The participation of men in family life in contemporary Europe: Caring fathers

by:

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Agenda

• Briefly about FamiliesAndSocieties
• Background: increasing family diversity
• The ‘Gender Revolution’
• Female educational advantage & new gender roles
• Gendered transition to and in doing parenthood
• Fathers’ time with children
• Fathers’ use of parental leave and consequences for family life
• Stepfamilies and shared physical custody – new challenges
Consortium

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From the ”Golden Age of the Family” to the era of family diversity in Europe

The ’Golden Age of the Family’ (1940s – 1960s)
- nearly universal marriage entered at rather young ages, stable partnerships
  (divorce rare, legal obstacles & social stigma)
- baby boom (early transition to parenthood in wedlock, large families common)
- family form: nuclear family - married couple with 2, 3 or more children
- male breadwinner-female homemaker model (traditional gender roles)

The ‘Second Demographic Transition’ (mid-/late 1960s onwards)
- below-replacement fertility, new childbearing patterns (shrinking family size, delayed parenthood if at all)
- changes in partnership dynamics (trends and timing; fewer, later and less committed)
  → increasing diversity of family forms
- new gender roles: dual-earner – x.x carer model
Delayed transition to parenthood and shrinking family sizes
Data sources: Eurostat, INED, Myrskylä et al. (2013)
The diverse family ‘landscape’ in contemporary Europe
(see also: PERFAR database)

Alongside marriages and non-marital cohabiting relationships, emerging non-standard family constellations:

• single parent families (especially: lone mothers)
• stepfamilies & blended families
• same-sex partnership families (see: LawsAndFamilies database)
• childless couples (married or cohabiting) (see also: ARPNoVA dataset)
• large families
• living-apart-together (LAT) relationships
• transnational & immigrant families
Variety of family policy models in Europe

Dual-Earner model / Social democratic welfare regime (Nordic countries)
extensive state support to share earning and family tasks; gender equality

General Family Support model / Conservative welfare regime
(Western Europe – most heterogeneous model)
support to mothers’ engagement in care and fathers prioritizing paid work

Latin Rim model / Familialistic welfare regime (Southern European countries)
separate spheres for women and men, limited state support to combine employment
and family tasks

Market Oriented model / Liberal welfare regime (English-speaking countries)
reconciliation of work and care via the market; mainly means-tested state support

Transition Post-Socialist model / Post-socialist welfare regime (CEE-countries)
state support to women combining earning and caring (reduced), revival of traditional
gender roles, gender inequality in families
The ‘Gender Revolution’: First phase

Data source: Eurostat
Changing educational pairings - new partnership patterns
Proportion of Unions by Relative Education and Cohort

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Share of unions

Union type  W  Men < Women  =  Men = Women  M  Men > Women

Source: Van Bavel 2016, data: pooled ESS1-6
Female educational advantage
(homogamous partnerships dominate, new pattern: hypogamous couples)
Consequences for (changes in) gender roles

Women’s breadwinning, new fatherhood, gender equal parenting:

- Growing importance of **female breadwinner** related to women’s increasing investment in education and career, still less common except among hypogamous couples (significant risk of conflict due to counter-normative gender behaviour (Jurczyk & Takács 2016))

- The **active / caring father**: more flexibility in realizing diverse gender self-concepts, more scope for negotiating gender roles, less conflict (Jentsch & Schier 2017)

- **More equal division of parental leave** related to couples’ wish to share the leave, perception of equal parenting being beneficial for the child, mothers’ labour-market aspirations, fathers’ will to be involved/caring parent (Evertsson et al. 2015)
The transition to parenthood goes hand in hand with a re-traditionalization of family roles (even among couples with a previously egalitarian division of housework).

The everyday pre- and postnatal parenting practices are interrelated.

6 different types (reflecting different manifestations of parents’ relationality in doing care work) exhibiting a complex continuum of parental gender relations:

- equal caring, absent (equality)
- key caring – helping, main caring – co-recognizing (ambiguity)
- managing – conducting (dichotomy)
- exclusive caring – absent (inequality)

Parents experienced several changes in their care involvement, linked to specific points in time → the child’s birth was but one among many turning points that influenced gender relations

Whether parental leave fosters or impedes equality between parents depends on numerous other processes which are interlinked (work flexibility, attitudes towards employment, managing income loss, child feeding practices, etc).
The caring father: fathers’ time use with children in France, Italy, Sweden and the UK
Tanturri et al. (2017)

Time Use Survey data on men with at least one co-resident child aged 0-14 years. Time indicators analyzed: total time with children, total time spent alone with children, time in childcare activities spent alone and with a partner (both weekday and weekend).

Context matters!

**Swedish** fathers spend the most time, and also in childcare activities both alone and with a partner.

**Italy**: non-childcare activities carried out together with the mother dominate.

**France**: very similar to Italy, but more time is allocated to care without the presence of the mother.

**UK** (data for 2000-2015): shift towards lower father involvement, but the association with the mothers working full time strengthened; also positive association between time alone with children and mothers having a university degree – indicating children growing up in unequal family environments beside material terms also by differences in fathering.

Data source: National Social Insurance Board (Sweden)
Consequences of fathers’ parental leave uptake in Sweden
(Duvander & Johansson 2016)

Gender division of care for sick children:

- The introduction of the one-month father’s quota in 1995 led to more equal sharing of care between mothers and fathers
- No impact is seen for the extension of the father’s quota (2002)

Gender gap in employment and earnings:

- The extension of father’s quota to 2 months in 2002 had a favorable influence on the income development of low-income mothers with one child, resulting from their increased labour-force engagement rather than from higher salaries
Propensity of second and third births by fathers’ leave
Duvander et al. (2016)

Second birth

Iceland  Norway  Sweden
up to the quota  more than the quota

Third birth

Iceland  Norway  Sweden
up to the quota  more than the quota
Separation/divorce propensity by fathers’ parental leave uptake

(Lappegård et al. forthcoming)
Aim in Nordic countries: inclusive society via social and gender equality

Do immigrants make use of family policy options to the same extent as natives?

- **Daddy days:** no country difference in the rate of lower usage by immigrant fathers

- **Parental leave:**

  Immigrant fathers in Sweden are much more likely to use parental leave (12% less than natives) than those in Finland (26% less). Why?

  Father’s quota (Sweden) has greater integrative effect, provides stronger legal protection easing negotiations with the employer and the mother

  Optional system (Finland) with bonus in form of more leave if used by the father provides lower incentives and less protection
Stepfamilies and blended families
(Schier et al. 2016; Bastaits & Mortelmans 2016, 2017)

Doing stepfamily is a complex moral and relational process often negotiated beyond different family households, and deeply shaped by gendered as well as biological patterns of caring for children.

Multiple actors: the child, the mother, the non-resident biological father (and possibly his new partner), the resident stepfather, stepsibling

Shared physical custody (not necessarily related to stepfamily, but to parental break-up): new structures and challenges for active parents
Towards the second phase of the ‘gender revolution’: lessons

The family is a dynamic entity, characterized by growing complexity in decision-making about transitions over the family life course and organization of family life.

It is no longer a set of well-defined roles – but is negotiated on a daily basis, shaped by interactions between partners at the micro-level and influenced by macro structures (economic and policy setting).

Gender relations and related values and attitudes have become more fluid, changing dynamically over the life course.

Context matters!