

**Dynamics of parental leave in Anglophone countries:
The paradox of state expansion in liberal welfare regimes¹**

Baird, M.² and O'Brien, M.³

marian.baird@sydney.edu.au

The University of Sydney Business School

The University of Sydney

Australia

M.O'Brien@ioe.ac.uk

Thomas Coram Research Unit

University College London

United Kingdom

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² Presenting Author: Marian Baird is Professor of Gender and Employment Relations and Director of the Women and Work Research Group at the University of Sydney Business School. Professor Baird specialises in research on women and workplace regulation.

³ Professor Margaret O'Brien is Director of the Thomas Coram Research Unit, University College London, Institute of Education. Professor O'Brien's research focus is fatherhood and work.

Introduction

This paper examines parental leave policies across six Anglophone countries - Australia, Canada (excluding Quebec⁴), Ireland, New Zealand (NZ), the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA). We focus on the early twenty-first century, in particular the decade 2004-2014, and give special attention to Australia and the UK, both of which have witnessed significant policy changes in this time.

In welfare state comparative analysis, the Anglophone countries are routinely classified as liberal welfare regimes, following Esping-Andersen's (1990) original typology of Liberal Welfare (Anglophone countries), Conservative/Corporatist (continental Europe and Japan), and Social Democratic (Scandinavia) regimes. The typology has been criticised for ignoring gender issues (e.g. Lewis, 1992; Orloff, 1993; Gornick and Meyers, 2004), and for not recognising the 'outlier' status of Australia and New Zealand (Wilson and Spies-Butcher 2013). Despite these debates, the typology is still widely used for macro-comparisons, with Gornick and Meyers (2004: 9) concluding that 'the Esping-Andersen regime types provide a fruitful starting point for assessing welfare regimes in relation to paid work and care'.

It is also argued, however, that when it comes to investigating countries *within* regimes (rather than *between* regimes) the 'big picture' tends to obscure the smaller, more subtle differences in policies between countries which are classified in the same way (Ebbinghauser, 2012:2). As we are interested in examining the parental leave policies of countries within one regime – that of the liberal welfare category – it is therefore necessary to have a more granulated approach. Thus, in our examination of the dynamics of parental leave across the Anglophone cluster of countries, we draw on a perspective which highlights the benefits of

⁴ We exclude Quebec because of its French speaking and separate policy status in Canada. For more detail see Doucet, Lero & Tremblay (2014) and Tremblay (2014). The UK, Ireland and New Zealand have unitary system of government. Australia, Canada and the USA are federations, a feature that adds to the potential for layers of policy arrangements.

uncovering variation and flexibility within a regime (e.g. O'Reilly, 2006; Feggagina, Seeleib-Kaiser, & Tomlinson 2013). Notably, Ollier-Malaterre, Valcour, Den Dulk, & Kossek (2013) have also recently challenged researchers to be more ambitious in comparative work-life research, arguing for greater attention to be paid to the characteristics and complexities of national context. In relation to cross-national studies based on institutional frameworks they call for studies 'looking at systemic changes in culture and institutions over time' (Ollier-Malaterre *et al*, 2013: 442) and suggest two catalysts for such change: sudden shifts in the socio-economic system (e.g. austerity shocks; socialism to capitalism) and the processes of globalisation.

We take up this approach in our examination of parental leave policies in the Anglophone countries, a set of countries united by language, history and political ties. An analysis of parental leave policies in this way has not been undertaken before. It is more common to compare the UK with EU countries, or with the USA, and to omit the southern hemisphere countries of Australia and New Zealand from comparisons (e.g. Ciccia & Verbo, 2012; Gornick and Meyer, 2004; Haas, 2003).

The significant social, economic and political changes that have occurred globally have impacted directly in the Anglophone countries in the last half-century, and have relevance to parental leave policies. The dramatic rise in female education levels and the concomitant increases in female employment rates, coupled with the decline of the male breadwinner family have unsettled traditional gender work roles and expectations (Sherif Trask, 2010). In this context, entitlements to job-protected leave after childbirth have become important policy measures to support parents (ILO, 2014). Furthermore, as the labour market activation of both sexes, and particularly women of child-bearing age, has become more salient in policy, so too have paid parental leaves become more relevant. As noted above, the Anglophone countries have traditionally been classified as belonging to the liberal welfare regime type,

classical features of which include: private rather than collective or government responsibility for individual and family well-being; low public benefits; and reluctance to regulate the labour market. They tend to 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). Moreover, liberalism's successor, neo-liberalism, has come to dominate the policy direction of the Anglophone countries. As a set of ideas, as well as a series of political economic practices, neo-liberalism stresses further the importance of markets, deregulation and individual responsibility (Moss, 2014). Yet, contrary to the expectation of liberal welfare state and neo-liberal economic analysis, the state, as we shall demonstrate, is intervening more directly in these policy areas in the Anglophone countries, especially so in Australia and the UK.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we provide an overview of policies in the Anglophone countries. To undertake this analysis, in addition to reviewing national government department policy documents, web sites and experts in the countries,⁵ we draw on the two key standard and frequently cited international sources concerning maternity, paternity and parental leave provision: the International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research (Moss, 2014) and the OECD Family database (OECD 2014). The paper also refers to the influential work of Ray, Gornick and Schmitt (2010) in conceptualising and measuring the gendered dimension of parental leave policies in affluent countries. In their classification two key design features of leave policies are identified: 'Generosity', defined by the number of job protected weeks and benefit level (the share of those weeks which are paid); and 'gender equality', the extent to which the portion of leave is available for fathers and the percentage of earnings replaced.

⁵ Professor Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay in Canada, Professor Eileen Drew in Ireland and Dr K Ravensood in New Zealand.

The next two sections of the paper provide a focus on Australia and the UK, where parental leave policies have changed significantly since the turn of the 21st century and where even today, the policy environment is dynamic. In our discussion, which then follows, we explore similarities in the leave policies of Anglophone countries and what substantive variations exist, attempting to uncover how far the countries still conform to or have moved from the archetypal liberal welfare regime type. In addition we examine particular changes in relation to state involvement, and attempt to illuminate possible reasons. We conclude by arguing that there is a paradox emerging in the liberal Anglophone countries, most notably Australia and the UK, where state involvement is growing, rather than contracting, due to the increasing emphasis on engaging women in the labour market. Despite this trend, gender equality appears strikingly absent as an explicit design feature and goal of the Anglophone parental leave policies, thereby continuing to differentiate these countries from the social democratic countries.

Parental Leave in Anglophone Countries

In this section we provide an overview of government policies in the Anglophone set of countries.⁶ These countries were comparatively late in introducing parental leave (i.e. from the 1970s), and even later in some cases in introducing paid leave (Kamerman & Moss, 2009). Of the Anglophone countries, Canada, the UK and Ireland first introduced paid maternity leave and later parental leave (Canada, paid maternity leave, 1971; parental leave 1990; UK paid maternity leave, 1975; paid paternity leave 2003; Ireland, paid maternity leave, 1998 (OECD 2012; Fonda, 1980; Phipps, 2006). Australia and New Zealand were

⁶ We acknowledge that in the same time frame and perhaps for similar reasons, there have also been considerable shifts in the parental leave policies provided by employers and/or bargained for by unions, not covered here. This is an area that space precludes us from detailing, but arguments from Berg, Kossek, Baird and Block (2013) suggest that the interaction between public policy and union bargaining is complex and relates also to the bargaining structure of the particular country.

later. In 1973 the Australian Labor government introduced 12 weeks paid maternity leave, but only for federal public servants (Brennan, 2009). In 1979 and 1980 respectively, Australia and New Zealand introduced unpaid maternity leave for eligible women workers. Paid leave legislation came even later, in 2000 for New Zealand and 2010 for Australia (Baird, 2005; Ravenswood and Kennedy, 2012). The outlier of the group is the USA. Its exceptionalism is characterised by no national approach, although there have been developments in some states (e.g. California, New Jersey and Rhode Island) and policy dialogue at the federal level has intensified towards the end of the decade (Appelbaum and Milkman, 2013; Gault, Hartmann, Hegewisch, Milli, & Reichlin, 2014; Kamerman and Waldfogel, 2014).

The literature indicates that researchers and international bodies use different criteria to compare (e.g. Moss, 2014a; OECD, 2014a) and rank (Ray *et al* 2010; OECD, 2014a) parental leave policies. Undertaking such comparisons and rankings is not an easy task because the country policy specificity makes like-with-like comparisons highly problematic. Therefore, our aim here is not to rank the policies of the countries but to specify the details in their policies, in line with the more granulated analytical approach advocated earlier. Noting the historical paths, and the definitional and methodological issues raised above, we cover what we argue are, for our analysis of Anglophone countries, the important dimensions of parental leave schemas, at the national country level. These are shown in Table 1 and include:

1. The name of the policy
2. The individual entitlement for mothers (in weeks)
3. The individual entitlement for fathers (in weeks)
4. The payment level for mothers/parents
5. The payment level for fathers alone
6. The maximum total parental leave (paid and unpaid) per couple (in weeks)

Insert Table 1 about here

Name of policy or policies

As Table 1 indicates, a variety of policy terminology is used. Countries differ in relation to whether or not the name of the leave is gender specific, but one characteristic that is clear among the Anglophone countries (with the exception of the USA), is the gender-targeted nature of the paid leave policies. Thus we see that, despite being called parental leave, both Australia and New Zealand provide paid leave to the mother in the first instance, transferable to a father or primary carer under certain conditions. In the UK, Ireland and Canada the term maternity leave is still used, although in the UK, for instance, part of the 52 weeks can, since 2010, be transferred to the father or partner. Leave terms are cultural, and increasingly political, markers of policy intent. Adjuncts can be added to the word ‘leave’ to communicate a symbolic design feature, such as in the UK’s recent ‘Shared Parental Leave’ (Children and Families Act, 2014). In the USA, where the policy has a broader remit than parental leave, the relevant policy name is ‘Family and Medical Leave’.

We note also that policy names have changed as policies have been updated or amended. Australia again is an example of this, where ‘unpaid maternity leave’, introduced in 1979 was changed to ‘unpaid parental leave’ in 1990 when the entitlement was made available to fathers. Additionally, as Table 1 shows, it is not uncommon for more than one policy to exist in each country, pertaining to mothers, fathers, parents, or for paid and unpaid leaves. Over time therefore we have seen both change in name and an increase in the number of actual policies relating to parental leave in the Anglophone countries. Parental leave policies and definitions in the Anglophone cluster show them to be dynamic, living policies.

Duration and pay level

The duration of leave available to mothers and fathers individually, and the respective pay level for each, is shown in columns 2, 3, 4 and 5. Combined, this is similar to Ray *et al's* (2010) generosity dimension, but separated, as presented here, allows the difference in policy detail between the countries to be highlighted.

Job protection is a key and fundamental element of parental leave policies, giving parents legal protection and security when taking leave from work. Taking into account both unpaid and paid leave, with the exception of the USA, the Anglophone countries provide mothers with around 52 weeks of leave, but the way these 52 weeks are constituted varies from country to country.

Payment level is also significant. Much literature argues that for gender equity to be achieved, full replacement wages during parental leave are required (Moss and Deven, 2009). None of the Anglophone countries provide replacement wages for mothers for their full period of leave. On this criterion, Canada and the UK appear to be the most generous, but not directly comparable. The UK provides 6 weeks for mothers at 90% income replacement, plus 33 weeks at €174 per week. Whereas Canada provides up to 52 weeks at a comparatively high rate, but this is capped at €32,651 *per couple*. It should also be noted that of all the Anglophone countries, Canada is the only one to design the payment on the basis of the couple unit, rather than an individual entitlement.

The level of payment is often assessed as 'well paid' if it meets the European Commission benchmark, defined as a high flat rate of €1,000/month or more, or 66 per cent of earnings or more. According to Moss' (2014) analysis, using this definition, the Anglophone countries do not rate well. Only the UK and NZ provide some weeks of 'well-paid' leave for mothers. None provide well-paid leave for fathers. The Australian situation is slightly different, as the

payment level is linked to the National Minimum Wage (NMW), which is high by international standards and which is reviewed annually. Furthermore, it is not pro-rated. Thus, for women who worked less than full-time prior to birth, their wage replacement can be higher than their pre-birth wage income. Low paid women working part-time in Australia are therefore comparatively better off on leave than the same women in the UK or Canada. Thus, the complexity of the different pay architectures of the schemes makes direct comparison difficult.

Of even more prominence in the Anglophone countries has been the low level of public policy interest in dedicated paternity leave, either paid or unpaid. None of the Anglophone countries have a long duration of explicit leave for fathers or a high wage replacement rate for fathers. Australia, with its recent changes and introduction of Dad and Partner Pay (2013), stands out now as the Anglophone country with the most generous unpaid leave period and designated paternity leave pay, with two weeks at the NMW, which is comparatively high (at €425 per week, or \$640.90 AUD per week as at June 2014). In the UK, fathers are also entitled to 2 week's pay, but the level is set at a flat rate of €174, or £138 per week. In Canada, (except Quebec), New Zealand, Ireland and the USA there is no paid paternity leave as an individual entitlement, although discussion about the introduction of a "daddy month" is currently underway in Ireland.⁷

Maximum leave available to working parents

In terms of *total* available job protected leave to working parents there is also considerable variation between the countries, as shown in the last column of Table 1. For instance, Australia provides 52 weeks per working parent, that is, a total of 104 weeks of job protected leave for working couples. The USA, on the other hand, provides just twelve weeks per

⁷ Personal communication, P. Moss, November, 2014

individual, or potentially 24 weeks per couple. The other four countries provide 90 weeks (UK), 72 (Ireland), 54 (New Zealand) and 52 weeks (Canada). Of course, there is a difference between availability and use, and with low levels of wage replacement the take-up rates will be correspondingly low (Moss, 2014).

The final point we make here is that in the Anglophone countries there has been and remains a strong maternalist interpretation of access to leave for parenting, shaped by historical pathways to protect working mothers' health and more recently by debates about the need to increase women's - principally mothers - labour market engagement. Ironically, despite gender equality arguments in leadership and management debates more broadly, there has been less focus on men's role as carers in the Anglophone countries and correspondingly less attention to developing generous paternity or father targeted leave policies.

The variation in scheme design described above point to the importance of acknowledging complexity in comparing country policies and of the need to note within-regime variation. As we will argue in our closer analysis of Australia and the UK below, the early rationales in the Anglophone countries of the need to protect maternal and infant health and promote fertility, have been surpassed by the rhetoric and reality of demographic and labour market change, giving way to a new and perhaps unexpected form of state expansion of 'welfare' within neo-liberalism through the provision of some leave payment by government for parents, although aimed principally at mothers.

Australia: Policy and Provision over Last Decade, 2004-2014

There have been major changes in parental leave policies in Australia in the last decade and when considering the Australian situation it is necessary to distinguish between unpaid and paid parental leave. Under current legislation, the former is enshrined in labour law, whereas the latter is covered by social services legislation. This two-stream approach is a legacy of

the way in which working conditions, such as leave, were principally designed for male workers, and social welfare payments, such as maternity allowances, were considered as female concerns. Paid parental leave sits at the intersection of employment and welfare policies and represents a conundrum for policy makers attempting to ensure that all groups are covered in one way or the other. For politicians it has become a cross-over issue, where it is understood that important economic and social benefits are derived from increasing women's workforce participation.

In relation to the unpaid leave provision, 52 weeks unpaid leave with a job guarantee was first made available to employed women in 1979 as the result of a major decision of the Industrial Relations Commission in recognition of the growing participation of women in the workforce. In 1990, the Commission extended the right to fathers and renamed it as 'parental leave' to indicate its application to both men and women (Baird, 2005). Despite this change, given that it is unpaid, a very low percentage (7%) of men utilise the entitlement (Whitehouse, Baird, Diamond and Hosking, 2006). In 2004, working parents had a legislative right to a total of 52 weeks unpaid parental leave. More recently, in 2010, the main labour law (The Fair Work Act, 2009) was changed to allow both men and women to each have access to 52 weeks of unpaid parental leave, which is, effectively doubling the unpaid parental leave entitlement to a total of 104 weeks for employed couples. If one partner does not use their allocation, the other has the right to request an extension to their unpaid leave by the amount not used by the other partner. (In theory, this could provide women with up to two years of job protected, parental leave.)

In relation to paid parental leave, during the decade 2004-2014 the policy debates in Australia were intense. In the early 2000s there was mounting public concern about the absence of a paid parental leave scheme in Australia and in 2002 the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) launched a comprehensive review of parental leave.

Their report recommended the introduction of paid maternity leave for a period of 12 weeks at the minimum wage (HREOC, 2002). The federal conservative government of the time argued, however, that decisions about family and parenting were the responsibility of the individual and their employer. Thus, the provision of paid maternity leave was not seen as an area of state responsibility (Baird, 2011). In 2004, the same government responded to the mounting pressure for a paid maternity leave scheme by introducing a new policy, called the ‘Baby Bonus’. This was a cash payment of \$5000 (AUS) per baby (Baird and Cutcher, 2005). The rhetoric accompanying the announcement by the Treasurer, encouraging women to have more children: ‘one for the mother, one for the father and one for the country’, clearly signalled the pro-natalist sentiment of the conservative government of the day. Although a major policy change, it ran counter to the policy preference of the majority of women, unionists and policy lobbyists, which was to introduce a government funded, paid maternity leave scheme. The emphasis at the time was placed on maternity leave, as this was regarded as a necessary first step to getting any form of a paid parental leave policy in Australia.

The second major turning point (after the Baby Bonus) in the policy debate came in the lead up to the 2007 federal election. Following the election, which the Labor Party won, the government announced an enquiry into the feasibility of introducing a paid maternity leave scheme. This time the Australian Productivity Commission had carriage of the enquiry, signifying the economic and labour market relevance of the issue. Much of the debate now focussed on women’s increasing labour force participation and work and family pressures. Fertility rates and Australia’s lack of compliance with international conventions were now less of a concern. On this latter point, international comparisons were, however, still used as political leverage, pointing out that the USA and Australia were the only two OECD countries (both Anglophone) that had not introduced paid maternity or paid parental leave.

Elements of the business community united with the trade union movement and women's groups to support the introduction of a national, government funded, scheme.

The Productivity Commission found that a scheme would be useful to meet the three objectives laid out by the government: to improve mother and infant health and welfare, to increase female workforce participation and to encourage gender equity in the home and the workplace (Productivity Commission, 2009). Subsequently, in 2010 the Labor Government introduced legislation for a new scheme and in January 2011 the new scheme commenced operating. Compared to the social Democrat countries, and to the UK, Canada and even New Zealand, Australia was therefore a very late adopter of paid parental leave.

Although officially called 'parental leave pay', the scheme was explicitly targeted at mothers, as the primary carers of infants. While mothers can transfer the pay to the father or another eligible primary carer, the data show that 99.4% of recipients of the new scheme are mothers (Australian Government, 2014). The scheme is fully government funded and provides minimum pay for 18 weeks (in 2014 this was \$622.20 per week/AU\$16.37 per hour, [€425/11], Whitehouse, Baird and Alexander, 2014). This compensation can be supplemented to wage replacement levels through collective bargaining or by employer discretion. All working women, including the self-employed and those with up to just one day's work per week in the ten months prior to birth are eligible. In 2013, designated paternity leave pay was also introduced. Called 'Dad and Partner Pay' (DaPP) the Labor Government provided all working fathers and same-sex partners with two weeks pay at the minimum wage, on a use-or-lose basis. Under both policies, the mother and father must utilise their unpaid parental leave entitlement in order to receive the parental leave or DaPP pay.

Australia's paid parental leave and payment for fathers and partners policies are thus relatively new, having been debated and designed through the global financial crisis years

(2008-2009) and becoming operational after the financial crisis. Australia did not technically have a recession and the drivers to the introduction of the scheme, and its later enhancement with the addition of DaPP, were a mixture of economic and social concerns, including recognition of the need to support female workforce participation, gender equity and maternal and infant health. Perhaps even more importantly, however, there was strong political pressure to introduce a policy that targeted working women, as they represented a growing voice in the electorate. Women and work and associated policies such as parental leave, child-care and pay equity, have arguably become defining political issues in the last decade and have now garnered support from all political parties.

Most recently in 2014, the current Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, (who leads a conservative coalition government) proposed a radical new parental leave policy, one that is more generous but arguably less gender equitable as there is no specific leave for fathers in his scheme. Originally the scheme promised mothers 26 weeks at income replacement to \$150,000 per annum. Given current budgetary pressures and internal party opposition to the scheme's generosity, the proposal is not being pursued in its original form. More attention is now being paid to child-care. However, the proposal did signal a marked change in direction in parental leave policy debates and in political support. In Australia, the emphasis remains on women and on attracting more mothers into the labour market. Parental leave and child-care are regarded as key policy drivers to achieve this end.

Overall, in the period 2004-2014, Australian public policy with regard to parental leave has undergone a significant transformation. From being regarded as primarily the responsibility of households and industrial relations, it is now an embedded state social policy. The legacy of the male wage earner welfare state system, however, lingers, and thus the payment is at minimum wages for a relatively short period of 18 weeks. The current 'Parental Leave Pay' is regarded as a targeted welfare payment, providing some level of compensation for women

who previously received none (mainly low skilled and low paid employees) with an expectation that for higher skilled and higher paid women, it can be supplemented to full income replacement by employers. The current scheme, introduced by the Labor Government, has a greater emphasis on gender equity than the conservative Government's nascent policy. The proposed policy of the conservative government has at this point in time no specific recognition of fathers.

This policy shift in Australia can be explained by the rise of concerns about ageing and shrinking labour markets and the need to attract and retain women in the workforce, along with changes in the socio-demographics of the workforce and the population as a whole. Moreover, this complex interplay of factors has driven political parties of the left, middle and right to recognise and endorse the need for paid parental leave policies, albeit with differing and contested views on the architecture of such schemes in terms of duration, payment, funding and gender equity. In short, in Australia, market forces and a collective need to increase the size of the female labour force have usurped the traditional liberal welfare regime characteristic of individualism and state abstinence from family matters.

The United Kingdom: Policy and Provision over Last Decade, 2004-2014

The first phase of the decade 2004-2014 was identified by continuing efforts by a Labour Government, elected in 1997, to attempt minimal harmonisation of UK leave with aspects of the wider European Union (EU) policy. From 2010, after the Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition government was elected, further policy innovation was attempted but a broad reform was not achieved.

Historically, British leave policies need to be set against two evolving societal contexts.

Firstly, the post- Second World War national welfare state provision of universal health and

social security underpinned by a male breadwinner “family wage earner” and female home-maker norm (Lewis, 1992). Accordingly, by 1973 only mothers were entitled to leave from employment, notably for a long duration of 40 weeks, but from the outset six weeks were well compensated at 90 per cent of earnings (Fonda, 1980). The second important UK context, is inclusion since 1973 in a supranational European governmental organization, the European Economic Community (EEC) of six countries, which has expanded into a EU of 29 countries by 2014. Since the 1970s EU measures to promote female employment, work-family reconciliation and gender equality have been formulated and, in cases of unanimity, adopted at country level. The Parental Leave Directive (1996), although a feature of the EU’s social policy agenda since 1989, was only implemented in the UK after the Labour Government was elected in 1997. Prior to this time a Conservative government, led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and then John Major, had negotiated a UK “opt-out” from the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty (which set a regulatory framework for the Parental Leave Directive) when it was signed in 1992 (Fusilier, 2005). Subsequently, the Labour government also adopted social policy objectives embedded in other negotiated frameworks such as the Lisbon Treaty (2007) target of 60% female employment across all member states by 2010.

Although the politics and policies of both the UK and the EU have witnessed significant change since the 1970s, the legacy of a long mother-centred leave has been resilient and to some extent has hindered design innovation in the UK. Through subsequent decades and into 2014, despite there being significant national policy rhetoric to include attention to fathers, the power of a maternal template has been strong (Lewis, 2009; O’Brien, 2005; Stanley, 2005). So in its first term, the Labour government had a Janus-faced position; on the one hand introducing paid leave for fathers for the first time in the UK, while on the other hand introducing further legislation to protect maternity rights through an extension of maternity

leave from 9 to 12 months (HM, 2002). Similarly, in its second term, the Labour government struggled with how to extend leave access to fathers while actually enhancing pay levels for maternity leave. Its consultation *Work and Families: Choice and Flexibility* (HM, 2005) set out a case for extending maternity pay from six months to nine months, which was implemented in April 2007.

By the end of the Labour Government's second term, in early 2010, the Additional Paternity Leave Regulation was introduced with an option for fathers to take unused maternity leave. Fathers and partners were not given individual entitlements to "additional paternity leave" but instead allowed access to mothers' leave when they returned to work during the maternity leave period. The transferability could commence after the first twenty weeks when the mother could transfer the remaining maternity leave to her partner (husband, biological father, civil partner) contingent on a return to employment. Any unused maternity leave pay could also be transferred to fathers up until the end of the paid maternity leave period at 39 weeks. Although ministers acclaimed the legislation as an innovation to enhance fathers' engagement in the first year of children's lives "This enables fathers to play a bigger part in bringing up their children." (Guardian, 2010), the formal regulatory impact assessment predicted that actual impact would be low with an uptake of 4-8 percent of eligible fathers (HM, 2010).

In the build up to the 2010 general election parental leave measures emerged as a component in each of the main political party manifestos. All parties had been influenced by a major "state of the nation" report from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in 2009 which had reviewed options to reform the UK parental leave system proposing a ten year implementation strategy. It included proposals such as developing 'parental' rather than 'maternity' leave when a baby reaches six months, and the introduction of dedicated, non-transferable periods of leave for mothers and for the fathers after this period. Subsequently,

the Labour party proposed to extend paternity leave with a "father's month" of four weeks' paid leave, also promoted by the Liberal Democrats who added a "use-it-or-lose-it" element to their election promise. Even the right of centre Conservative Party was keen to campaign with their own approach to parental leave, introducing idea of "flexible parental leave" to encourage fathers to share maternity leave.

When the new Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition government was elected in May 2010 a national consultation on leave policy followed (*Consultation on Modern Workplaces: flexible parental leave, flexible working, annual leave and equal pay*, HM 2010a). It attempted a radical root and branch reform of parental leave in some ways resonant of the "Nordic turn" led by the Conservative party coalition in Germany earlier in the decade (Erlor, 2005). The consultation included proposals to reconfigure UK's leave system: to reduce the length of maternity leave (52 weeks) and pay to 18 weeks; and to reclassify the remainder of existing maternity leave as parental leave. Proposals for the new "post maternity leave" parental leave included: four weeks of paid Parental leave exclusive to each parent to be taken in the first year (designed to incentivise greater involvement by fathers); and 30 weeks of additional Parental leave available to either parent - of which 17 weeks would be paid and could be broken in blocks between parents (to introduce more possibilities of flexible use).

This document represented a critical policy break away from the legacy of maternalist architecture but proved difficult to implement, suggesting a resilient path dependency foundation in the UK (Mahony, 2000). A range of competing views (from the business sector, mothers' groups, fathers' groups, and child welfare organisations) were expressed, with some resisting the reduction in named maternity leave from 52 to 18 weeks. There were strong suspicions amongst women and mothers' groups that the new legislation would undermine maternity rights in times of austerity, leading to further weakening of the radical proposals. In the two years that followed the government stalled, a form of institutional

freeze, and in the context of global recession, stressed lack of funds for radical innovation. Instead the Conservative party manifesto idea of “flexible parental leave” was resurrected whereby maternity leave would not be reduced but instead be made more flexible for parental sharing (HM, 2012).

The Children and Families Bill introduced in February 2013 included: the retention of maternity leave duration to 52 weeks and paternity leave duration to two weeks. Flexibility was introduced by permitting mothers to transfer maternity leave to her partner after the first two weeks, rather than 20 weeks as before under the Additional Paternity leave regulation, and, unlike the previous regime, mothers’ transfer was not to be contingent on a return to employment. This new leave provision is termed Shared Parental Leave (replacing Additional Paternity Leave, under which mothers could only transfer leave to partners after 20 weeks, O’Brien, Moss, Koslowski & Daly, 2014). While there will be no requirement for a woman to return to employment before the father can begin taking shared parental leave, mothers must commit to a return to employment date in the future when she will end her maternity leave.

One criticism of this legislation is its lack of flexibility in that mothers have to take maternity leave in one block and cannot return to it after a period of paternal sharing. This rigidity means that if a father takes up the high income replacement maternity leave period between weeks 3-6, he has to continue on leave through to week 39 or the family loose payment entitlements. This constraint and inflexibility appear to be at odds to the discourse of choice connected with the underlying objectives of the legislation: ‘Legislating to give parents access to flexible parental leave; so that where they want to, mothers and fathers can share caring’ (Children and Families Bill, 2013). The Children and Families Bill contained no provision to introduce an individual non-transferable paid entitlement to fathers, which is the accepted evidence based approach to incentivize partners (e.g. Haas and Rostgaard, 2010).

Instead there is a proposal to extend paternity pay through secondary legislation at a later date.

Moreover, the Children and Families Bill contained minimal reference to the parallel EU legislation on the revision of the 1996 Parental Leave which was being debated in the European parliament at the same time. The new revised framework increased parental leave for each parent from 13 weeks to 18 weeks which may be taken up to the child's fifth birthday and was legally enacted in the UK on 8th March 2013 (O'Brien et al, 2014).

Therefore, in the same year, British parents had an expansion of parental leave provision on two fronts: a "home-grown" new Shared Parental Leave scheme and an actual additional month's individual unpaid entitlement to mother and father from the EU.

On balance the British policy architecture is notably incoherent with twin track disconnected developments occurring side by side; within the UK itself and for the UK as a member of the European Union. Between 2010 and 2014, the Conservative-led Coalition government, with its greater antipathy to the EU than the previous Labour government, has contributed to a lack of national coherence in respect to parental leave policy. In practice leave entitlements for British parents are not highly generous or gender equitable when compared to Nordic Europe but when contrasted to other Anglophone countries they appear less meagre. In response to the rise in dual earning families, the importance of female employment activation, and the political imperative of being 'modern and contemporary', political parties, left and right, rhetorically promote policies for a modern working family where parents share the care of children and fathers are engaged. Even employer organisations, such as the Confederation of British Industry are calling for more government subsidized child-care so that families 'can make an even bigger contribution to the world of work' (BBC, 2014). This emergence of broad political support for work-reconciliation policies in the UK, rather than opposition and

indifference, suggests that political parties accept the desirability of parental leave policies but are not yet moved to viable solutions (Gornick and Meyers. 2007).

Discussion

In this paper we have reviewed parental leave policies over the last decade in the Anglophone countries, UK, Ireland, Canada (excluding Quebec), New Zealand, Australia and the USA. Two countries, Australia and the UK, have been the specific focus of our attention because they experienced major policy developments in the study period 2004-2014 and we have used them to examine the drivers of change in the liberal welfare type regime category. Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and the USA have been relatively inactive during the study period compared to Australia and the UK, but even so, changes are occurring in these countries.

This focus within regime type has allowed us to provide a closer analysis of change, as Ollier-Malaterre *et al* (2013) have argued is necessary in comparative work-life policy research. Our emphasis has been the nature of public policies, the catalysts for the changes and the direction of policy innovation in the Anglophone countries. Similarities are apparent in the three areas. Firstly, the terminology and approach adopted in relation to the policies is reflective of the origins of the schemes, demonstrating some path dependency (Mahony, 2000), where many of the Anglophone countries early schemes were adopted with a concern for protecting the health and well-being of mothers in the workforce. With the exception of the USA, both explicitly and implicitly, there is a policy concentration on leave for mothers in the Anglophone countries. The residual emphasis on male breadwinning, women's caring roles and the undervaluing of women's market work has also arguably resulted in parental leave payment levels that have rarely reflected income replacement and tend to be regarded more as welfare payments. However, there are signs of change in this regard too, with more stress in recent debates in some of the Anglophone countries on income replacement.

Secondly, our analysis has found that since the turn of the 21st Century, there has been considerable dynamism and variation in the design of parental leave policies in the Anglophone cluster, with the state intervening to a greater degree than would be expected from a conventional understanding of liberal welfare regimes. Given the coincidental timing with the global recession, one may not have expected the expansion by the state into paid parental leave policies. Yet this is exactly what has occurred. This pattern of increasing state intervention has been highlighted through our analyses of Australia and the UK policy developments. In terms of government expenditure as a proportion of GDP, OECD data also shows that the Anglophone countries, (except the USA), have increased expenditure on maternity and parental leave (OECD, 2014a; OECD, 2015).

There are multiple reasons, both external and internal to countries, for this shift away from the traditional, individualist approach of the liberal regime countries. The external pressures on countries have accounted for some of the changes. In the UK's case, external pressure has come from the regulatory framework of the supranational governmental EU. In the case of Australia, the country's low international standing in policy relating to paid parental leave provided useful ammunition for advocates of the introduction of paid parental leave, but ultimately did not force the issue. The conjuncture of internal political and socio-economic factors did.

The internal drivers in both the UK and Australia included the increase in women's education levels and the corresponding political arguments for a return on educational investment via increased labour force participation (OECD, 2012). More significantly there are clear indicators of a normative shift occurring in the social expectations and political rhetoric and aims within the Anglophone countries. In addition to the cross-over issue of parental leave and work and family, in both Australia and the UK, political discussion and politicians' behaviour during the decade, have also influenced the character of debate around parental

leave. In the UK, the pattern of two recent male Prime Ministers endorsing and taking paternity leave, and in Australia, the conservative male Prime Minister advocating a more generous government funded parental leave scheme are indicative of this normative shift. Interestingly, while these examples suggest a more gender equitable approach to parenting, this is not directly reflected in the policy design of either of these countries.

Thirdly, then, our analysis has shown that for most of the 20th century, parental leave policies in Anglophone countries have been based on a maternalist orientation. The USA is the exception, where there has been a marked absence of federal level policy, but at the state level, the policies that have been introduced are more gender equitable, if comparatively less generous, in their design than other Anglophone countries. In the 21st century, women and mothers remain the focus of work-family policy development in Anglophone countries and it is only in more recent times that fathers have received more attention, although they are rarely centre stage (O'Brien, 2013).

Conclusion

Across all Anglophone countries there remains a tension in parental leave policy design between generosity and equality. We have demonstrated some important advances in duration and monetary value of parental leave, yet only small shifts in gender equality. Historically, progressive governments in more social democratic countries have led policies to support working mothers, dual earner families and working fathers, notably under the Nordic model (Esping-Anderson, 2009; Eydal and Rostgaard, 2015). None of the Anglophone countries provide fathers with a well-compensated or lengthy individual entitlement to parental leave. However, as we have shown, the picture has become more complex in the Anglophone countries, with even conservative and market-oriented governments attempting to fit fathers into leave policies, albeit in minimalist ways. We suggest that attention to working fathers is

emerging as the big 21st century challenge (Haas and O'Brien, 2010) , but in all of the Anglophone countries implementation of policies to facilitate active fatherhood have not yet fully matured. Studies continue to show that actual time spent on child rearing and domestic duties in Anglophone countries is still higher for women than men, although trends towards greater father involvement in childcare since the 1970s are notable (Sullivan, Coltrane, McAnnally and Altintas, 2009). As Gornick and Meyer (2007) have argued, the three parallel conversations policy makers typically engage in on work and family life, namely - economic productivity, child wellbeing and gender equality - need to be joined up and connected to promote more integrated policy solutions.

Despite reservations concerning gender equality, it is important to note that even under periods of economic uncertainty, parental leave policies have not been reduced in aggregate in the Anglophone countries in the early 21st century. In fact, we observe the increasing role of the state in developing parental leave policies, in extending their duration and, in some cases, increasing payment levels. To varying degrees there has been considerable policy activity in all the Anglophone countries in the past decade. As we have elaborated, while there are variations in the specificities of each country's policy and in the main drivers of policy change, it would appear that parental leave policies are now embedded in state policy in contemporary liberal welfare countries, thus representing something of paradox. While the architecture of schemes may be debated, state support for paid parental leave and their policy existence overall appears to be unchallenged. With the exception of the USA, parental leave is now an established part of the work-care policy landscape in the Anglophone countries.

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Australia	Unpaid Parental Leave (with job guarantee)	52 weeks (transferable)	52 weeks (transferable)	-	-	104 weeks in total paid
	Parental Leave Pay	18 weeks (transferable)	-	Paid at National Minimum Wage ⁹ of €425 per week	-	-
	Dad and Partner Pay (DaPP)	-	2 weeks (non-transferable)	-	Paid at National Minimum Wage of €425 per week	-
Canada ¹⁰	Paid Maternity	15-17 weeks (non-	-	55% av. insured earnings, up to	-	52 weeks

⁹ At November 2014; reviewed annually.

¹⁰

http://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/Leavenetwork/Country_notes/2014/Canada.pdf; accessed 26 Nov 2014

(excl. Quebec)	Leave transferable)			ceiling of €345 per week; €32,651 <i>per couple</i>		15-17 weeks in total paid
	Parental Leave	35 weeks (shared with father)	35 weeks (shared with mother)	As above	-	-
Ireland	Unpaid Parental Leave (available to child's 8 th birthday)	18 weeks ¹¹	18 weeks ¹²	-	-	78 weeks 26 weeks in total paid
	Maternity Leave	42 weeks		26 weeks x €230 per week	-	
New Zealand ¹³	Parental Leave	52 weeks (unpaid except for 14				54 weeks 14 weeks

¹¹ EU Revised Parental Leave Directive 2010
http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/equality_between_men_and_women/em0031_en.htm

¹² EU Revised Parental Leave Directive 2010 Ibid.

¹³ <http://www.dol.govt.nz/er/holidaysandleave/parentalleave/summary.asp>; accessed 24 Nov 2014

		weeks)				in total paid
	Paid Parental Leave	14 weeks (transferrable)			€303 per week	
	Paternity Leave		2 weeks (unpaid)		-	
United Kingdom	Unpaid Parental Leave (available to child's 5 th birthday	18 weeks ¹⁴ (non- transferable)	18 weeks ¹⁵ (non- transferable)			90 weeks 41 weeks in total paid
	Maternity Leave	52 weeks (first 20 weeks reserved for mother)			6 weeks @ 90% income replacement + 33 weeks x €174 per week	
	Paternity Leave		2 weeks		€174 per week	

¹⁴ EU Revised Parental Leave Directive 2010 Ibid.

¹⁵ E EU Revised Parental Leave Directive 2010 Ibid.

	Additional Paternity Leave	Transferable from mothers after 20 weeks			Flat rate, as above (if transferred)	
	Shared Parental Leave (from April 2015)	Transferable from mothers after 2 weeks			Payment at 90% replacement for 4 weeks + 33 weeks x €174 per week (if transferred)	
United States of America	Family and Medical Leave	12 weeks ¹⁶ (Unpaid)	12 weeks ¹⁷ (unpaid)			24 weeks

¹⁶ Note eligibility, only in companies 50 or more employees

¹⁷ Note eligibility, only in companies 50 or more employees

