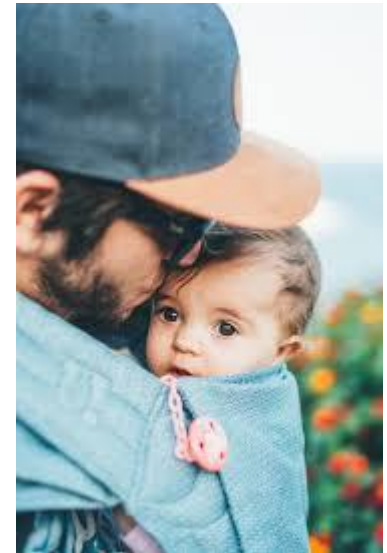


Fathers and Work-Family Balance: challenges, policies and practices

Karin Wall



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Porto, Portugal



Fatherhood in flux

20th century transition:

- Decline male breadwinner model
- Cultural scripts from “father protection” to “father involvement”
- Policies from leave for mothers to leave targeted at fathers



21st century agenda:

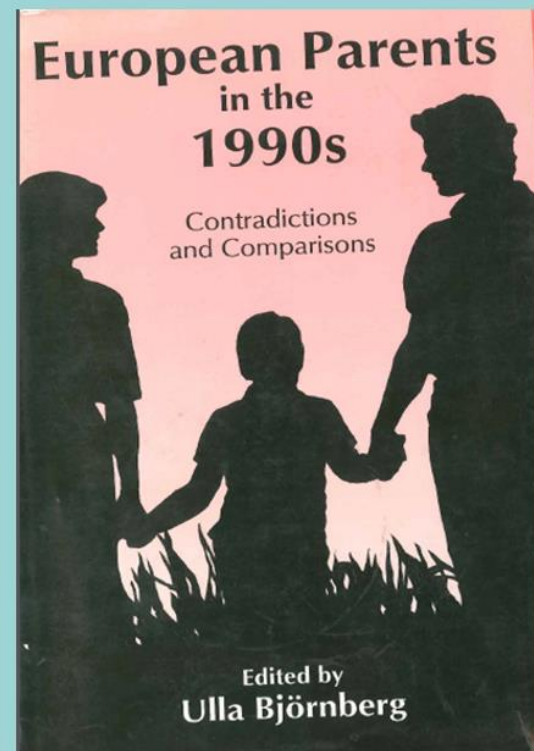
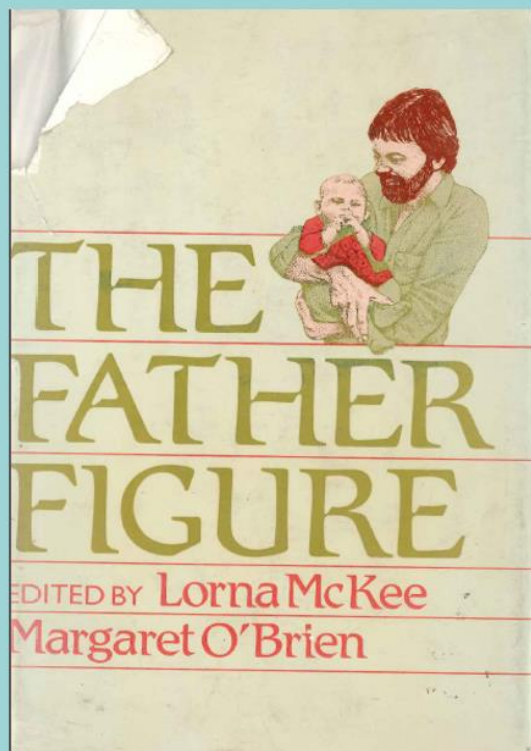
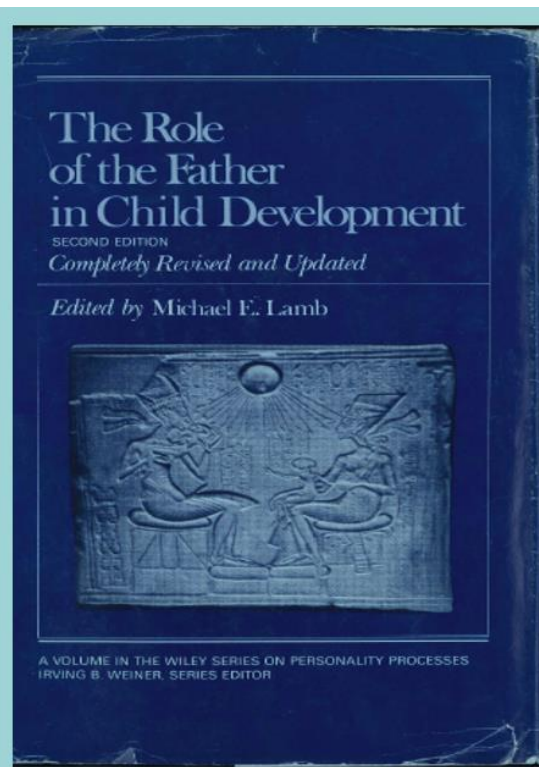
- Fathers’ “two worlds” of work and family
- How do fathers care?



Father-sensitive work-family research & policies



Father-sensitive Research: 1970s, 1980s, 1990s



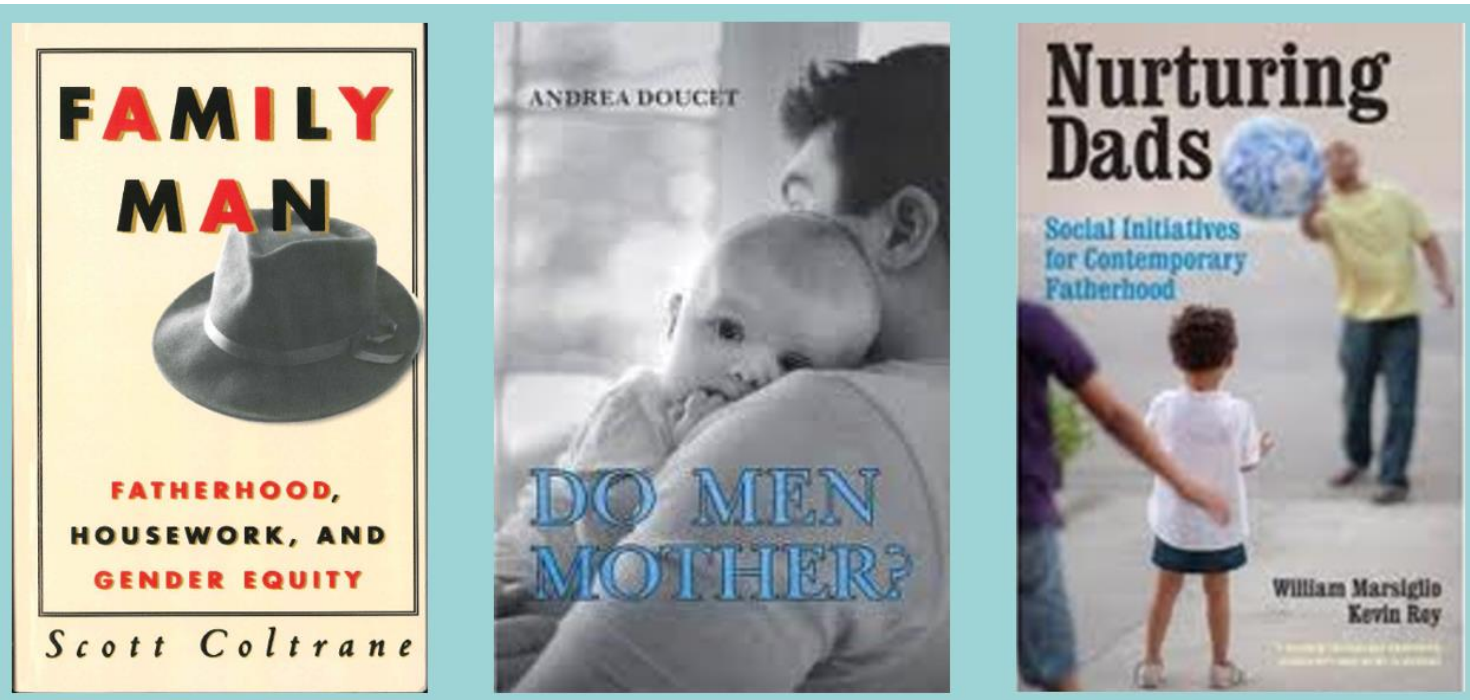
Critique of mother-focused paradigm

- Matri-centred social sciences - mothers and wives
- Exploration of fathers' and men's perceptions of the personal
- Re-evaluation of essentialist elements in concept of patriarchy:

“When men share housework & child care with women important mechanisms of patriarchy are threatened”

McKee & O'Brien, 1982

Father-sensitive research in the 21st century: fathers as partners, carers, involved, nurturers, intimate

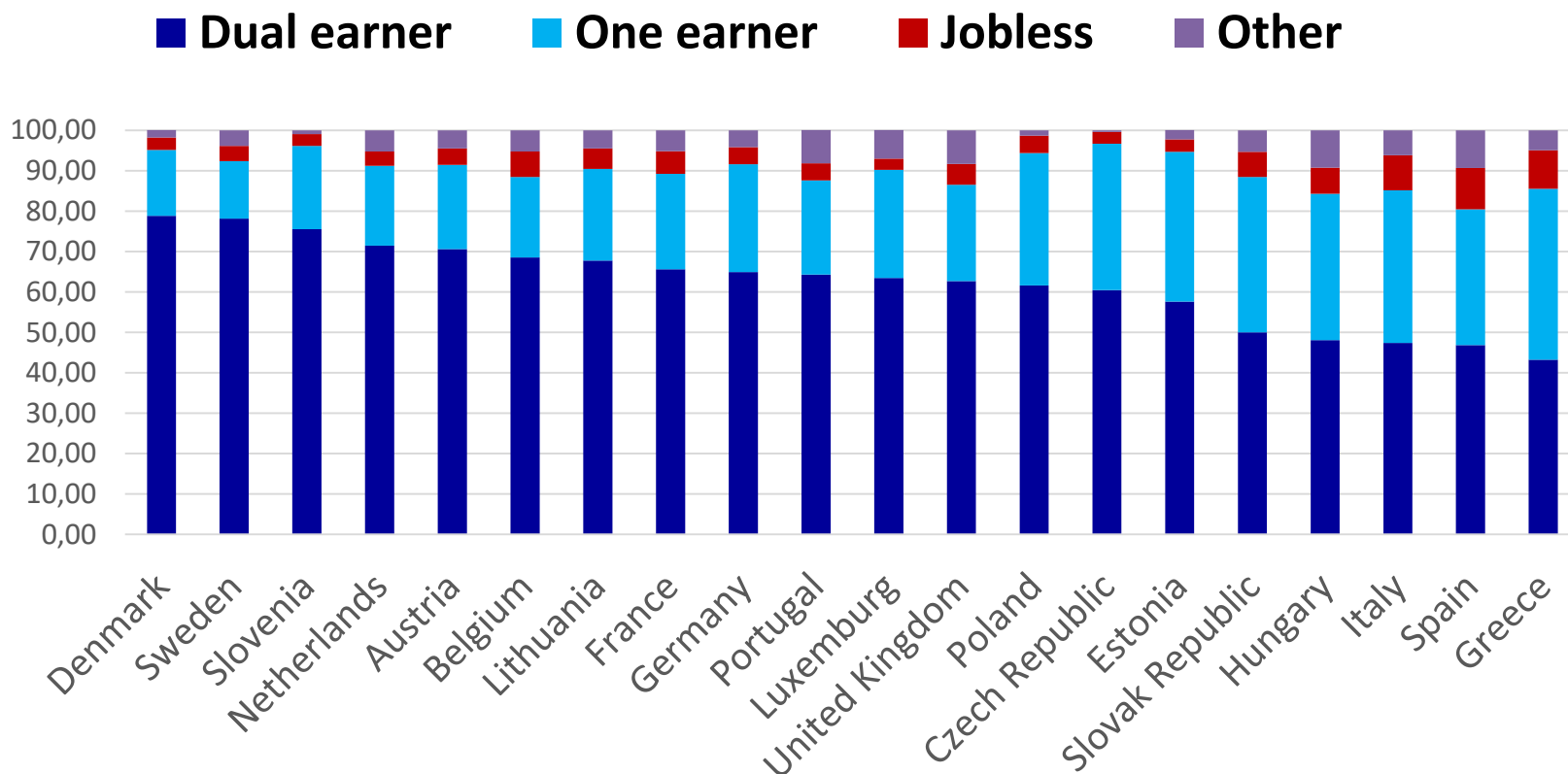


Developing a father-focused paradigm on caring masculinities

- Profiling the role of men in paid work and family life, their work-family stress, comparing with mothers
- Mapping developments in work-family policies and their impact on fatherhood
- Understanding how caring masculinities impact on gender equality
- In-depth studies of fathers' and men's perceptions, agency, practices as carers

Declining solo father earners “breadwinners”

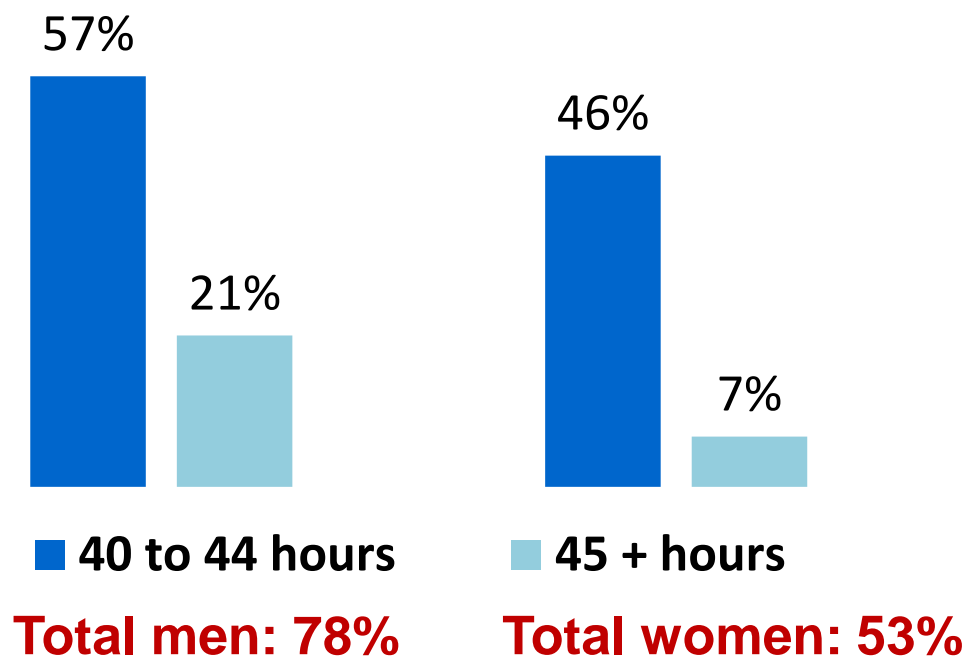
Employment patterns in couples with at least 1 child 0-14 (2014) (%)



Source: OECD family data base

% of fathers and mothers working long hours (40+) Couples with children 0-14

EU Average (2014)

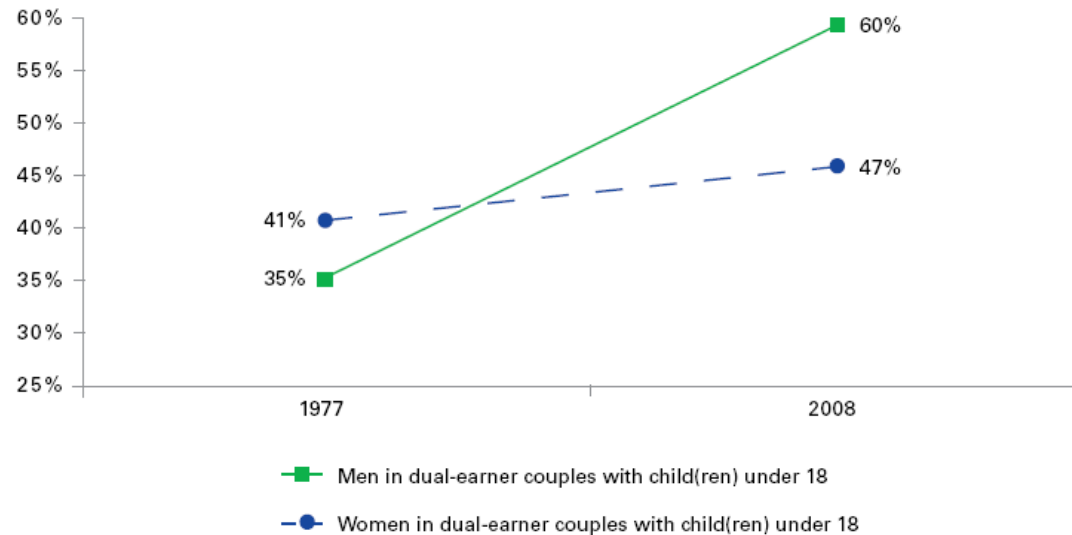


Source: OECD family data base

Fathers and Mothers reporting work-family conflict (%)

Dual earner couples with children under 18 years old

Figure 1: Percentage of Fathers and Mothers in Dual-Earner Couples Reporting Work-Family Conflict (1977–2008)



Statistically significant differences between men and women in dual-earner couples with children under 18: 1977 not significant; 2008 $p < .01$; Statistically significant differences between 1977 and 2008: Men $p < .001$; women not significant. Sample size: 1977 $n = 283$; 2008 $n = 391$. Source: 2008 NSCW, FWI and 1977 QES, U.S. Department of Labor.

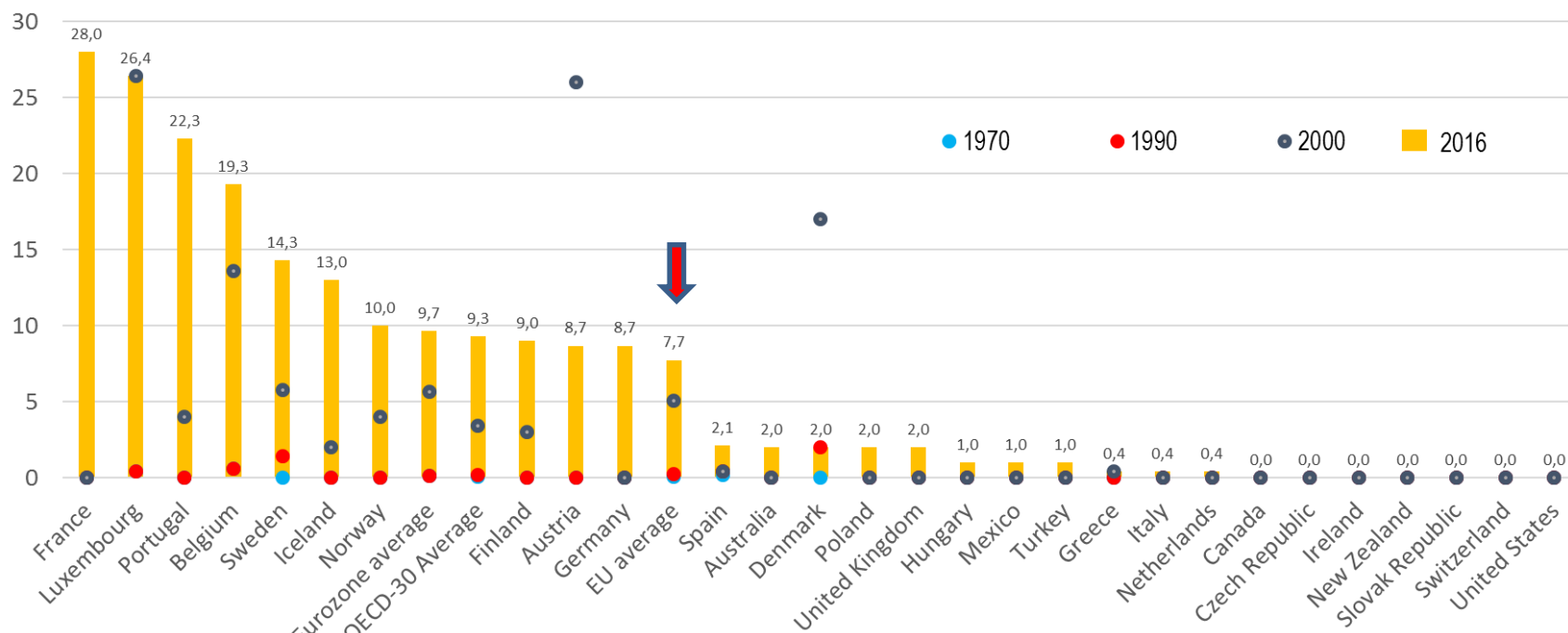
Work-family Policies: fathers' entitlements to leave

- Paternity leave and parental leave targeted at fathers have gradually become more common place across the world.
- Father's quota/month introduced early 1990s – Reform seeking to involve fathers in care and to enhance gender equality in work-family balance
- Slow process and still a highly controversial policy issue: current proposal for a new Directive on Work-Life Balance (European Commission E2017/0085).



- 1) 10 days paternity leave following birth
- 2) General consensus regarding support for work-life balance, but disagreement on fathers' individual non transferable rights

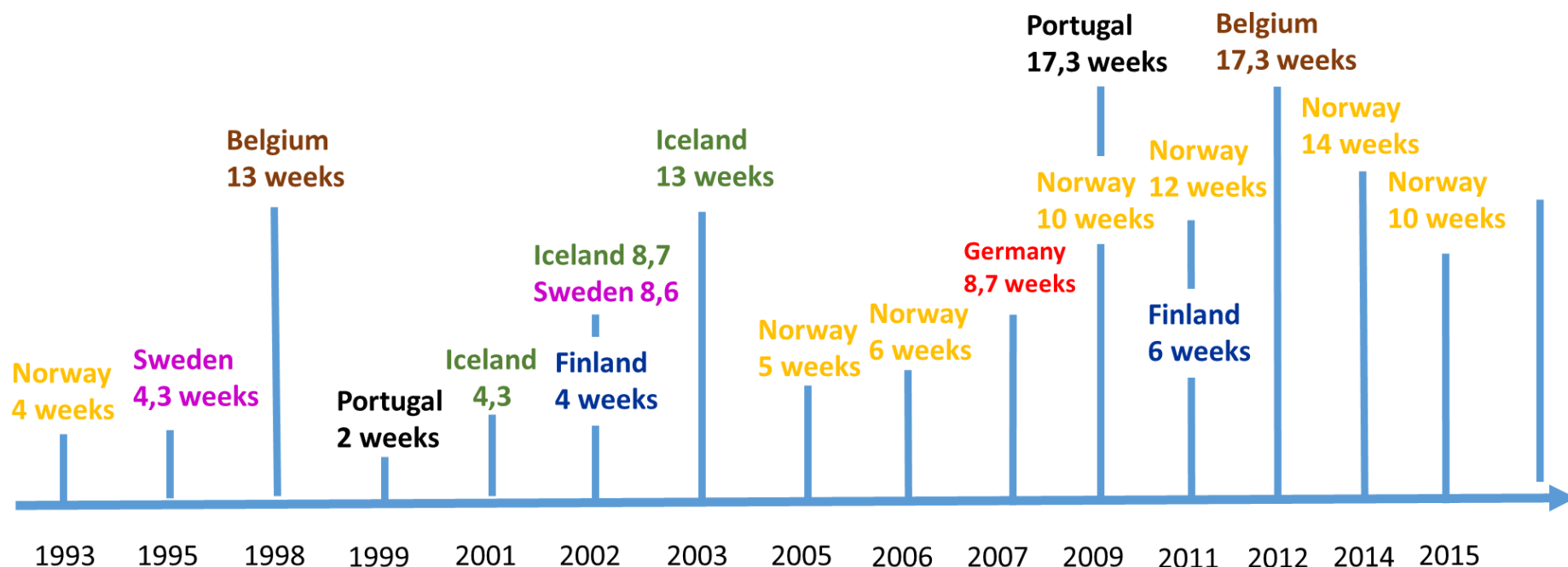
Total length of leave reserved for fathers (weeks) (PATERNITY + PARENTAL + OTHERS) 1970, 1990, 2000, 2016 a)



a) Information refers to entitlements to paid paternity leave, 'father quotas' or periods of paid parental or home care leave that can be used only by the father and cannot be transferred to the mother, and any weeks of sharable paid leave that must be taken by the father in order for the family to qualify for 'bonus' weeks of parental leave. Data reflect entitlements at the national or federal level only, and do not reflect regional variations or additional/alternative entitlements provided by states/provinces or local governments in some countries (e.g. Québec in Canada, or California in the United States).

Source: OECD Family Data Base.

Paid parental leave reserved for “fathers solo care”, by year of introduction – 7 countries



Source: base des données de l'OCDE

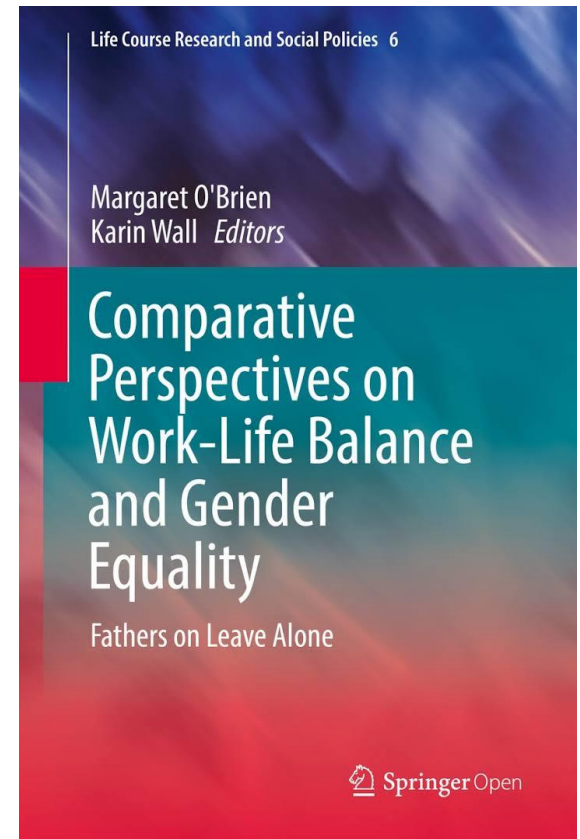
Father's on “Home Alone” Leave: impact and lived experiences

O'Brien and Wall (eds.) (2017)

***Comparative Perspectives on Work-Life Balance
and Gender Equality – Fathers on Leave Alone***

Crossnational comparative study - **11 Countries**

(Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Canada, U.K., France,
Switzerland, Japan, Portugal, Spain)



Research Questions

- How do fathers on leave with a new born child do fathering alone?
- How does solo care (for at least 1 month) impact on their lived experiences and care practices?
- How is gender equality in care work affected?
- What is the impact of different policy context on use and experience of leave?

Theoretical perspectives

- 1 – **Institutional perspective** (comparative welfare research): emphasizes influence of policy context on individuals' actions and expectations
- 2 – **Family interactionist perspective:** emphasizes the autonomous agency of the actor who constructs and negotiates his/her practices (“doing family”)
- 3 - **Gender perspective:** emphasizes influence of gender cultural models and practices, to what extent leave crystallizes or challenges gender inequalities (“doing/undoing gender”)
- 4 – **A socio-structural perspective** emphasizes the influence of social positioning and workplace context

Existing Research

- A Challenge for research in the **Nordic countries**
 - Father's quota/month introduced early 1990s – Reform seeking to involve fathers in care and to enhance gender equality in work-family balance
- Main Findings of Research in the **late 90s**
 - Fathers become more aware of infant life and “slow time” (daily life rhythm related to caregiving) and experience the strengthening of father-child bonds (Brandth & Kvande, 1998, 2001)
 - Fathers build up a Masculine form of “Care work” and being at home: committed to “doing” things with child and “teaching” independence; being with child rather than doing housework; doing other activities...
 - “Undoing gender” not a major trend (Huttenen, 1996; Chronholm, 2002; Rostgaard, 2002; Lammi-Taskula, 2008...)

Methods

- Exploratory comparative qualitative study -meanings, experiences, motivations
- Fathers who had taken leave alone for thirty or more days
- Non-probability purposive sampling 10 - 20 interviews
- Semi-structured in-depth interview schedule (1-3 hours), taped & transcribed
- Case study summaries and thematic analysis

Findings: all countries

- **Policy framework is significant**

Pioneering, forerunners: “looked upon with suspicion” vs “taken for granted”

- **Experience**

Emotionally intense, joyful, “a luxury”, “an oasis”; fatigue, anxiety, boredom

- **Social positioning and Workplace context**

Facilitated by high education, employment and financial resources

- **Transformative?**

Yes, but involved fatherhood and gender egalitarianism not always co-terminous

Policy framework is significant:

- Where the non-transferable “daddy months” have been in place for some time (e.g. Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland) findings show that father’s use of leave alone for two or three months tends to be **“taken-for-granted”**, a “normal” decision both in families and in the workplace.
- Where similar policy measures were introduced recently (e.g. Portugal, Spain), the first **“forerunner” fathers** to take up leave in a home alone manner have had to assert their rights, to deal with some employers’ initial “surprise” and mistrustfulness.
- Where statutory, well-paid, non-transferable rights do not exist (e.g. Switzerland, UK, France) and where labour market contexts favour the long-hour male breadwinner model (e.g. Japan), leave for **fathers with a “frontier spirit”** comes at a heavy price: social stigma, work penalties, “playing down parental employment”, using personal resources.

Experience: *hard work but new skills and a stronger connection to infant life*

- Norway- twenty years after the introduction of the father's quota in 1993, fathers find the experience to be "challenging and tiresome and wonderful"

"Kids that age [6 months] usually sleep for three hours maybe... she never slept that long. Maybe one and a half hours, and then I had to [entertain her]. (...) I would start with something [in the house], and then I'd just give that up." What I managed to do was "basically cleaning and vacuuming and stuff like that. And making the dinner when she was sleeping". (Adam, 15 weeks leave)

- Japan – a few pioneer fathers: hard work and new skills

"The hardest thing was that she wouldn't accept bottled milk when I started caring for her alone. She would accept the bottle from my wife, and loved to be breastfed when my wife came back from work, so I felt a sense of failure and was at a loss as to what to do. But then she suddenly started to drink when I slightly changed the way I held the bottle". (Ikuya, 7 months leave).

Transformative?

- Changing masculinities: more assertive fathers regarding work - family balance

Nils (researcher, 40) *"I work from home one day a week to be able to pick up and drop off [at preschool] that day".*

Carlos (technical production manager, 42) leaves work early to pick up his child from preschool, *"It doesn't matter if I am sitting in a meeting with a super-important person, no, sorry".*

- More gender equality in parenting: fathers on leave alone acquire new skills and become more autonomous

Olli (marketing manager, 39) *"When she was at work and I was on leave, I did everything at home (...) I guess the gender roles in our family were the opposite of how they usually are".*

- But gender equality slow to materialize: not all fathers become primary care givers on a par with mother or take on all responsibilities in the home

Exploratory qualitative study of fathers on leave in a “home alone” manner: **the case of Portugal**



Karin Wall, Sofia Marinho, Mafalda leitão

ICS – University of Lisbon

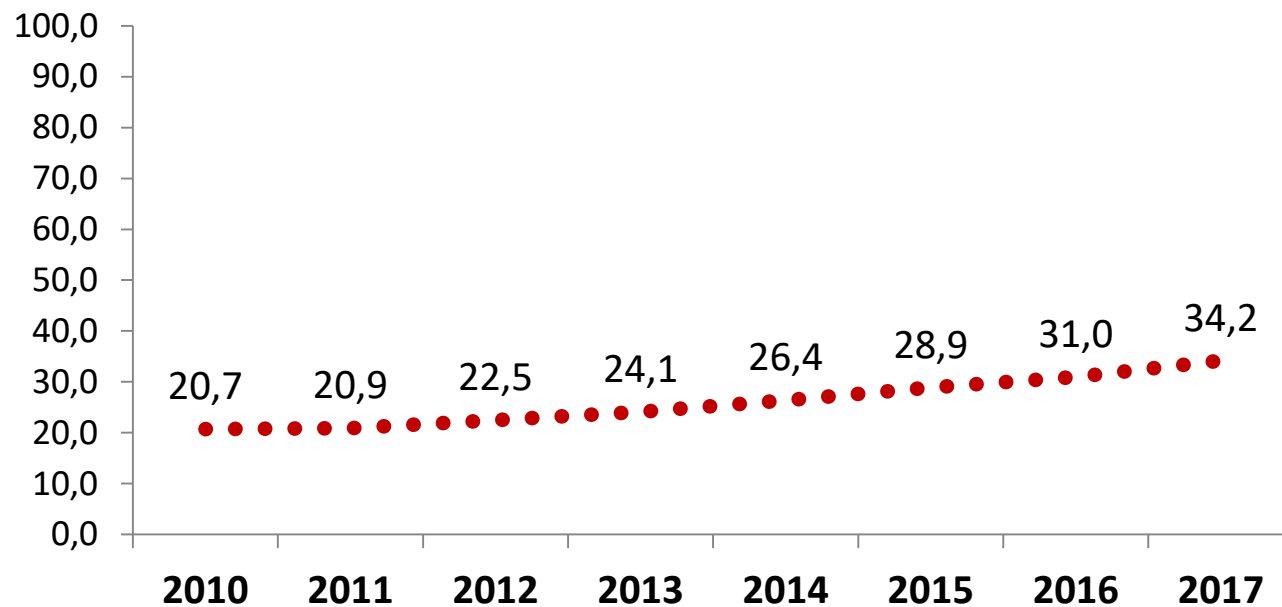
Context: leave entitlements for fathers (2018)

- 5 weeks well-paid paternity leave at 100% (3 are compulsory)
- Daddy “Bonus” Month at 83-100%:

if the father takes at least 1 MONTH on his own after the mother has gone back to work the well paid “initial parental leave” increases from 5 to 6 months.
- 3 months additional leave at 25%

Impact of “Daddy Bonus Month”

- **Before change in legislation in 2009:** 0.6% of fathers shared leave
- **After:**



Qualitative study: methodology and sample

20 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS, MEN living in cities of Lisbon and Covilhã (2012)

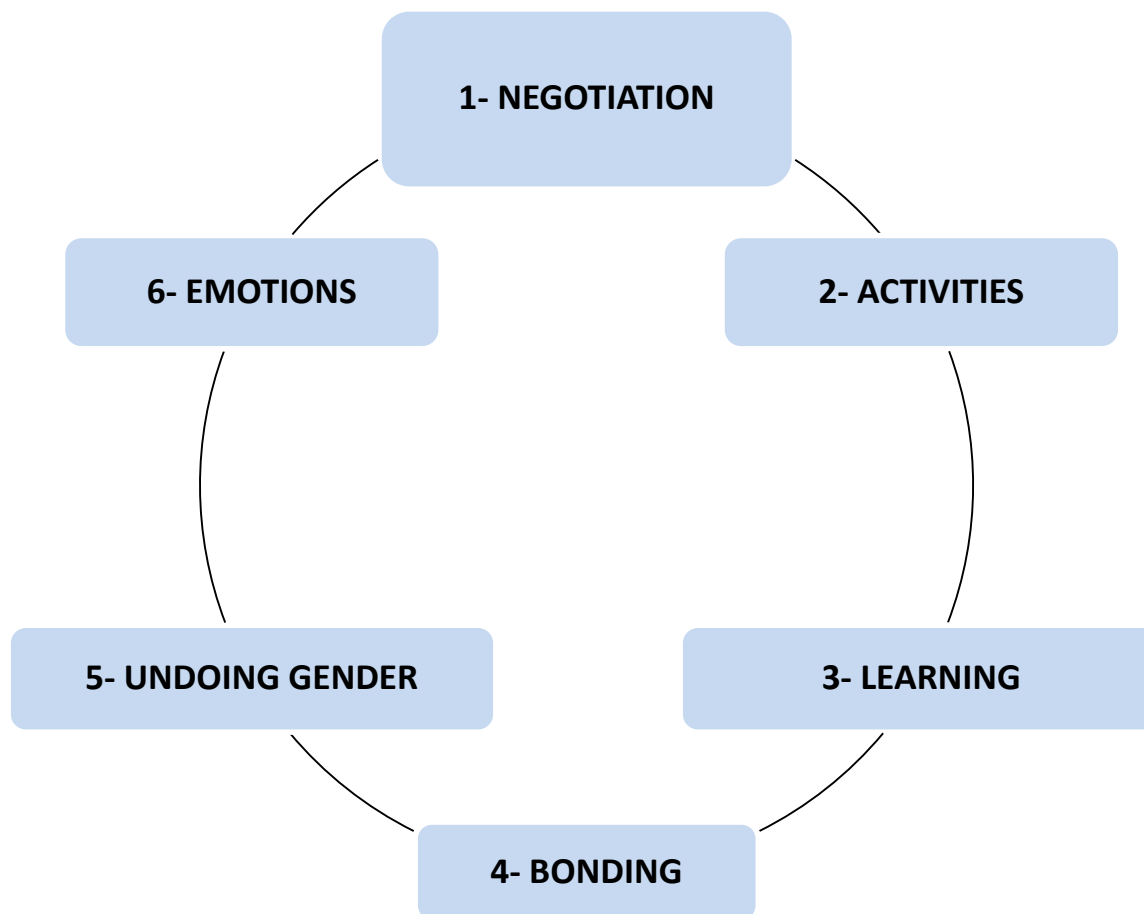
AGES: between 28 and 54

SECTORS : 8 private sector, 12 public sector/state corporate sector

PROFESSIONS: policeman, chief accountant, aircraft maintenance engineer, product manager, sports manager, hairdresser, television journalist, architect, management consultant, designer, computer engineer, nurse, driver, researcher, internet product manager, economista, software architect, radio professional, geographer, university professor.

RESULTS 1: FATHER'S EXPERIENCES OF "PARENTAL LEAVE"

- 6 KEY PROCESSES -



6 KEY PROCESSES:

1 - **NEGOTIATION:** with employers, with partners;

*“ T. and I still thought about whether she would take five and I one, or she would take four and I two, but I couldn’t take two months with my job. Even one was bad enough ... well, it wasn’t bad, I can’t really say it was bad, I can’t compare the work I do with working in a factory, where punishment and reprisals are much more noticeable. But I think there are ways of doing these things. There’s no longer any physical whipping, **but there are still the psychological blows.** That’s more like what I went through, that psychological game. At the time, as soon as I knew, I told them – because you have to give as much notice as possible with these things – that I intended to take a month’s leave and that it would be in July of that year. **The first question they asked me was why I wanted to take a whole month, wasn’t it enough to take just a few days or a couple of weeks ...**”*

(Manuel, aged 34, internet maintenance manager, private company, 1 child)

*“ We were updated on the changes in legislation, so we discussed what to do. We preferred that **she, my wife, took the maximum she could take and then only after that... I came on the scene.** Well, because she was breastfeeding and so this was an advantage. I think we sort of assumed it would be so, our approach was quite traditional from that point of view. And then, of course, we thought it was important to do what we could to **put off the moment when the baby went to the crèche....** Her sisters at four months were so small on the first day at the crèche. And then there was another aspect to the decision: **my wife’s job.** It was always very difficult for my wife to stay away from the courts for long, the work piles up and you can’t lose track... So we didn’t want her to.... We had to **find a point of balance between trying to care for the baby at home for a bit longer without penalizing our working lives too much**”.*

(R., computer engineer, wife judge, 3 children, option 4 plus one month)

6 KEY PROCESSES:

2 - ACTIVITIES: caring, housework, little leisure, little work

“it was a very demanding month ... I was with him. He’d wake up, I’d give him his bottle, then he would go back to sleep a bit more during the morning, then I would play with him, I was here with him. Then I’d make lunch, tidy up, spend part of the afternoon with him, interacting with him, playing. Then, well, he would sleep a bit more, but almost every time I thought I’d take a bit of a rest after tidying up and having done all that stuff, he would wake up. It was an almost never-ending cycle, with no rest in between, it’s really very tiring looking after a kid all day”

(Rafael, 28 years of age, management consultant, private company, 1 child)

6 KEY PROCESSES:

3 - **LEARNING:** becoming an INDEPENDENT CARER, taking on RESPONSIBILITY, learning EMOTIONAL CARE

*“I have a clear idea that I reminded myself to say ‘right, it’s time to feed, or give him the bottle, it’s time to go to sleep...’ (...) I may even have done the same things before - [with his other children] - , in fact I’m sure I did, but it was always **with my wife to guide me. This last time I was home alone, so I acted more responsibly**” (...) but I also managed to get over that initial panic, of saying whenever he cried “he’s crying, what’s happening?” and I said to myself, right, ‘this must be the nappy or it must be time to give him the bottle’, so there was... a bit less panic, my reactions were a bit better organized and rational, let’s say, and practical maybe, yes, more practical ...”*

(Roberto, 54 years of age, computer engineer, state corporate sector, 3 children)

“That’s when we truly become parents, isn’t it? When we have such a close tie to them that we know just by the kind of crying, or by his manner, what he wants ... it’s that kind of awareness which I think is very important, I think it shows how close you are, and that is what it really means to be a father”.

(Rafael, 28 years of age, management consultant, private company, 1 child)

6 KEY PROCESSES:

4 - **BONDING**: stronger ties between FATHER and SON, HUSBAND AND WIFE

“There’s no-one else there, and that creates a stronger bond ... I don’t know, when people say there’s a stronger tie between mother and baby, I think that tie between mother and baby is transferred to the father in this way, at least that’s what I felt”.

(Leonardo, 32 years of age, hairdresser, 2 children)

*“I always used to do a lot, but when I stayed at home by myself, that’s when I understood the important little things that happen in day-to-day life, and I think that helps me to appreciate the other side as well (...) because I had to do those things I think that my wife and I got to know each other better, and I think **it actually helped our relationship quite a bit**”.*

(Manuel, 34, internet manager in a private company, 1 child)

6 KEY PROCESSES:

5 – UNDOING GENDER: moving away from routine gender practices (temporary or weak undoing of gender; contesting pre-conceived male and female roles (deconstruction of gender differences))

*“I think equality (...) is not just household chores, it’s not just your worries, not just the shared leave ... With all due respect, and I think it’s very important ... I think it’s the other side, really understanding the man, (...) That other side is more of an effort, isn’t it? It’s more of an effort. Making meals, being at home all day, that’s an effort, so it’s good to share that aspect, let’s share that side. The other thing is – I can even sleep with him here close beside me, feel his warmth, even though I (the man) have to wake up and go and fetch him, then it’s ‘look, go and fetch him’, ‘right, I’ll stick with the worst part which is going to get him, and you get the best part, which is staying with him. **Why don’t we share it the other way round?** You go there, make up the bottle, you go and fetch him and I’ll give it to him in bed’. That doesn’t happen, but I think that’s the next step, **that may be the next step ...**”*

(Manuel, 34, internet manager in a private company, 1 child)

6 KEY PROCESSES:

6 - EMOTIONS:

Pleasure, liking, happiness, satisfaction, willingness, ability, responsibility, confidence (in oneself/the future of the child), connection, proximity, affection, friendship, challenges, testing oneself, pride, calm, empathy, mutual understanding, tiredness...

RESULTS 2: DIVERSITY OF EXPERIENCES

4 PROFILES

SUPPORTED

FUNDAMENTAL BREAK

**INNOVATION and
INDEPENDENCE**

**INNOVATION and
DECONSTRUCTION**

PROFILE – SUPPORTED

- *A third party is present and helps with the caring (the interviewee's mother helps out, a domestic employee...)*
- *The father has a greater sense of responsibility, learns a little, but sees himself as a “**supportive father**” (in contrast to the mother as the main and natural carer)*
- *The period of leave is appreciated mainly from the child's point of view and for strengthening family ties. The fact that the father is left alone is less important*

PROFILE – INNOVATION AND DECONSTRUCTION

- *In this profile the father becomes an “independent carer,” but he also regards the period of leave “on his own” as a fertile ground for building gender equality (he sees himself as ‘an egalitarian father and partner’ who is ‘at the heart of the family,’ as his wife is)*
- *The father ‘tests himself out’, embarking on tasks which he regards as difficult (going out, planning, having people in), and becomes **more reflexive** with regard to gender relations, questioning those differences between men and women which are conventionally held to be natural*
- *This profile not only strengthens bonds, but also enables the period of leave to be viewed as a time when **parents are able to question and deal with “in-built” cultural norms** relating to gender roles*

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

- As revealed by previous research, fathers' experience of leave alone is highly valued because **it contributes to work-family balance and to the strengthening of father-child bonds and family ties in general.**
- In contrast, findings **do not reveal a dominant form of “masculine care”**. The fathers see themselves as **involved caregivers who replace the mother in all the nurturing and caring tasks rather than distant carers or educators.**
- Findings also point to a **diversity of lived experiences** rather than one main pattern. To identify this diversity and the social consequences of leave, it is necessary to take into account **different processes of the leave experience.**
- From the perspective of the impact of leave on gender, this diversity means that the **experiences of fathers are not always similar or equally transgressive or transformative** from a gender perspective.

ADDITIONAL CONCLUSIONS

What factors encourage the “innovation-deconstruction of gender roles” profile?

- **A project and desire for individualized parenthood, i.e. taking everything on, on one's own, and doing it in one's own way** (tied in with the perception of the man as an independent and equal actor in the home, one who may adopt the role of the mother).
- **Pro-active behaviour (agency) on the part of the father:** an extra effort, in other words “testing himself out” (being sure that he knows how to do everything and more).
- **Egalitarian (dual earner/dual carer) couples, in norms and practices,** who deconstruct and neutralize gender in family roles and places (all things may be done by him or her).
- **Family-work reconciliation values** focusing on the importance of the family and not just work.
- Men **with similar or lower professional status and income levels as partner + medium to high educational and occupational attainment levels.**

Thank you!

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For more information on **family policies and gender equality** in Portugal:



Wall, K., Cunha, V., Atalaia, S., Rodrigues, L., Correia, R., Correia, S. V., & Rosa, R. (2017). WHITE PAPER—Men and Gender Equality in Portugal. *White Paper-Men and Gender Equality in Portugal*, 1-135.