

# **Dynamics of parental leave: The paradox of state expansion in liberal welfare regime countries**

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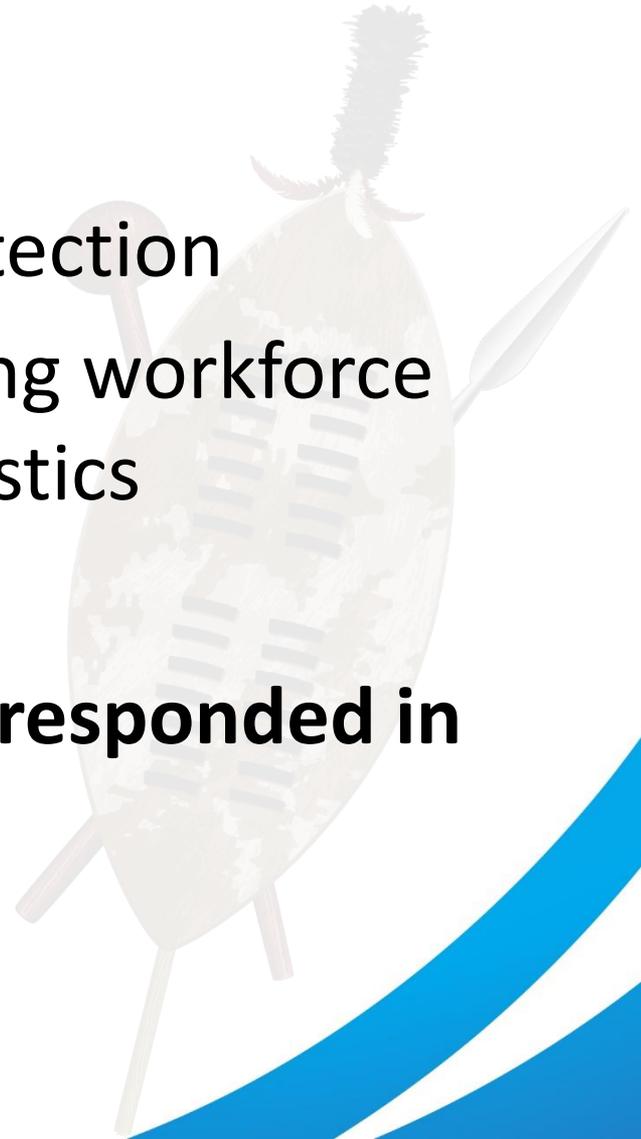
# Paper

- Parental leave as a social protection
- Important because of changing workforce demographics and characteristics

→ Research Questions:

**How have the Anglo countries responded in the period 2004-2014?**

**What is the role of the state?**



# Approach

- Australia, Canada (excluding Quebec), Ireland, New Zealand, the UK and the USA
- Liberal welfare regime countries (Esping-Andersen (1990))
- We undertake a ‘within regime’ analysis to demonstrate the dynamic and complex nature of parental leave policies in these countries (Ebbinghauser 2012:2; Ollier-Malaterre *et al*, 2013)

# The role of the state in liberal welfare regime countries

- Private rather than collective or government responsibility for individual and family well-being; low public benefits; and reluctance to regulate the labour market.
- Assume an ideal adult, male worker model of self-provisioning individuals and households with minimal state intervention or support for care responsibilities at the family level (Lewis, 2009).
- Neo-liberalism now dominates the policy direction of the Anglophone countries. Stresses further the importance of markets, deregulation and individual responsibility (Moss, 2014)

# Proposition

- In this context propose that the state would not intervene in parental leave policies for workers.
- That parental leave would be addressed through employer - employee/union bargaining.

# Evidence

- Aim is not to rank the policies of the countries but to specify the details, thus:
  - The name of the policy
  - The individual entitlement for mothers (in weeks)
  - The individual entitlement for fathers (in weeks)
  - The payment level for mothers/parents
  - The payment level for fathers alone
  - The maximum total parental leave (paid and unpaid) per couple (in weeks)

# Australia

Name of Policy	Unpaid Parental Leave Paid Parental Leave
Entitlement for mothers (weeks)	52 + 18 (transferable)
Entitlement for fathers (weeks)	52 + 2 (non transferable)
Payment level for mothers	18 weeks at National Min Wage €425pw
Payment level for fathers	2 weeks at National Min Wage €425pw
Max total parental leave per couple (paid and unpaid)	104

# Canada

Name of Policy	Paid Maternity Leave Parental Leave
Entitlement for mothers (weeks)	15-17 (non transferable) +35 (shared)
Entitlement for fathers (weeks)	35 (shared)
Payment level for mothers	55% av. insured earnings capped at €345pw
Payment level for fathers	As above
Max total parental leave per couple (paid and unpaid)	52

# Ireland

Name of Policy	Paid Maternity Leave Unpaid Parental Leave
Entitlement for mothers (weeks)	26 paid; 18 + 42 (unpaid, non transferable)
Entitlement for fathers (weeks)	18 unpaid
Payment level for mothers	€230pw
Payment level for fathers	--
Max total parental leave per couple (paid and unpaid)	78

# New Zealand

Name of Policy	Paid Parental Leave Parental Leave Paternity Leave
Entitlement for mothers (weeks)	14 (paid) + 52
Entitlement for fathers (weeks)	2
Payment level for mothers	€303 per week
Payment level for fathers	—
Max total parental leave per couple (paid and unpaid)	54

# United Kingdom

Name of Policy	Unpaid Parental Leave Maternity Leave Paternity Leave
Entitlement for mothers (weeks)	18 + 52
Entitlement for fathers (weeks)	18 + 2 (paid)
Payment level for mothers	6 weeks @ 90% income replacement + 33 weeks x €174pw
Payment level for fathers	€174pw
Max total parental leave per couple (paid and unpaid)	90

# USA

Name of Policy	Family and Medical Leave
Entitlement for mothers (weeks)	12
Entitlement for fathers (weeks)	12
Payment level for mothers	—
Payment level for fathers	—
Max total parental leave per couple (paid and unpaid)	24

# Conclusions

1. Complexity and diversity of policy architectures.
2. Paradoxical situation of the expanding role of the state in advancing parental leave policies, extending the duration of parental leave and, in some cases, increasing the payment level (P.S. Australia may now be an exception).
3. The policies in Anglophone countries remain maternalist in orientation, with negligible development in paternity leave policies, reflecting the strong legacy of the male breadwinner model.
4. We argue that neo-liberalist, gender specific labour market rationales (business case) have driven governments (except USA) to make changes. Employer role less developed.
5. Parental leave policies, whatever their exact architecture, are now embedded in state policy in these countries.