certain groups are excluded. For example, small companies in Greece can object to the leave when 8% of the workers in the company take parental leave in a year. In Sweden, where one of the stated aims of parental leave was the stimulation of labour market equality among the sexes, payment is much higher if the woman or man has a employment history. This specific framework represented a strong incentive to be active in the labour market before the birth of a child (Bruning and Plantenga 1999: 202). However in terms of promoting male parenting the assumption is that the more universal eligibility is, the better. Countries were given a score out of five. They are awarded a five if there were no

conditions attached to leave, and zero where there is no leave at all. An in between score is awarded if there were lenient conditions attached to leave, and a one if 12 months of service is required.

Looking at Table 7 there is not a clear regional pattern to the conditions of eligibility.

Table 7 Conditions of eligibility

Eligibility attached to employment	Score	No conditions attached to leave	Score
Belgium – 12 months of service (a)	1	Austria – though partner must be	3
Finland – 6 months of service (or 12 in	2	employed	
the last 2 years)		Denmark	5
France – 12 months of service	1	Italy	5
Germany – 4 weeks of service	3	Norway – though much higher rate	4
Greece – 12 months of service	1	if previously in employment	
Netherlands - 12 months of service	1	Spain	
Portugal – 12 months of service	1	Sweden – though much higher rate	5
		if previously in employment	4

(a) The only condition is that the employer must find an unemployed replacement for the leave taker

Source: Wilkinson (1997: 67,74,78) and Source: European Commission (1996).

2.1.6 Government encouragement given to men to assume an equal share of family responsibilities

There has been much variation between countries with respect to whether men are actually expected to take parental leave. It has been documented that many men recognise that they ought to do more in the way of childcare (New Ways 1998: 3). The gap between the new readiness of men to acknowledge the importance of family responsibilities and the low take-up in practice of those responsibilities is largely the result of workplace barriers. Men who want to work shorter hours or take parental leave because they have young children often face considerable prejudice on the part of employers and work-mates (New Ways 1998: 3). One of the barriers to men's electing to stay home from work to care for their babies in Haas' study (1992: 150) was the lack of perceived support from employers, lack of contemporary role models and social support.

In some countries such as Spain, Austria and Germany the care of children is still seen very much as the mother's job. It is not expected that the father will want to claim parental leave. Parental leave programs in these countries are concerned with reducing women's "double shift" as workers and mothers (among other motivations),

but not with increasing male caring. Fatherhood has been given greater importance in Scandinavia. Unusually in Sweden, there is shared legal custody in case of divorce, and this has had a deep and positive impact on men's attitudes and behaviour (New Ways 1998: 15). This is reflected by the fact that in the Scandinavian countries there have been public awareness programs to encourage men to spend time at home on parental leave. It may be that the only way to realise an increase in male parenting is to have it as one of the central motivations behind a parental leave program. Given its probable importance, this dimension of variation was weighted out of a score of 10. The maximum score was awarded to countries that had run publicity campaigns.

Table 8 Has your government encouraged men to assume an equal share of family responsibilities through awareness programs?

No = 0	Yes = 10
Austria	Denmark
Belgium	Finland
France	Norway
Germany	Sweden
Greece	
Italy	
Netherlands	
Portugal (before 1998)	
Spain (a)	

(a) Men have a right to reduce their working hours during the lactation period of a child under 9 months

Source: European Network 1998: 3 (NB Not all questions were answered by all participants, Haas (1992) and Wilkinson (1997: 67,74,78).

2.2 Typology of parental leave programs in Europe

Table 9 shows that between 1994-1996, within Europe there are clearly four categories of parental leave provision that cluster regionally (four categories if those not having any parental leave provision are included). This would concur with Wilkinson's typology (Table 2), although her "beyond Europe" category is beyond the scope of this paper. It does not correspond to Esping-Andersen's three categories. This is partly because there are no Anglo-liberal regimes in Europe with parental leave schemes between 1994-1996, but more importantly because there are differences between North and South Europe. These differences are not so marked as the differences between Scandinavia and North Europe, but there is a definite separation between North and South Europe. The Netherlands is an unusual case as whilst national legislation is not as extensive as it could be, this is compensated by the

prevalence of generous employer-employee arrangements both in the private sector and the civil service. This provision is not included in this analysis hence the lower than expected score.

Table 9 Country Scores of father friendliness

Country	**Sum Score (by Region)**
Denmark	42
Finland	41.2
Norway	43.5
Sweden	49
Austria	21
Belgium	29
France	19.5
Germany	25.5
Netherlands	17
Greece	14.5
Italy	16
Portugal	9
Spain	17
Ireland	0
Luxembourg	0
UK	0

2.2.1 Scandinavian countries

Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway belong to the Scandinavian category. From the Table 10 it can be seen that the Scandinavian schemes generally offer; a mix of family and individual leave entitlements, high wage compensation, positive incentives to involved fathers and flexibility to return to work at reduced hours over a long period of time.

2.2.2 Northern Europe

Most schemes act as extended forms of maternity leave and are characterised by long leave times, family leave entitlements, minimal income replacement and few structural incentives to encourage male participation. The persistence of the gender pay gap means that fathers take little or no time off work to maximise the family income during periods of leave. The low level of male take-up and the potentially discriminatory effects of parental leave in northern Europe illustrate that without substantial income replacement and non-transferable elements for men, parental leave schemes fall far short of promoting equal parenthood (Wilkinson 1997: 75). Indeed, they can reinforce traditional gender roles. Belgium is a slight exception to the group

with its career break scheme. The Netherlands is also a slightly different case as parental leave can only be taken on a part time basis.

2.2.3 Southern Europe

Leave in Southern Europe is generally not flexible, is unpaid and only aimed at mothers. The persistence of the gender pay gap means that most families cannot afford to lose a father's income and as parental leave is unpaid, fathers are unable to use the leave. Men are not encouraged to take leave either in the culture of the workplace or financially. Any measures for the reconciliation of family and work life, are as a rule targeted only at women with the aim of protecting maternity and facilitating women's carrying of multiple roles.

Table 10 Parental leave in Europe 1994 – 1996

	Scandinavian	**North Europe**	**South Europe**
Transferability	Combination	Family	Family
Wage Compensation	High	Low	Unpaid
Duration	No clear pattern		
Flexibility – pt or ft	Yes	Yes	No
Flex – fragmenting	Yes	Mixed	Mixed
Eligibility	Universal	Mixed universal and employment based	
Men encouraged to take	Yes	No	No
Index of father friendliness	40+	19 – 30 (with the exception of the Netherlands which scores 17)	Below 19

Table 1. Overview of Parental leave Provisions in European Union Countries, 1994-5										
Country	PL intro	Duration		Transfer-ability	Benefits		Flexibility		Restrictions in coverage	Conditions
		Maximum	Boundaries		Rate	Period	Part time	Fractioning		
Belgium (a)	None	1 year		Individual	Flat-rate with higher payment for two and three children	260Weeks	Yes (b)	Yes	On employer's agreement	12 months of service
Denmark (c)	1992	Max 2 years (b)	Until child is 9	Family and Individual	Flat-rate: 80% of unemployment benefit	10 wks (f) 20 wks (l)	No	Yes for individual	None	No
Germany	1986	max 3 yrs	Until child is 3	Family	Income-related	Until child is 3	Yes (b)	Yes	none	4 weeks of service
Greece	1984	6 mths	Until child is 2.5	Individual	Unpaid		No	Yes	Companies 100 workers and 8% claims	12 months of service
Spain	1994	3 yrs		Family	Unpaid		No	No	None	No
France	1985	3 yrs	Until child is 3	Family	Flat rate from 2nd child	Until child is 3	yes	No	None	12 months of service
Ireland	None									
Italy	1977	6mths	Following ml (d)	Family	Income-related 30% of earnings	26 weeks	no	no	Farmers/self-employed/domestic services	No
Luxembourg	None									
Netherlands	1991	6 mths (part time per parent)	Until child is 4	Individual	Unpaid		Only	no	none	12 months of service
Austria	1990	2 yrs	Until child is 4	Family	Flat-rate ©	104 weeks	yes (b)	no	Prov.govern. Workers and agriculture/forestry	no
Portugal	1984	6 months Max: 24 mths (f)	Following ml (d)	Family	Unpaid		no	no	none	12 months of service
Finland (g)	1980	6 months and until child is 3	Following ml (d) until child is 3	Family and individual	Income-related 66% and Flat rate	20 wks and until child is 3	Yes	yes	none	no
Sweden	1974	18 months (per parent)	Until child is 8	Family and individual	Income-related 80% (10mths) and 90% (2 mths); flat-rate (3 mths)	65 weeks	Yes	yes	none	6 months of service (h)
UK	None									

Notes:
a No parental leave but career break b Only with employer's agreement
c Leave can also be used for other reasons, such as training, only wo rkers taking leave to care for children are guaranteed their jobs
d ML = maternity leave e Higher for single parents or low income families
f Portugal: maximum of 24 months to be taken in special circumstances g Basic parental leave and extended "child care" leave
h Or 12 months in the last 2 years Source: European Commission (1996) and Wilkinson (1997: 67, 74, 78)

SECTION 3

3.1 The Data

In Section 2 different variations among parental leave programs have been detailed. An index of policy father friendliness has been constructed. In Section 3, the impact that different policy programs have on male parenting is evaluated. The number of men taking leave is difficult to estimate; though, this is the approach taken by Bruning and Plantenga (1999: 199). Firstly, there is a lack of reliable and comparative data. Secondly, there is the problem of interpreting the data, for example, the distinction common in most countries between parental, maternity and paternity leave does not always apply. Thirdly, a problem, which also complicates the interpretation of data, concerns the fact that collective labour agreements in a number of countries can mean deviations from national legislative entitlements. Well-known examples are Denmark and the Netherlands. In these countries, a large number of civil servants receive a higher benefit payment than is fixed by law. Such supra-minimum agreements clearly influence the popularity of leave regulations, resulting in a situation whereby empirical data on leave takers no longer match (completely) with national regulations.

Haas (1992: 184) found fathers that had taken parental leave did more childcare even after the leave period had expired, than those fathers that had not taken leave. Comparative data does exist detailing the amount of time that fathers spend on unpaid childcare. For this analysis, the numbers of hours per week fathers with children under nine spend caring for them is the dependent variable. The age of nine was chosen as a cut off point as this is the oldest age that was catered for by parental leave legislation. What is lost in specificity by not analysing actual take up rates of parental leave, is gained from the increased comparability of this measure.

For this analysis the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) is used. There were at the time of writing three waves (complete annual cycles of the survey) in the public domain, (1994, 1995 and 1996). Data were initially available for twelve EU countries, Denmark, Ireland, Netherlands, Greece, UK, Spain, France, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg. Data for Austria are available from wave 2, Finland from wave 3 (and Sweden will be from wave 4). The initial sample was of approximately 158,000 individuals interviewed, in 55,000 households. This sample was reduced to 11319 households.

Longitudinal data permits research on change at the micro (individual or household) level in contrast to repeated cross sectional surveys which focus on change at the macro (population) level (Buck et al 1994: 4. In this analysis the data is mostly used in a cross-sectional fashion as at only three years old the ECHP is not a mature panel. Whether or not there appears to be the beginnings of a particular trend in male parenting behaviour is however considered.

3.2 The Analysis and Results

For each wave, country by sex for those caring unpaid for children for 14+ hours/week is tabulated. For each wave, the χ^2 statistic shows that the sample was representative of the population at the 95% confidence level. The proportion of child carers that are male, caring 14+ hours a week, averaged over the three years, varies across countries from 41% in Denmark to just 13% in Portugal. The two Scandinavian countries for which data are available Denmark and Finland have the highest proportion of male child carers during the period 1994-1996 (above 40%). Then the Northern European countries have a medium (29-36%) proportion of male child carers with the exception of Austria and France. These countries, along with the Southern European countries have the lowest (13-28%) proportion of male child carers. Having obtained the proportion of carers (14+ hours/week unpaid) that are male, the next step is to see whether there are any trends across waves. This was repeated for those caring unpaid for children for 28+ hours a week.

Using the analysis of variance single factor analysis I obtained a p-value of 0.5. This means that any trend between waves is not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. The same applied to the proportion of carers that are male spending both 14+ and 28+ hours/week caring unpaid. The proportion of fathers caring does not increase between 1994 – 1996.

It is clear from Tables 1 and 2 that there are differences between the countries in male parenting behaviour. What explains these differences in male parenting behaviour? A simple limited dependent variable analysis is used, under a probit specification (Greene 1991: 662-700). A logit was also estimated; the results are comparable. This procedure identifies the impact of certain individual and country specific

characteristics on the probability of a man spending more than 14 hours per week caring for children without financial returns in 1996. The dependent variable takes the value 1 if the man spends more than 14 hours per week caring for children and zero otherwise. The explanatory variables include age, age^2 (included to allow for a non-linear effect), whether men have two, three, four or more children, the total number of hours worked a week, the total net annual household income, whether they are married, country of residence and finally the father-friendly policy index created in chapter 2. Denmark has been used as the reference country as from Chapter 2 and tables 1 and 2, it would seem to have more male parenting than other countries. The table presents the marginal effects calculated at the sample means rather than coefficients to ease interpretation. These can be interpreted as the impact of a unit change in the explanatory variable on the probability of a man spending more than 14 hours per week caring for children.

Any missing observations had already been excluded prior to producing Table 3. Missing observations are usually a result of non-response. Non response is the failure to obtain complete measurements on the survey sample (Groves 1989: 133). This is generally due to either the failure to obtain any substance from the chosen sample person or where the chosen sample person agrees to take part in the research but fails to answer all of the questions fully. The ECHP uses the standard remedies for these problems, which are weighting for attrition and imputation for item/individual non-response. However in estimating this model, I assume that the 1996 ECHP data is representative of the population of the individual countries.

With reference to table 3, the value of the χ^2 statistic indicates that this model has predictive power that is significantly greater than random, despite a rather low pseudo R^2. The latter indicates that the model explains a little over 10% of the variation in the probability of a man caring for his children for more than 14 hours per week.

A t-statistic greater than or equal to 1.96, indicates that the explanatory variable has a statistically significant effect on the probability at the 5% level – we can be sure with 95% certainty that the coefficient on the variable is different from zero. The results suggest that age, hours worked, household income, marital status, the country of

residence and my constructed index are all statistically significant determinants of the probability of a man caring for his children for more than 14 hours per week. The younger a man is, the higher the household income is and the fewer hours he works the more likely he is to look after children for 14+ hours/week. For example, reducing weekly work hours by 10 at the sample mean (which is 39.36) increases the probability by 3 percentage points. A married man is 13 percentage points more likely to look after the children for 14+ hours/week than an unmarried father. Which country a man lives in also makes a difference. If all other characteristics were held constant and all parental leave policies were identical, a man living in the Netherlands or in the UK is about 40 percentage points more likely than a man in Denmark to spend 14+ hours per week looking after the kids. Similarly, living in Ireland or Italy increases the probability by 13 and 31 percentage points respectively. Residing in other countries reduces the probability by between 20 and 30 percentage points relative to living in Denmark. Finally, the value of the father-friendly policy index is also statistically significant. The marginal effect suggests that a one point increase in the index increases the probability of spending 14+ hours/week caring for children by about one percentage point. Adopting a particular policy can greatly change this index. For example, adopting an individually based scheme where no scheme was in place would increase the index by 10 points. This will increase the probability of a father caring 14+ hours/week by approximately 10 percentage points from the sample mean. Therefore, we can conclude that social policy has a significant, and large, effect on male parenting behaviour.

Clearly, however, the diagnostic statistics suggest that much of the variance is left unexplained by this model. In developing the analysis, it might be useful to look at a broader range of explanatory variables such as education level, how many hours a week the female partner works and how much she earns, as well as cultural factors across countries. In addition, examining the effect of changes in policies that countries adopt on the probability of men spending time caring for children would add to our understanding. Unfortunately, these data do not, as yet, allow for such analysis.

Finally, a correlations test was run to see whether different policy components were more significantly correlated with male parenting than others. If the correlation

statistic is higher than 0.6 then there is a significant correlation. From Table 4, it would appear that the level of wage compensation, whether leave can be taken in blocks and whether there is government encouragement for men to take leave are all particularly important elements of a successful parental leave program if male parenting is the aim.

3.4 Tables

Table 1. % Proportion of child-carers (14+ hours/week unpaid) that are male

Country	1994	1995	1996	Average	In Rank
Austria		19.86	20.42	20.14	12
Belgium	27.19	30.92	29.56	29.22	7
Denmark	39.35	42	41.26	40.87	1
Finland			38.98	38.98	2
France	23.83	23.54	24.72	24.03	11
Germany	26.58	30.58	30.78	29.31	6
Greece	18.58	17.32	22.03	19.31	13
Italy	26.96	28.89	29.61	28.49	8
Ireland	23.87	32.57	25.25	27.23	10
Luxembourg	22.42	31.92	33.74	29.36	5
Netherlands	30.56	37.67	39.1	35.77	3
Portugal	11.65	14.2	13.31	13.05	14
Spain	27.29	29.88	26.44	27.87	9
UK	30.01	33.3	28.6	30.63	4

Source: ECHP

Table 2. % Proportion of child-carers (28+ hours/week unpaid) that are male

Country	1994	1995	1996	Average	Rank order
Austria		9.52	10.7	10.11	12
Belgium	20.09	18.77	22.13	20.33	3
Denmark	27.67	29.87	31.66	29.73	1
Finland			28.18	28.18	2
France	14.83	13.59	14.2	14.21	8
Germany	10.61	19.44	16.93	15.66	6
Greece	8.84	4.77	9.59	7.73	13
Ireland	12.49	18.46	13.85	14.93	7
Italy	12.64	13.35	15.31	13.77	9
Luxembourg	8.53	15.93	15.34	13.27	10

Netherlands	11.25	11.96	11.9	11.70	11
Portugal	7.01	7.38	6.07	6.82	14
Spain	14.94	18.02	16.14	16.37	5
UK	18.9	20.44	19.08	19.47	4

Source: ECHP

Table 3 Probit estimates - What explains differences in male parenting behaviour?

Mancares (14 hours or more a week)	**Marginal effect**	**(t-statistic)**
Age	0.007	1.34
$Age^2/100$	-0.024	-3.33**
One child	Reference category	
Two children	0.016	1.46
Three children	-0.013	-0.85
Four or more children	-0.005	-0.20
Hours worked (weekly)	-0.003	-11.44**
Log household income (annually)	0.068	7.93**
Single	Reference category	
Married	0.129	9.54**
Denmark	Reference category	
Austria	-0.207	-9.12**
Belgium	-0.264	-12.59**
Finland	-0.193	-7.49**
Netherlands	0.412	10.45**
Spain	-0.212	-9.57**
Italy	0.132	3.16**
Greece	-0.246	-10.10**
Portugal	-0.276	-10.34**
UK	0.385	6.83**
Ireland	0.310	5.43**
Germany	0.004	0.12
France	-0.196	-8.68**
Index	0.010	10.52**

Log-likelihood	6521.0
χ^2	1367.0

Prob. $>\chi^2$	0.0000
Pseudo R^2	0.112
Number of observations	11319

** This indicates statistical significance at the 5% level.

Source of data: ECHP and the father-friendly policy index developed in chapter 2.

Table 4. Correlations between different policy components and the amount of time men spend caring.

Different policy components	**14+ 1996**	**28+ 1996**
Transferability	0.330	0.318
Wage Compensation	0.441	**0.722**
Duration	0.205	0.397
Full time or part time	0.078	0.031
Can be taken in fragments	0.411	**0.679**
Universal Eligibility	0.206	0.332
Government encouragement for men to take leave	**0.669**	**0.818**
Index	0.481	0.656
GDP per inhabitant 1995 (ECU)	0.586	0.421
Unemployment % 1997	0.095	-0.103
Crude birth rate % 1996	0.300	0.241

Source data: father friendly policy index and Eurostat http:\\www-rcade.dur.ac.uk

Figures in bold show significant correlation.

CHAPTER 4 Conclusions

I have started to investigate the impact of different parental leave policies on different outcomes of male parenting. I found that parental leave programs differ largely from country to country, and there are various dimensions of variation between them. These variations are:

- Leave can be a family or an individual right.
- The level of wage compensation can vary from 100% to nothing at all.
- Duration of leave varies from three months (six months if both parents use their right) to three years (family right).
- Leave can be taken on a part time or full time basis.
- Leave can be taken in one block or fragmented over a number of years.
- Entitlement to leave can be universal or related to a particular period of employment.
- Leave can be targeted at men through government awareness programs.

The father-friendly policy index shows that there are four regional clusters of types of parental leave provision. These are the Scandinavian countries, Northern Europe and Southern Europe. The fourth group, the Anglo-Saxon countries (the UK and Ireland) did not have any parental leave programs. This does not correspond with Esping-Andersen's (1990) typology of welfare state regimes, which does not differentiate between Northern and Southern Europe. The Scandinavian group scores most highly on the father-friendly policy index, followed by the Northern Europe group, the Southern Europe group scoring the lowest. For the period 1994 – 1996, parental leave in the Scandinavian countries was generally characterised by a combination of family and individual right, high wage compensation, flexibility in how leave is taken, being universal and government awareness programs for men. Parental leave in the Northern European countries was generally characterised by family rights, low wage compensation, some degree of flexibility of how leave is taken and a lack of government programs encouraging men to take leave. Parental leave in Southern Europe was generally characterised by family rights, no wage compensation at all, not allowing leave to be taken in a flexible manner and a lack of government programs encouraging men to take leave.

The ECHP provides comparative data on the amount of time that fathers spend weekly on childcare (unpaid). From the data it can be concluded that men spend more time caring for their children in some countries than in others. According to the number of fathers who care for their children, countries in Europe can be classified in three categories: high, medium and low. Countries that are in the high category are the Scandinavian countries. Countries that are in the medium category are the Northern Europe countries with the exception of France and Austria who join the countries that are in the low category which are the Southern Europe countries. With the exception of France and Austria these results correspond with the scores on the father-friendly policy index and so the regional typology of parental leave programs. The average proportions of child carers that are male in the UK and Ireland placed these countries in the medium category. As these countries do not have parental leave programs there must be other determinants which affect male parenting. Whilst parental leave arrangements do support male parenting, they are not really promoting the equal sharing of childcare by mothers and fathers. Mothers are still responsible for a vastly greater proportion of childcare.

Further analysis of the data suggest that age, the number of hours worked, household income, marital status, how father friendly policy is, as well as country of residence were all significant determinants of the probability of a man caring for his children for more than 14 hours per week. The younger, the higher his annual household income is and the less he works, the more likely he is to care for his children for more than 14 hours a week. Much of the variance in male parenting behaviour was left unexplained by the model. However, most importantly, we can conclude that parental leave policy has a significant and large effect on male parenting behaviour. It could be also that in countries where father-care is common, legislators have tended to make relatively generous provision for parental leave (aimed at the father), the direction of this relationship is ambiguous. It would appear however, that particular dimensions of variation of parental leave policy have more significant effects on male parenting behaviour than do others. The level of wage compensation, whether leave can be taken in fragments rather than all at once, and whether there is government encouragement for male take up of leave were significantly correlated with men spending 14+ hours a week caring for his children.

Different policies do contribute to different outcomes of male parenting. The central question addressed in this thesis asks if social policy can promote equal sharing by men and women of both paid employment and childcare. Findings would suggest that yes social policy can be used to promote male parenting. The degree to which it does this, if indeed at all, depends on the content of the policy program. There are specific policy tools that governments can employ, if their aim is to increase male parenting. Recommendations for father friendly parental leave policy are:

- Leave should be an individual right.
- There must be high wage compensation.
- Flexibility should be possible in the way leave can be taken.
- Leave should be targeted at men through government awareness programs.

In developing the analysis in future research, it might be useful to look at a broader range of variables explaining fathering behaviour within countries such as education level, how many hours a week the female partner works and how much she earns, as well as cultural factors across countries. In addition, examining the effect of changes in policies that countries adopt on the probability of men spending time caring for children would add to our understanding. It may also be useful to conduct qualitative analysis with a smaller sample of fathers. To continue to use the ECHP would limit the amount of policy analysis possible. Different types of fathering behaviour could be analysed further with the ECHP however, as well as consequences of this behaviour for male labour market participation and fertility.

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