



Increasing parental leave uptake: A systems social marketing approach

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ABSTRACT

Ineffective paid paternity leave policies perpetuate gender inequality and have significant, long-lasting outcomes for families, organisations, and the economy. They maintain unequal divisions in child-rearing and household chores that restrict families' decisions about workforce participation and caring responsibilities. Low levels of uptake of paternity leave are caused by workplace practices, social norms, and economic factors that influence the choices fathers make when their children are born, and which become entrenched over time. Fathers' early involvement in children's lives is profoundly beneficial for families, therefore, we recommend to policy makers and organisations how they can change internal workplace cultures to allow for a more inclusive image of parenting and a more nuanced image of the ideal male worker. We outline a systems social marketing approach that addresses change at the macro, meso and micro levels through the three E's model (establish, explore, and enable), to help policy makers, organisations, and families consider the implications of meaningful parental leave and the importance of increasing fathers' uptake. Future research questions for increasing parental leave uptake are presented.

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CHINESE ABSTRACT

无效的带薪陪产假政策延续了性别不平等，并对家庭、组织和经济产生了重大而持久的影响。它们造成了父母双方在养孩子和家务上保持着不平等的分工，这限制了家庭在劳动力参与和照顾责任方面的决定。低水平的陪产假是由工作场所的惯例、社会规范和经济因素造成的，这些因素会影响父亲在孩子出生时所做的选择，并随着时间的推移变得根深蒂固。父亲在幼儿成长时期的早期介入对整个家庭是有利的，因此，我们建议政策制定者和组织如何通过改变内部工作场所的文化，以使父母养育子女的形象更加包容，理想男性工作者的形象更为细腻。我们概述了一种系统的社会营销方法，该方法通过三个E模型（建立、探索和启用）来应对宏观、中观和微观层面的变化，以帮助决策者、组织和家庭考虑有意义的育儿假和增加父亲作用的重要性。最后，本文提出了有关增加育儿假的未来研究问题。

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1. Introduction

Recent reports by the United Nations (UN) show that women spend three times as many hours on unpaid domestic work as men (UN, 2019). This is especially true for parents. As household work increases after having children, the amount of labour required from parents increases, with the burden of unpaid domestic labour and caring responsibilities falling largely on women (Craig and Mullan, 2010). The added responsibility placed on women in the household after the birth of children accumulates over time and may limit their career trajectory (Cooke, 2011). In Australia, 40% of moth-

ers in families with at least one child under the age of 12 work part-time compared to 4% of fathers (Baxter, 2019). Balancing work and family often necessitates women taking time off work, working fewer hours, or putting their careers on hold until children are older; in contrast, men remain employed full-time until retirement (Cooke, 2011). Fig. 1 clearly demonstrates the limited impact the birth of a child has on the father's working life in comparison to the mother's.

The UN recognises the significant impact of gender inequality and has allocated a specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) to the issue (i.e., SDG 5): to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (UN, 2016). If there were an equal distribution of household labour and child-rearing responsibilities between the two genders, the benefits would apply not only to women, who would be able to advance in their careers (Cooke, 2011), but also to men, who would be able to develop a stronger bond with

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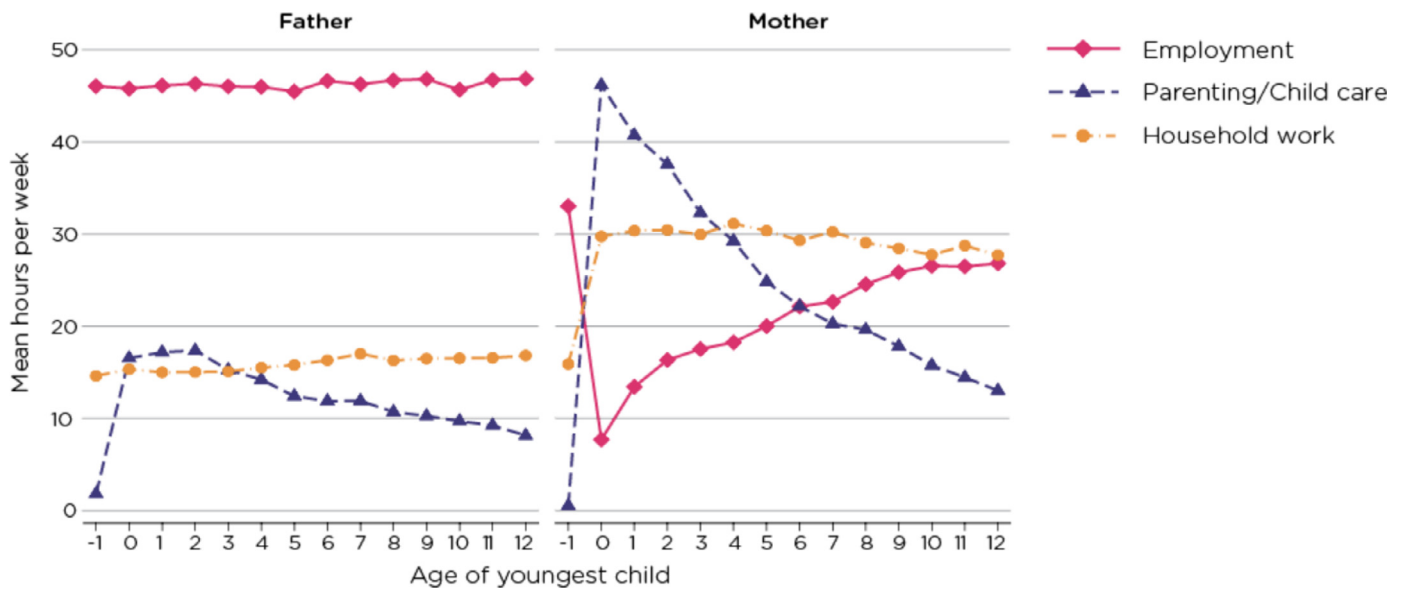


Fig. 1. Mothers' & fathers' use of time before and after the birth of the first child.
 Note 1: Age of youngest child = -1 is the year before the first birth.
 Source: Baxter (2019).

their children (Tamm, 2019). As with many other complex problems tackled by social marketing (Duffy et al., 2017), this requires a number of changes: a change in the way we perceive men and the value they can bring to the family, a change within organisations and what we perceive as the “ideal male worker,” and a change at the government level in the type of policy support for fathers and how to execute it.

Research has found that government-funded paid parental leave increases women's workforce participation (Thévenon and Solaz, 2013). In Germany, it increased the birth rate (Huebener et al., 2016). Research into the low uptake of parental leave by fathers has concluded that this complex issue requires a multi-faceted solution. Nonetheless, it is important to find such a solution, since countries that have enacted policies granting fathers a minimum of one month of parental leave have reaped significant benefits, including a positive effect on the father-child bond (Tamm, 2019), improvements in children's health and well-being (Månsdotter et al., 2007; Nandi et al., 2018; O'Brien, 2009; Tanaka, 2005), reduced marital conflict (Kotsadam and Finseraas, 2011), and an increase in the life satisfaction of fathers (Kramer et al., 2019). Parental leave enables a father not only to be engaged in the children's upbringing by participating in parental tasks and skills but also to provide financially for the family, thus fulfilling both paternal and breadwinning roles (Galinsky et al., 2013; Marsiglio and Roy, 2012).

2. The need for a systems social marketing (SSM) approach

Multiple studies have found that social marketing approaches can change social norms and behaviour effectively (Burchell et al., 2013; McKenzie-Mohr and Schultz, 2014; Schuster et al., 2016). Blair-Stevens and Cork (2008) suggested that social marketing interventions, campaigns, and programmes help establish an overall acceptance and application of policies not only by the targeted group (e.g., fathers) but also by the relevant stakeholders. Support beyond the target group can be critical to successful adoption of a change, as key stakeholders will be essential to creating change that is lasting. Complex problems which involve multiple causal factors (e.g., social, economic, policy, and historical factors) require system-wide interventions that address each factor caus-

ing the issue or supporting the status quo (Kemper and Ballantine, 2017). The use of SSM and macro-social marketing demonstrates that the discipline is evolving from a micro focus towards a holistic, systems-based perspective on complex problems such as those articulated in the UN's 17 SDGs or the World Health Organization's (WHO) One Health initiative. For such problems, initiatives must address three levels together: the macro level (government, policy, and economy), the meso level (society), and the micro level (individual beliefs and habits). This is possible through SSM approaches (Kemper and Ballantine, 2017).

Recently, the social marketing discipline has introduced and debated the concepts of system-wide social marketing and macro-social marketing (Truong et al., 2019). The need for such an approach has emerged from the limitations of general and even original social marketing techniques and frameworks, especially when applied to complex issues (Van Esch, 2017). Lefebvre (2013) argued that social marketing can be inadequate in creating meaningful change for three main reasons. First, social marketing attributes behaviour issues to the individual, thereby “blaming the victim” in many cases where external factors (e.g., governmental policies, social norms) are in play. Second, to create behaviour change, social marketing relies mostly on media and advertising campaigns that are not always effective alone. Third, only a limited number of social marketing initiatives focus on creating change in the surrounding context of the issue and its effects on the individual's behaviour (Lefebvre, 2013; Van Esch, Tsartsidze, and Van Esch, 2014). We should not underestimate the power and influence of changing socio-cultural forces combined with structural policy interventions to achieve system-wide social change.

3. The problem: ineffective policy, an unreceptive socio-cultural environment, and the male breadwinner stereotype

3.1. What is “parental” leave?

Parental leave is job-protected leave available to working parents to enable them to take time off work following the birth of a child while maintaining their employment and at least part of their income (Heymann et al., 2017). Often, parental leave policies

Table 1
Definitions of different types of leave.

Type of leave	Definition
Maternity	A <i>protected</i> period of absence from work granted to a mother before and after the birth of her child
Paternity	A <i>protected</i> period of absence from work granted to a father after or shortly before the birth of his child
Parental	A period of absence from work, paid or unpaid, and usually as required by law, granted by an employer to an employee who is the parent of a baby or young child
Family	An excused absence from work for the purpose of dealing with family matters, especially the birth or adoption of a child or to care for a sick parent or spouse

Source: Adapted from the Oxford Dictionary.

distinguish between a primary and a secondary caregiver (usually these terms are a proxy for mother and father) and offer significantly greater entitlements to the primary caregiver. For example, the Australian government offers 18 weeks of paid leave to the primary caregiver and two weeks to the secondary caregiver. With the exception of the United States, all OECD countries have introduced some form of paid parental leave for fathers.

Parental leave may be government funded or employer funded. Susan Wojcicki (2014), the CEO of YouTube, argued that paid parental leave reduces turnover, improves morale, and boosts productivity overall. (Google, the owner of YouTube, offers 18 weeks of paid leave for mothers and 12 weeks for fathers.) Recently, some organisations have sought to attract talent, boost loyalty, and retain their workforce by offering equal access to parental leave irrespective of gender or caregiving status; these organisations include Aviva, Diageo, ING, Spotify, and Unilever. Although such organisational-level policies can be positive, only a minority of people enjoy the benefits. For meaningful change to occur across society, government policy must be supported by a shift in socio-cultural norms in and outside the workplace (Lott and Klenner, 2018).

Parental leave covers a variety of definitions of leave and a range of policies at the organisational level (Table 1). However, research has focused on maternity leave, neglecting other types of parental leave, especially the types of leave that fathers access (Petts and Knoester, 2018).

3.2. Parental leave uptake

Social marketing has a strong tradition of collaborating with key stakeholders in order to listen, leverage, and learn to generate lasting social change (Domegan et al., 2019). Recently, there has been a generational shift for men to be involved in childcare and family caregiving alongside their work-related responsibilities (Albiston and O'Connor, 2016). This can be attributed to the increase in the number of women in the workplace as well as to fathers' increased involvement in child-rearing compared to earlier decades (Bianchi et al., 2006; Nandi et al., 2018). Young employed men are seeking the "package deal" where they are able to achieve career goals and maintain emotional involvement with their children (Townsend, 2002). In a survey of 1000 new Australian fathers, 75% said they wished they could have taken more leave (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014). In more than half of cases, the reason reported for not taking enough leave was affordability and more than a quarter reported experiencing discrimination when requesting to take parental leave or after returning to work after taking parental leave. Consequently, fathers' uptake of parental leave in Australia is notably low compared to other countries (Ray et al., 2010). Becoming evident from these studies is that fathers are seeking a change to current practices. However, because of persisting parenting-related gender norms, combined with the gender pay gap, it is predominantly mothers who take parental leave (Lundquist et al., 2012). Fig. 2 demonstrates the stark disparity between the entitlements offered to fathers and those offered to mothers.

Statistics from Australia show that only 27% of employed fathers took an average of seven days of paid paternity leave, and very

few (7%) took a short period of unpaid paternity leave of around 14 days. In contrast, 45% of mothers took an average of 11 weeks paid maternity leave (Whitehouse et al., 2007). More recently, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) reported that in 2017 less than 30% of fathers took parental leave, compared to 72% of mothers. The report also showed that only one in 20 men took primary parental leave when their children were born (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). In Australia, the government pays parental leave at the level of the minimum wage, which is the least generous policy of all OECD countries (except for the US, which does not have a government-funded paid parental leave policy).

There is evidence of a link between decisions about who takes parental leave, on the one hand, and the gender pay gap (Thévenon and Solaz, 2013) supported by the "male breadwinner" social norm, on the other (Ciccia and Verloo, 2012). For many OECD countries, labour market gender disparities continue to attract considerable attention at the macro level (policy makers), meso level (organisations), and micro level (individuals) (Christofides et al., 2013; see also Fig. 3). In the context of subsidised payments for parental leave, Rogerson (2008) reported that higher tax implications distort the decision as to which parent will stay at home to look after the child(ren). Further support for this comes from findings in selected OECD countries that the gender of the parent taking parental leave changes as taxation and subsidies increase or decrease (Ngai and Pissarides, 2011). However, studies also indicate that increasing fathers' uptake of parental leave has a positive effect on mothers' careers by allowing mothers to return to work earlier (Duvander and Johansson, 2012) and increasing women's employment rate by 6.8% (Amin et al., 2016).

Overcoming the economic restraints on fathers' uptake of parental leave requires macro-level interventions capable of leading change in social norms, such as formulating system rules or policy making and policy change (Huff et al., 2017). A successful example can be found in Quebec, where in 2006 the government offered a separate paternity leave policy distinct from the policy in the rest of Canada. Quebec increased the wage replacement rate from 55% to 75% and introduced three weeks of leave for fathers only (commonly known as the father's quota or "daddy quota") (Freeman, 2008; Mayer and Le Bourdais, 2019). This change increased fathers' uptake of parental leave to 80%, compared to 50% in the rest of Canada (Mayer and Le Bourdais, 2019). This shows how a targeted intervention can influence individual behaviour (the micro level) by changing policy (the macro level) in an effective, measurable, and results-driven way.

Sweden was a pioneer of parental leave, introducing in 1974 generous entitlements that can be shared between the couple, with 10 days reserved for the father. The policy aimed to help fathers achieve work-family balance, to establish an equal distribution of household responsibilities between genders, and to increase gender equality in the workplace (Yeung, 2016). However, just 6% of fathers took up any of the shared leave (Benhold, 2010); policy alone was insufficient (Haas and Hwang, 2019; Koslowski and Kadar-Satat, 2019). Sweden has spent decades refining its approach to parental leave in order to ensure a meaningful level of uptake that allows families to feel the benefits. It was not until the introduction of a quota reserving one month of leave for fathers only that uptake levels rose to over 80% (Tremblay, 2019).

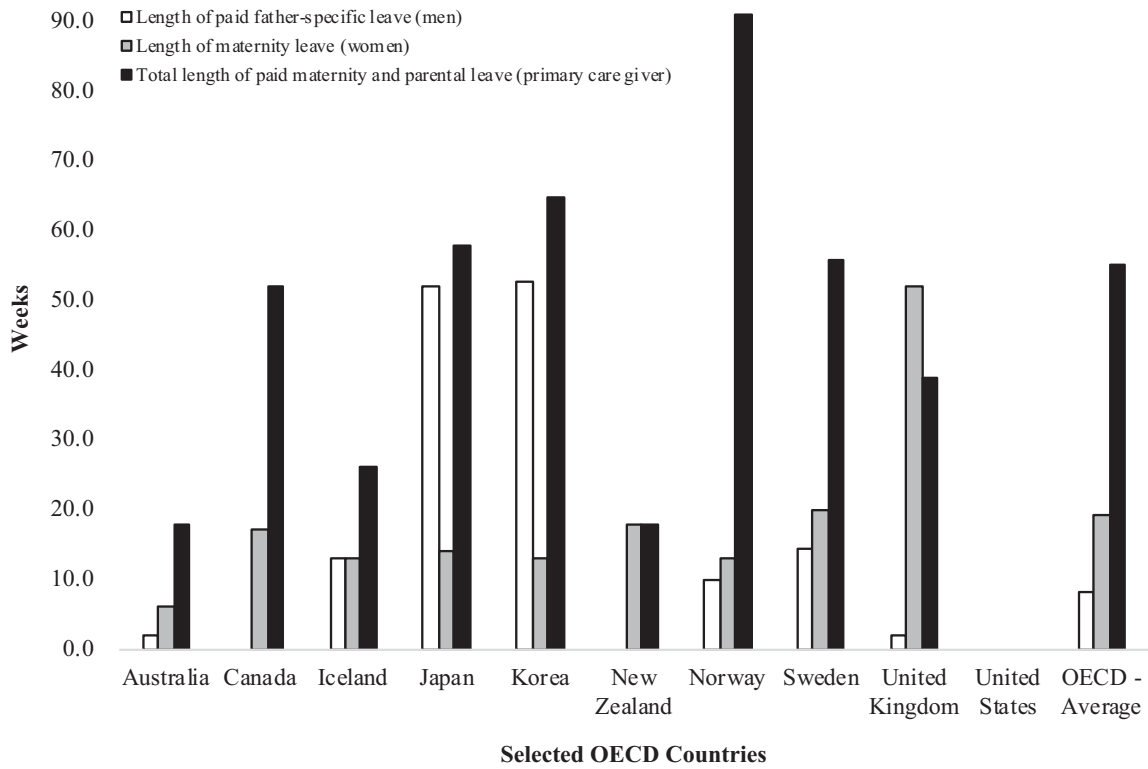


Fig. 2. Length of paid father-specific leave, maternity leave and parental leave (as at 2016, selected OECD countries).
 Source: Adapted from OECD data (<https://data.oecd.org>).

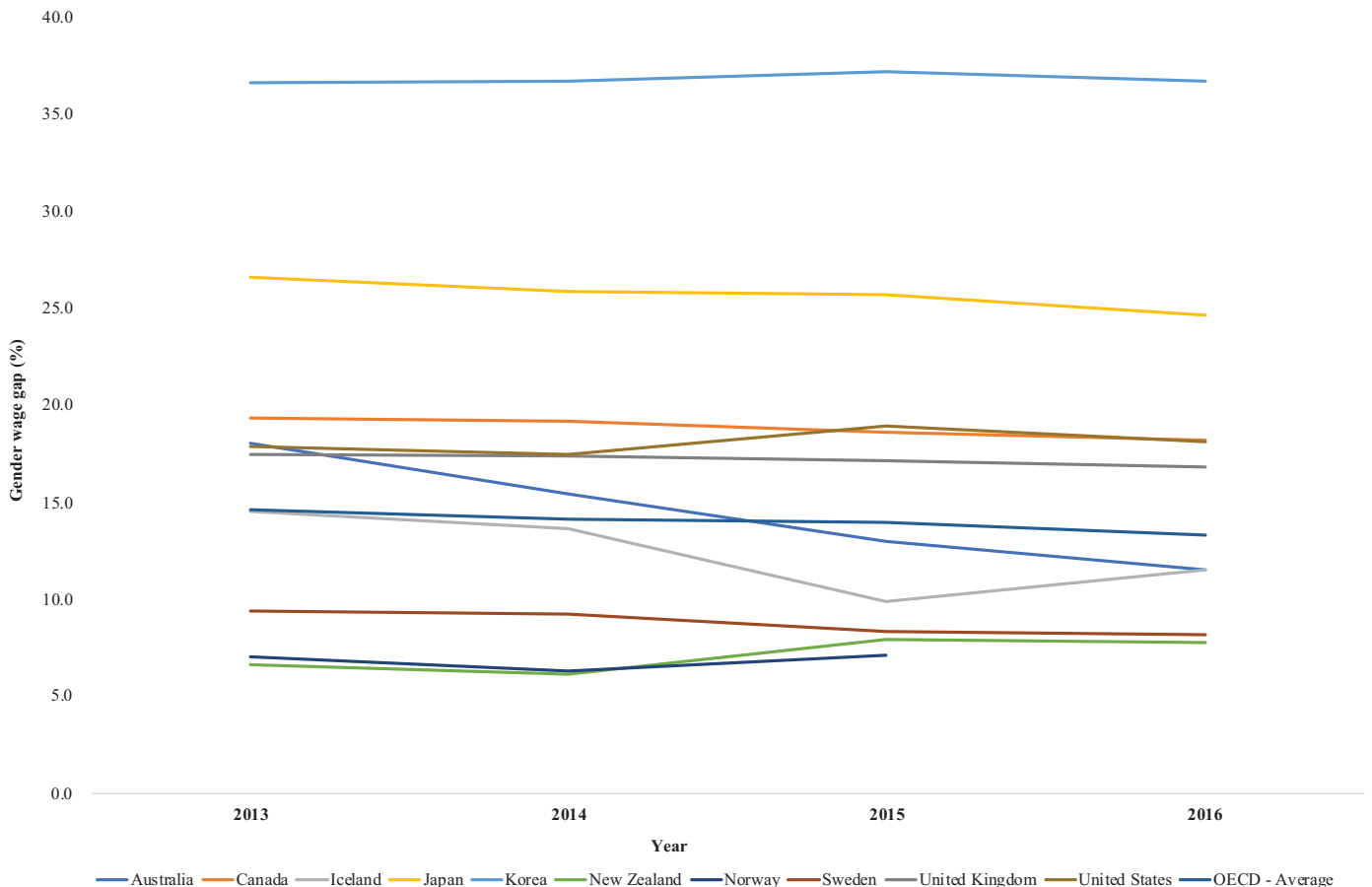


Fig. 3. Gender wage gap (%), selected OECD countries, 2013–2016.
 Source: Adapted from OECD data (<https://data.oecd.org>).

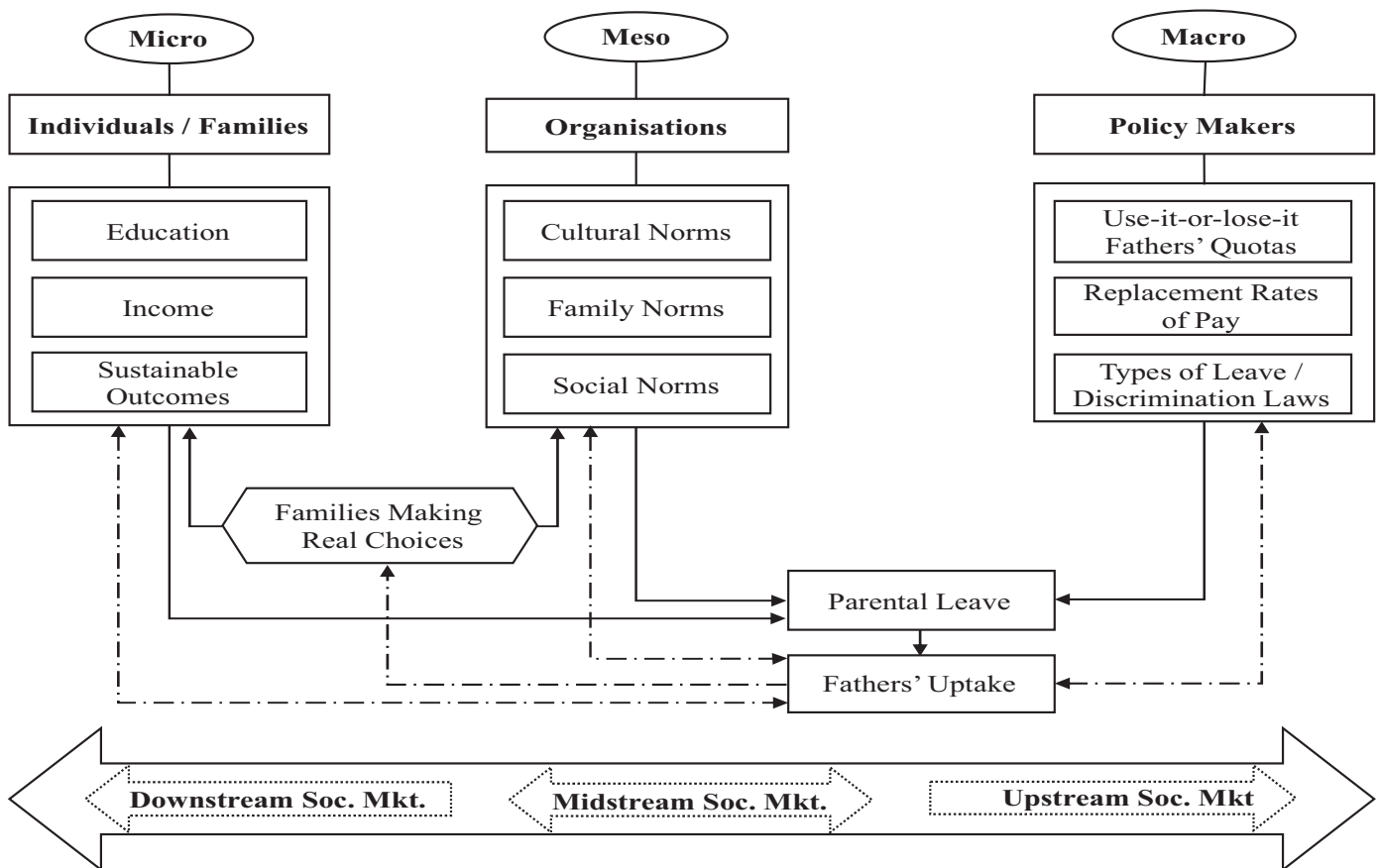


Fig. 4. Systems social marketing: Factors affecting fathers' uptake of parental leave.
Source: Developed for this research.

Today, a father's quota exists in Iceland, Norway, and Sweden; it has increased to three months of leave paid at 80% of the father's salary (with a cap) and may be taken any time before the child is seven years old. Research has found that uptake rates are higher in countries where paid leave is at, or close to, a salary replacement rate (OECD, 2016). Even where uptake is high, recent research has shown that although couples anticipate that they will share the leave almost equally (40% for the father and 60% for the mother), only 13% of couples do this (Haas and Hwang, 2019). This is due in part to workplace cultures discouraging men from taking long absences, and to the assumption that a masculinised ideal worker will prioritise work and have limited caring responsibilities (Haas and Hwang, 2019).

4. Applying systems social marketing (SSM) to develop a solution

Low uptake of parental leave by fathers is a complex issue that involves social, economic, and historical factors, making it difficult for contemporary societies to address by means of individualistic social marketing approaches (Truong et al., 2019; Van Esch, 2015; Van Esch et al., 2017). SSM is able to deal with this problem, since it considers the need for change at the micro level (individuals), the meso level (organisations), and the macro level (policy makers) (Levy and Zaltman, 1975; Truong et al., 2019; see also Fig. 4).

4.1. Micro level: from nice to necessary

Effective parental leave policies enable families to make choices about how parents share caregiving, workforce participation, and household chores. It is important to delve into the forces at work

at the micro level that affect how parents make these choices. Research has found that the education levels of fathers and their partners, as well as their income levels, play a key role in influencing uptake of parental leave. Previous studies have reported mixed results on the role of education in fathers' uptake of parental leave (Geisler and Kreyenfeld, 2011, 2019; Horvath et al., 2018). In most cases, the literature suggests that highly educated men are more likely to take parental leave than less educated men (Geisler and Kreyenfeld, 2019; Sundström and Duvander, 2002). Similarly, the more educated a father's partner is, the higher the uptake of parental leave by the father (Geisler and Kreyenfeld, 2011). Higher education correlates with more liberal attitudes to gender roles, which commit fathers to more childcare and family responsibilities than in less educated families (Geisler and Kreyenfeld, 2019). The impact of 'education' on fathers taking parental leave, Geisler and Kreyenfeld (2011) reported that the more educated a man, the higher his income and the more demanding his job, making it difficult to leave his job when his children are born.

Research has identified income as one of the main obstacles to fathers taking parental leave (Ndzi, 2018). In Australia, fathers get two weeks of paid parental leave at the rate of the national minimum wage (about \$740 per week before tax). This may negatively impact the financial situation of new parents, encouraging fathers to reduce the duration of their leave and go back to work early to fulfil the accepted role of breadwinner (Reich, 2011). Furthermore, when the partner's income is similar to the father's income (slightly higher or lower), fathers take more parental leave (Lappegård, 2012). If a father's income is considerably higher than his partner's, he is less likely to take parental leave, indicating that economic constraints have an influence on fathers' decisions to take leave (Lappegård, 2012; Reich, 2011).

Studies have shown that parental leave has a positive impact on a father's sense of well-being and can improve marital stability. Fathers who take parental leave develop confidence and increased feelings of love and appreciation as they care for their children. Furthermore, a sense of purpose and self-worth develops alongside their caring competences and emotional attachment to their children (Brandth and Kvande, 2018). A study conducted in Norway before and after the introduction of the father's quota found reduced levels of conflict over household tasks and more equal division of such tasks between parents (Kotsadam and Finseraas, 2011). As a consequence, further research into the development of a public education campaign to communicate the family-wide benefits of an involved father could influence parental leave uptake by fathers.

4.2. Meso level: from periphery to centre stage

Implementing family-friendly policies, benefits employees and employers alike. Social exchange theory (SET) offers an explanation for this (Emerson, 1976): social behaviour is the result of an exchange process aiming to maximise benefits and minimise costs. Some industries and organisations have applied SET in linking family-friendly policies to productivity, commitment, and performance (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012; Lewis et al., 2014). SET suggests that employees who are fairly treated and valued in an organisation are more satisfied and therefore more likely to be productive and committed to the organisation (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012). Similarly, the International Labour Organization directed by the UN has focused on promoting parental leave as a business investment rather than a business cost. With workplace policies in place that help employees achieve work–family balance, thereby reducing internal conflict, organisations have noticed improvements in productivity, profitability, and competitiveness (Croucher et al., 2013; Gregory and Milner, 2009; Lewis et al., 2014). For example, evidence suggests that men who take parental leave are healthier and, as a result, less likely to take sick leave or be absent from work, therefore benefiting their organisations (Lewis et al., 2014).

Although parental leave policies may be in place to ensure fathers have access to time off work when their children are born, without a change in social norms the uptake can be limited. Studies suggest that social norms have a great influence on reducing this gap and reinforcing the implementation of policy (Lott and Klenner, 2018). The literature correlates a lack of work–family policy and organisational support with low uptake of parental leave on the part of fathers (Hobson and Fahlén, 2009). However, a recent study by Haas and Hwang (2019) revealed that fathers rarely identify their workplace policy as a factor preventing them from taking parental leave. Their findings suggest that policy does not necessarily change the way an organisation views taking parental leave, especially for fathers, nor does it encourage flexible work practices that enable fathers to take substantial amounts of parental leave or to change the way they work (as mothers often do). The clear gap between policy and practice in workplaces is due mostly to work cultures that have established social norms relating fathers' taking of paternity leave to unproductivity, lack of commitment, and reduced masculinity (Haas and Hwang, 2019). Empirical evidence shows that fathers taking leave is not the norm in organisations, even when policies allow for generous amounts of leave (Goodman et al., 2019).

Managers tend to discourage male employees from taking leave by communicating the idea that “leave is a choice, not an expectation” (Haas and Hwang, 2019). Regardless of leave rights and policies in an organisation, managers tend to characterise fathers taking leave as a form of employee absence, which presents challenges such as finding a replacement or operating with a staff shortage if a replacement cannot be found (Nordberg, 2019).

Fathers with managerial and leadership roles plan and take shorter periods of parental leave for fear of loss of opportunity (Gartzia et al., 2018; Horvath et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2013). Career interruption related to family negatively affects salaries, promotions, and career progression, making it particularly unfavourable to fathers in managerial positions (Gartzia et al., 2018; Hardoy et al., 2017; Horvath et al., 2018).

The trend for managers to take less parental leave not only reduces the likelihood that other employees will take leave (Haas and Hwang, 2019; Lott and Klenner, 2018; Nordberg, 2019) but also affects managers' assessment of employees who take their full parental leave, making them seem less committed and therefore less valuable to the organisation (Ellison et al., 2009). Experimental studies show that fathers who take parental leave face more negative consequences from their managers in terms of denied promotions and lack of career growth compared to mothers (Wayne and Cordeiro, 2003) and to fathers who took no leave (Rudman and Mescher, 2013). Research shows a correlation between the length of a given father's leave and that of his colleagues (Bygren and Du-vander, 2006; Dahl et al., 2014; Koslowski and Kadar-Satat, 2019). In terms of fathers' masculine identity, research supports the development through care responsibilities of a caring masculinity, and highlights its benefits for men's mental health (Brandth and Kvande, 2018). Research also emphasises the need to promote a culture of caring masculinity within workplaces to encourage more men to take parental leave, a solution that can be achieved through social marketing interventions (Huff et al., 2017).

Applying a SSM lens to low levels of parental leave uptake shows that the beliefs, social norms, attitudes, and values at the organisational level (i.e., the cultural system) must be influenced, along with people and their relationships within that system (i.e., the social system) (Kennedy, 2017). At the meso level, SSM must focus on training managers, employers, and colleagues to accept fathers' parental leave, to raise employees' awareness of the benefits of parental leave uptake for them and their children, and to normalise leave uptake for fathers in an organisation (Huff et al., 2017; Kemper and Ballantine, 2017; Truong et al., 2019). However, a review of the literature shows a lack of studies on the role of SSM in influencing specific corporate norms and behaviours. The question raised by Truong et al. (2019, p. 191) highlights the need for further research on the issue: “What is the extent to which corporate entities can be involved in SSM intervention and, if they are, how do their organisational norms or functioning procedures change after they have participated in an SSM intervention?”

4.3. Macro level: from supporting cast to lead role

Government policy is capable of generating meaningful change and reducing gender division by supporting the equal distribution of caring responsibilities between mothers and fathers. Formally, Australia has equal opportunity legislation, yet research into parenthood, gender, and work–family time across multiple countries found that in Australia the presence of children was associated with the greatest increase in a gendered division of labour (Craig and Mullan, 2010) and the highest levels of time-stressed parenting for mothers (Craig et al., 2019). Furthermore, anti-discrimination laws in Australia allow employers to distinguish between fathers and mothers and treat them differently. There have been lawsuits challenging organisational policy on the grounds of gender discrimination in the US, with successful high-profile cases brought against Estée Lauder, JPMorgan Chase, and CNN by fathers demanding equal access to parental leave. However, because of the existing legislation, these lawsuits were unsuccessful.

At the government level, we recommend the implementation of a father's quota, as this has been a successful lever in multiple policy domains. In Denmark and Finland, the time fathers spend

Table 2
The three E's for increasing parental leave uptake.

Three E's	How	Level	Stream	Systems Social Marketing Approach
ENABLE	Moving from nice to necessary	Micro	Downstream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't fixate on current norms; focus on both short-term and long-term family goals in order to achieve sustainable family-orientated outcomes. • Seek out and work for organisations that have generous and equitable parental leave policies. • Share practices and, where applicable, advise and inform soon-to-be or new parents in your social and work settings.
EXPLORE	Moving from periphery to centre stage	Meso	Midstream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify fathers who have taken paternity leave and encourage them to advocate for the experience to increase awareness and discussion. • Think carefully about all the different perspectives and how they will be experienced by families to ensure a positive overall experience. • Create and use a common language that encompasses all types of leave, for example "parental leave."
ESTABLISH	Moving from supporting cast to lead role	Macro	Upstream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change discrimination laws to prevent conscious and unconscious bias, so employers treat fathers and mothers equitably. • Offer higher and equal levels of financial support (i.e., replacement rates of pay) when employees take parental leave. • Implement a "use-it-or-lose-it" fathers' quota to establish new habits.

Source: Developed for this research.

Table 3
Parental leave uptake – future research questions.

Level	Stream	Who	Three E's framework	Future research questions
Micro	Downstream	Families	Enable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * How are fathers' on parental leave perceived and judged in society? * How do fathers' use parental leave, with reference to length of leave? * How do fathers' use parental leave, with reference to whether fathers' are the main carers of children or not? * Does non-normative parenting have greater potential for 'decoding' the role of gender in parenting, by putting the child's need for care at the centre of parenting practices?
Meso	Midstream	Organisations	Explore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * How are fathers' on parental leave perceived and judged in organisations? * How do fathers' use parental leave, with reference to occupational differences? * How do fathers' careers develop after parental leave compared to mothers? * How is the re-entering of the labour market organized on an organisational level (concerning fathers)?
Macro	Upstream	Policy makers	Establish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * How can parental leave legislation be described from a gendered and/or historical perspective? * Why is fathers' uptake of parental leave considerably lower than mothers', even in 'father friendly' societies? * How is the re-entering of the labour market organized on a legal level (concerning mothers' and others)? * What gendered challenges can be seen in the context of fathers' parental leave? * How effective are quotas in promoting gender equality in relation to parental leave? * How is parental leave uptake supported, when fathers' work in part-time roles? * How are fathers' parental leave and careers portrayed in marketing campaign materials?

Source: Adapted from Axelsson (2014).

caring for children is closer than in other countries to the time mothers spend caring for children. This appears to be the result of three factors: institutional support for mothers in the workplace, a father's quota encouraging fathers to be involved in childcare, and positive social attitudes supporting gender equality (Craig et al., 2019; Craig and Mullan, 2010). This may explain why mothers in Nordic countries report higher rates of satisfaction with work-family balance than mothers elsewhere (Lewis, 2009).

A study of families in Iceland showed that the introduction of a father's quota had a direct effect on the divorce rate, which was 8.3% lower after five years and 3.4% lower after 15 years (Duffy et al., 2019). Inequality in caring responsibilities contributes to high rates of dissatisfaction with work-family balance, to lower productivity in organisations, which consequently operate at a lower capacity, and to a reduction in women's long-term career advancement (Lewis, 2009; Noonan et al., 2007). When parental leave is mandatory and non-transferable (as in the Nordic countries), studies have found a positive influence on norms (Brandth and Kvande, 2018). There will be links between what happens at the macro, meso, and micro levels in the pursuit of this change.

5. Implications of a systems social marketing (SSM) approach and recommendations

Structural and social change is required at all levels: at the micro level, in the way we value fathers and their contribution to families, not only as breadwinners; at the meso level, within organisations as a way of challenging the notion of the "ideal male worker" and encouraging ongoing institutional support for fathers; and at the macro level, in the form of financial and ideological support from government. Policy alone does not achieve the desired increase in fathers' uptake of parental leave (Haas and Hwang, 2019; Koslowski and Kadar-Satat, 2019). There is therefore a need for an approach that helps to close the gap by changing social norms, work cultures, and government-level policy. We suggest that social marketing can help in connecting policy and in changing practice when it comes to fathers' parental leave uptake (Bryant et al., 2014).

Next, at the *micro* level, we draw on rational choice theory (Zafirovski, 1998; Lappegård, 2008) to examine theoretically the factors that enable social change for fathers' to care for their

children. Are fathers' better equipped to care for their children or do children suffer from being nurtured by their fathers' (Axelsson, 2014). Factors such as historical transformations, political interventions and social power relations, may not necessarily explain social change and as a consequence, has the potential to either harm or place the blame on mothers' (Glass, 1998). Such discourse may help explain why mothers and fathers' still share parental leave dis-proportionately.

At the *meso* level, we draw on feminist theory (Gurrieri et al., 2013; Robila, 2012) and the gender literature (Martam, 2016; Castro-García and Pazos-Moran, 2016) to explore the economic reasons, maternal gatekeeping behaviours, non-father-friendly organisational cultures and traditional sex roles on fatherhood representations.

Finally, at the *macro* level, we draw on comparative and historical policy research (Amenta et al., 2001; Wall and Escobedo, 2013) to establish how leave-taking corresponds with demographic and socio-economic characteristics, organizational cultures, societal views of childcare and the intersect with institutional and structural gendered inequalities.

Taken all together, we present a framework (Table 2) that helps families, organisations and policy makers think about the internal and external levers that influence fathers' uptake of parental leave. We refer to this model as the three Es: establish, explore, and enable.

An SSM approach can help identify policy limitations and any complementary changes in socio-cultural forces that will support uptake of the policy. Bryant et al. (2014) found systematic social marketing efforts that utilise upstream (macro) approaches to be particularly effective in increasing policy enactment. Their eight-step community-based policy development and enactment framework utilising macro-social marketing approaches has proved effective not only in changing policy but also in promoting policy enactment and practices (Bryant et al., 2014). A macro-social marketing approach combines the need for policy to foster and adopt certain practices (e.g., parental leave uptake) with social marketing techniques to introduce such policies and promote higher uptake (Kemper and Ballantine, 2017). While it is not unusual to apply SSM to issues such as obesity, environmental behaviour, and climate change, it appears that no study has applied an SSM framework to the issue of fathers' uptake of parental leave or gender equality more generally, thus warranting future research into its efficiency and effectiveness.

Increasing the uptake of parental leave by fathers requires system-wide change. It is surprising that one month of leave for fathers granted on the birth of their child can have such wide-reaching consequences and benefits for so many stakeholders. Norms and practices often become established and entrenched early on, which explains why what some may see as relatively small interventions can achieve such significant outcomes. Hence, we recommend a government-mandated father's quota to ensure access to flexible and adequately paid leave for all working parents. This should be complemented by an awareness campaign, aimed at new parents, to communicate the benefits of early involvement on the part of fathers: achieving better outcomes for children, creating equality in the distribution of caring responsibilities, generating greater marriage stability, and allowing both men and women to achieve their career goals (Heilman and Caleo, 2018). Finally, we suggest offering guidance and support to organisations so that they can change their internal workplace cultures to allow for a more inclusive image of parenting and a more nuanced image of the ideal male worker. We suggest targeting line managers first, then colleagues, to ensure that men feel entitled to take parental leave or to adopt flexible working practices that reduce work-life conflict and promote work-life harmony.

Further research can help develop a more nuanced understanding of the forces preventing fathers' uptake of employer-funded

paternity leave (see Table 3). This may shed light on the sources of resistance at the meso and at the macro (e.g. government) levels that are likely to prevent a more definitive and supportive stance on a father's quota. Previous studies have shown that parental leave policies boost female participation in the workforce, which has a positive influence on the economy. However, more research is required to determine how a business case can be made at the organisational level for equal access to parental leave.

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