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The Paternity Leave Puzzle:

A Mixed-Methods Analysis of the Impact of Paid Father-Specific Leave on Women's Workplace Advancement in OECD Countries

Dissertation submitted by

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Table of contents

Abstract

Despite the emerging evidence on the link between paternity leave and women's career outcomes, paternity leave has not had the same momentum as maternity leave. Through an innovative research design that combines a panel regression analysis with a modified version of process tracing, this study assesses whether paid father-specific leave has an impact on women's workplace advancement in member countries of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) — where most countries have introduced some form of paid father-specific leave — and determines the factors that have influenced its uptake in Japan and Portugal, two OECD member countries that have implemented significant expansions of their paternity leave policies in the last decade but have seen divergent outcomes from their reforms. The panel regression analysis finds that, while paternity leave has a highly statistically significant, positive effect on the percentage of women holding company board seats, it has no statistically significant impact on the advancement of women at different stages of their careers. Meanwhile, the case studies point to the importance of a comprehensive consideration of the individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions in the design and implementation of a policy: while Japan offers a significantly lengthier paternity leave entitlement and a higher compensation rate for paid father-specific leave than Portugal, it has seen a lower uptake of paid father-specific leave because it lacks the necessary cultural and institutional infrastructure to support its paternity leave reform.

1. Introduction

Paternity leave has not had the same momentum as maternity leave. The disparity between the two is evident in how these entitlements are reported: the length of maternity leave is counted in terms of months, while the duration of paternity leave is expressed in weeks or mere days. While the provision of paternity leave was briefly mentioned in the 2009 International Labour Conference resolution focusing on gender equality at the core of decent work, no International Labour Organization (ILO) standard concerning paternity leave has yet been established (International Labour Organization, 2014). The World Economic Forum (WEF)'s Global Gender Gap report, which is arguably the most comprehensive and most cited report on gender inequality, did not even mention paternity leave until 2011, five years after the inaugural report was published in 2006. Such omissions point to the policy inertia behind paternity leave even as evidence of the positive impact of father-specific entitlements on women's advancement in the workplace is emerging.

A study of gender diversity in almost 22,000 firms from 91 countries found that paternity leave, instead of maternity leave, is strongly and positively correlated with women's share of corporate board seats (Noland et al., 2016). On the surface, the result runs counter to the seemingly intuitive idea that only leave entitlements that specifically target mothers can affect women's career progression. The underlying implication of this finding, however, is that the length of maternity leave is not directly proportional to women's workplace advancement. Rather, more inclusive policies that explicitly encourage fathers to be more actively involved in childcare may be more helpful to women.

Although investigating the relationship between paternity leave and women's career advancement at a large scale was not its main objective, the 2016 Noland et al. study was the first to do so. Nevertheless, the authors cautioned researchers from making

sweeping statements based on their findings given the fact that the study was limited to 2014 data. This study, which is the first to determine how paid father-specific leave affects women's careers in several countries in a period that spans more than a decade, is partly an attempt to build on Noland et al.'s work by constructing and analyzing through five different regression models a panel dataset of countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), where most countries have introduced some form of paid father-specific leave (OECD, 2017b). A qualitative analysis — which involves a modified process tracing of within-case studies of Japan and Portugal, two countries that in the last decade have significantly lengthened their paid father-specific leave through a reform of their laws — complements the panel regression analysis to explain the factors that have influenced the uptake (or lack thereof) of paternity leave in the OECD.

The study starts with an overview of previous research on paternity leave, followed by the rationale behind the chosen analytical framework, an explanation of the methodology, a discussion of the findings, and finally, a reflection on the broader implications for scholarly research and policymaking. Consistent with the Noland et al. study, the panel regression analysis finds that paternity leave has a highly statistically significant, positive effect on the percentage of women holding company board seats. Paternity leave has no statistically significant impact, however, on the advancement of women at different stages of their careers. Meanwhile, the case studies illustrate that, without the foundation of cultural norms and organizational support, even lengthy entitlements cannot successfully encourage men to use paid father-specific leave.

While the Noland et al. study covered one year and focused on women who were already at the top of the corporate hierarchy, this study looks at women's workplace advancement more broadly by considering more than a decade's worth of data for each OECD country and including not only the proportion of company board seats held by women, but also the percentage of female managers, the rate of female labor participation, and the gender wage gap. By adopting a more inclusive approach to

investigating (a) whether paid father-specific leave affects women's career progression and (b) what has affected the use of paid father-specific leave in the OECD, this study aims to contribute to the burgeoning literature on paternity leave — a body of work that has primarily focused on the contribution of the use of such entitlements to children's well-being (Nepomnyaschy & Waldfogel, 2007; O'Brien, 2009; Cools et al., 2015). This goal is achieved through a sociology-grounded analytical framework that can translate more abstract causal mechanisms into specific hypotheses and variables for systematic testing, an innovative mixed-methods approach to a subject that has traditionally been assessed through either exclusively quantitative or qualitative methodologies, and an original panel dataset that covers OECD member countries from 2005 to 2018.[1]

The study's main objective is to generate insights that could be useful to scholars and policymakers alike as they explore the relatively overlooked importance of leave for the exclusive use of fathers and delve into the implications of family schemes that continue to place women at the center of the calculus of childcare. A more modest aim of this study is to provide some nuance to the traditional thinking that continues to pervade policies aimed at promoting women in the workplace.

[1] Colombia, the most recent country to have joined the OECD, is not part of the dataset because it became a member in 2020.

2. Background of the study

2.1 The "motherhood penalty"

While the supposed erosion of the male breadwinner model — one that assigns men as the ones responsible for earning money to support their families and women as the household's caretakers — is often the center of the discussion surrounding paternity leave or paid father-specific leave,[2] the focus on it overlooks a crucial fact: "A pure male breadwinner model never existed; women always engaged in the labor market" (Lewis, 2001, p. 153).

Indeed, women have always worked — although much of that work has gone unpaid because of how their contributions are valued (Schmidt, 2016). For instance, when asked about what they deemed the top hurdle for women in the workplace, male and female respondents participating in a global survey answered that work-life balance was the biggest challenge (International Labour Organization & Gallup, 2017). This work-life balance responsibility is made even more difficult when a woman gives birth: there has been evidence that the disproportionate burden of domestic responsibilities placed on women restricts female advancement in the workplace through a so-called motherhood penalty and that longer maternity leave entitlements could worsen the problem.

Contrary to the conventional notion of maternity leave as a measure designed to give women a leg up in the career ladder by enabling them to retain their professional roles, studies have shown that maternity leave could even have a detrimental effect on women's careers. For example, a post-birth fixed effects model designed to estimate the wages of mothers returning to full-time employment in Germany after having their first child found that, in a maternity leave period of less than 3.5 years, there is a wage penalty of 3 percent to 6 percent for every year of leave, with higher-skilled women facing bigger

[2] For the purposes of this study, both terms are used interchangeably to mean paternity leave and parental leave entitlements, shareable parental leave entitlements that are reserved for fathers, and any shareable leave entitlements that must be used by the father for the family to access "bonus" weeks of leave.

dents to their incomes (Ejrnæs & Kunze, 2013). Meanwhile, a comparison of Germany, the United States, and Sweden — three countries with markedly different policies addressing the work-family conundrum faced by working women — found that in all three countries, longer time-off periods had a destabilizing effect on women's careers (Aisenbrey et al., 2009). In the United States, where both the length of the maternity leave and the history of such a policy are the shortest, even brief periods away from work were found to have a negative impact on women's career mobility. Even in Sweden, which is known for being the most "family-friendly" country among the three for its relatively long and well-compensated leaves, women are better off professionally if they do not spend a significant time away from their jobs.

These findings may underline the need for fathers to take on a greater share of childcare responsibilities and use more of their leave entitlements. One argument for lengthier paid father-specific leave is that the existing design of parental leave policies entrenches gender inequality both in the family and in the workplace: while longer maternity leave entitlements have the positive effect of increasing female labor participation, they may also inhibit post-birth earnings and women's career advancement (Farré, 2016; Ruhm, 1998). This current system of parental leave schemes, which disproportionately places the responsibility of childcare on mothers through a significantly longer maternity leave, seems designed to set up women to fail professionally (Perraudin, 2019).

2.2 An overview of paternity leave in the OECD

Paid father-specific leave, which includes paternity leave and parental leave entitlements, shareable parental leave entitlements that are reserved for fathers, and any shareable leave entitlements that must be used by the father for the family to access "bonus" weeks of leave, was introduced to the OECD in 1970 when Spain, Luxembourg, and Belgium put in place one day, two days, and three days, respectively, of leave for the exclusive use of fathers (OECD, 2017b). Adoption of entitlements reserved for fathers was

sluggish: by 1990, the average length of paid father-specific leave in the OECD was just one day. While several OECD countries started introducing paid father-specific leave in the last few decades — South Korea and Japan, where fathers are entitled to a year of paid parental leave, are particularly notable in this regard — and the OECD average length of paid father-specific leave is now a little over nine weeks, there have also been policy reversals. For example, the abolishment of the "father quota" in 2002 in Denmark significantly shortened the length of its paid-father specific leave (OECD, 2017b).

The OECD has seen policymakers either mandating or lengthening paid father-specific leave with the explicit aim of supporting women both in the workplace and at home (Cools et al., 2015). A closer look at 2018 data, however, shows that policies and payment rates still vary widely across member countries. For example, the length of paid father-specific leave in the OECD ranges from zero weeks (Canada, Israel, New Zealand, Slovakia, Switzerland, and the United States) to 52.6 weeks (South Korea). For countries with at least one week of leave reserved for fathers, the payment rate can be as low as 19.2 percent (France and United Kingdom) to as generous as 100 percent (Chile, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Turkey).

Both the length of paternity leave and the payment rate associated with it can, to a certain extent, influence the decision on whether to use the paid father-specific leave entitlement. Figures 1 and 2 graphically depict the differences in lengths of paid father-specific leave and payment rates in the OECD.

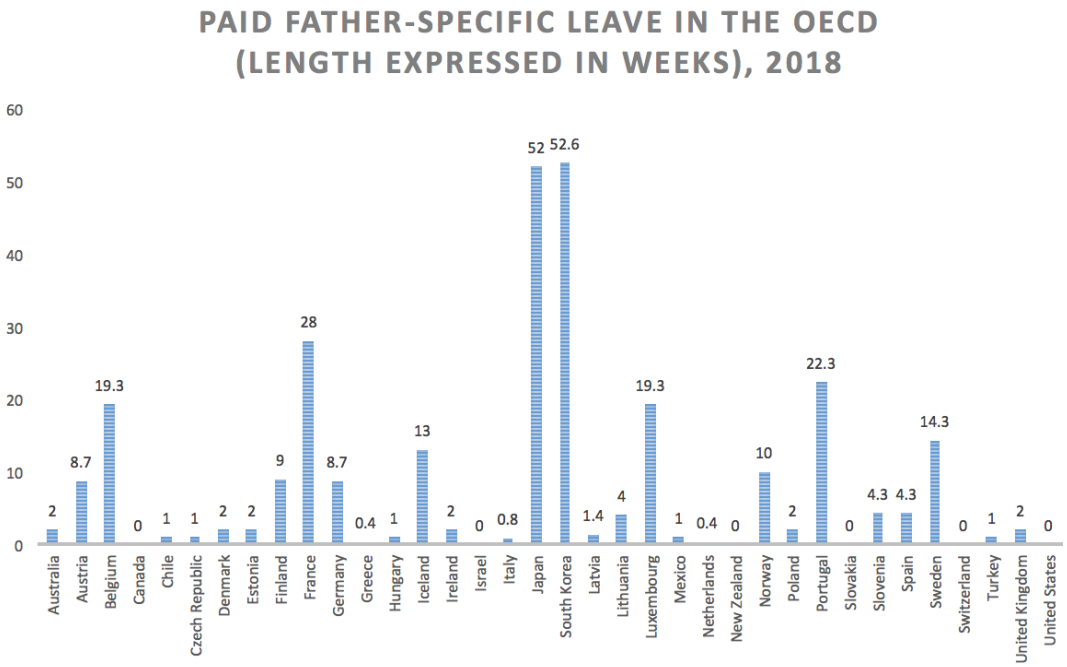

Figure 1. Paid father-specific leave in the OECD in weeks (OECD, 2018).

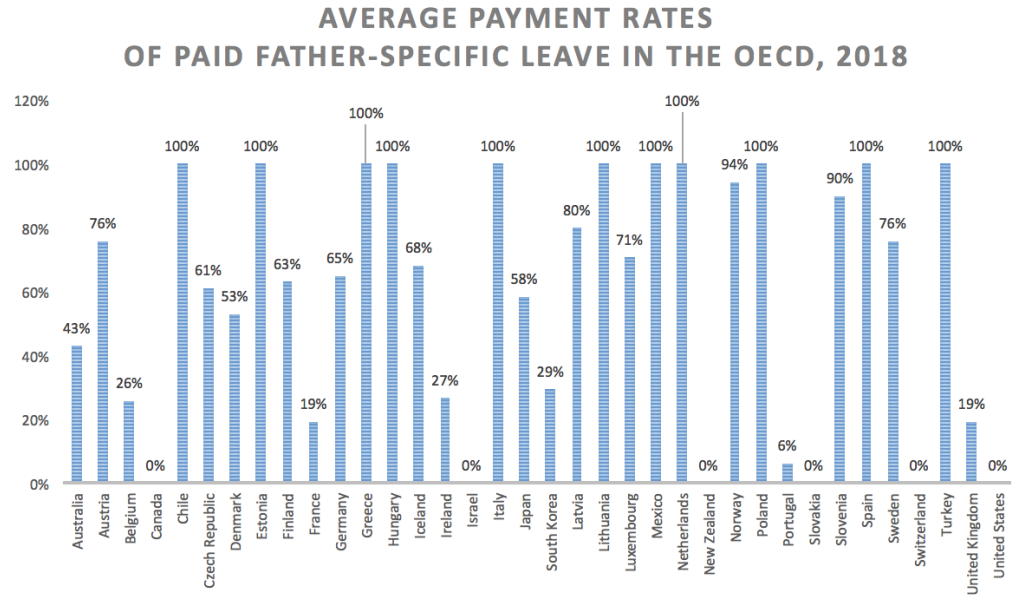

Figure 2. Average payment rates of paid father-specific leave in the OECD (OECD, 2018).

2.3 The mixed evidence on paternity leave in the OECD

Most research surrounding paternity leave in the OECD has focused on the positive impact of more time-off for fathers on their children's well-being (Nepomnyaschy & Waldfogel, 2007; O'Brien, 2009; Cools et al., 2015). Relatively little attention has been paid to whether fathers spending more time at home could also benefit women professionally. While the Noland et al. (2016) study is the most comprehensive in terms of countries covered, the available empirical evidence on the impact of paternity leave on professional outcomes for women in OECD countries has painted a mixed picture.

For example, in Iceland, a law that lengthened the parental leave from six to nine months — which was designed to allow each parent to take three months of leave, with the distribution of the remainder to be decided by themselves — was found to have reduced gender inequality in the labor market as women found themselves in a better position to find better compensated jobs that required more of their time (Anarson & Mitra, 2008).

Paternity leave, however, has also been found to have hurt women's careers — or at the very least, it has failed to alter the earnings differential between men and women, as policymakers have intended. A difference-in-differences study conducted in Norway has shown that a higher uptake of paternity leave could have negative consequences for women's workplace advancement (Cools et al., 2015). A study in Sweden, a country known for policies that promote work-life balance, showed a similar result, but acknowledged that the findings must be interpreted with caution, especially since the paternity leave reform also increased the uptake of maternity leave (Ekberg et al., 2013), which means that there could be "complementarities in mothers' and fathers' time at home" (Cools et al., 2015, p. 820).

There are other missing pieces to the paternity leave puzzle. For instance, the questions of whether paternity leave affects women's employment similarly across all

kinds of companies and whether paternity leave and maternity leave substitute or complement women's employment have no clear answers yet (Amin et al., 2016).

2.4 Challenges in measuring paternity leave

Determining the impact of paid father-specific leave is also complicated by several data collection challenges. Variations in national leave systems, contrasting terminologies, and differences in how leave uptake is calculated, for example, make it inadvisable to conduct cross-country comparisons of these variables (Aumayr-Pintar, 2019).

There is also the issue of fathers forgoing their leaves. The stubborn gap between the earning capacities of men and women — in 2018, the disparity in economic participation and opportunity for men and women was estimated at 58 percent (Merelli, 2018) — contributes to the perceived opportunity cost of fathers spending more time at home and is one crucial reason that the uptake of paid father-specific leave is not higher (Ruhm, 1998). Low uptake of paternity and parental leave by fathers, meanwhile, forces mothers to spend a longer time away from their job to care for their children, if not exit the labor market altogether, thereby reducing the potential of their salary trajectories.

Aside from the design of parental and paternity leave entitlements, which affects how much fathers are compensated and how flexible their leave entitlements are, the encouragement (or lack thereof) from employers in promoting parental and paternity leave as well as the administrative requirements for claiming benefits also influence whether fathers use their allocated leave allowances (Aumayr-Pintar, 2019; Perraudin, 2019).

2.5 Putting it all together

This brief review of previous research on paternity leave points to two main observations: (a) measuring the impact of paid father-specific leave is impeded by several

gaps, methodological (e.g., data collection challenges) and behavioral (e.g., fathers being discouraged from using their entitlements) alike and (b) while the research on the impact of paid father-specific leave on women's workplace advancement remains inconclusive, there is enough evidence that paternity leave could benefit women simply by shifting the disproportionate burden of childcare away from them. This study incorporates these insights into its approach to the research questions it aims to answer.

3. Framework for analysis

The mere existence of a policy does not translate into actual impact. Implementation as well as deep-seated attitudes and behaviors often influence one another and determine the effect — or lack thereof — of any policy. For these reasons, this study draws on sociologist Barbara Risman's conceptualization of gender as a social structure, which places gender "at the same level of significance as the economy and the polity" (Risman, 2004, p. 446) and interrogates how the individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions of this structure determine one another. The latter point about how no single dimension is more important than the others needs to be emphasized because, while this study is about whether paid father-specific leave has an impact on women's workplace advancement, it is not solely focused on the institutional dimension. For example, whether or not men use their leave and what drives them to use their entitlements or leave them unused — both factors are driven by not just institutional policies, but also by cultural norms and socialization, which can be considered part of the interactional and individual dimensions — are equally essential to understanding how to design better parental leave policies.

Risman noted that the tendency to treat institutions and individuals as opposing forces belies the mutual relationship between the two. For example, the emphasis on constraint as a component of structure (Blau, 1977) minimizes the agency that individuals have in willingly assuming the roles they think they should play: "Not only are women and men coerced into different social roles; they often choose their gendered paths" (Risman, 2004, p. 431). This recursive relationship is a more nuanced explanation of the fact that some men, even with the availability of paid father-specific leave, continue to forgo their entitlements (Aumayr-Pintar, 2019). Employers' expectations that male employees should be more visible in the office, as well as the relative absence of public male figures involved in domestic responsibilities, are just some of the signals that indicate to men that they cannot afford, financially or otherwise, to spend time away from

work for an extended period, causing them to voluntarily give up much of their paternity leave. Individual decisions, however, also perpetuate the structures that keep these patterns in place: the low uptake of paid father-specific leave illustrates to other men in the workplace that there are considerable risks — whether financial, social, or both — to using these entitlements.

Using the framework of gender as a social structure also helps to operationalize the variables driving the different relationships in all dimensions. Indeed, for scholars delving into similar issues and looking to make their research more relevant to policymakers, the conceptualization of gender as a social structure could also yield more actionable insights:

> ... the feminist project is better served by finding empirical answers to particular questions and by identifying how particular processes explain outcomes in need of change. If our goal is to do scholarship that contributes to transforming society, the identification of the processes that explain particular outcomes is the first step in effectively changing those processes and subsequently the outcomes themselves. (Risman, 2004, p. 435)

Figure 3 depicts how the different dimensions in Risman's framework correspond with the various factors affecting the relationship between paternity leave and women's workplace advancement analyzed in this study. It must be reiterated that these factors do not strictly belong to any one dimension and that all three dimensions can affect one another.

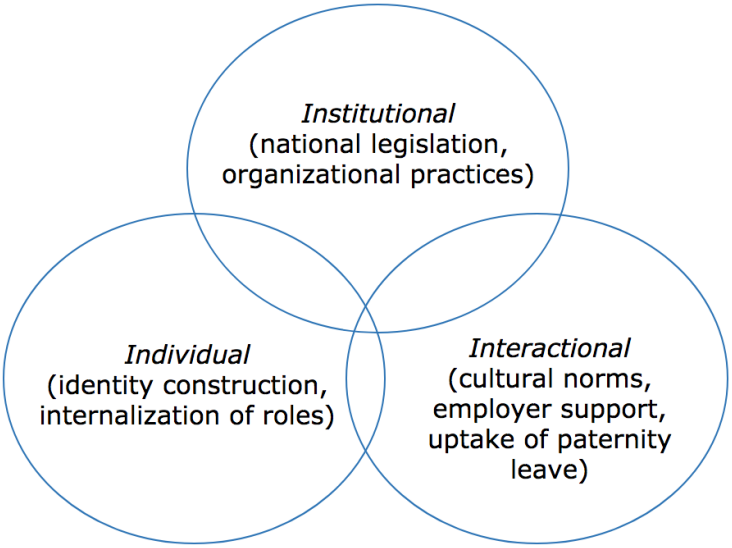

Figure 3. Framework for analysis

4. Research design

4.1 Rationale

This study aims to answer a two-fold research question. The first and main question concerns whether paid father-specific leave affects women's workplace advancement in the OECD. Since comparable national data on paternity leave uptake is not available, however, a second — and equally important question — is asked: What has influenced the uptake of paid father-specific leave in the OECD? While the main question itself is straightforward, the nature of the puzzle is complicated by the individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions that influence how views on paternity leave — which have an impact on the use of these entitlements — have been shaped. Figure 4 is a simplified representation of these relationships.

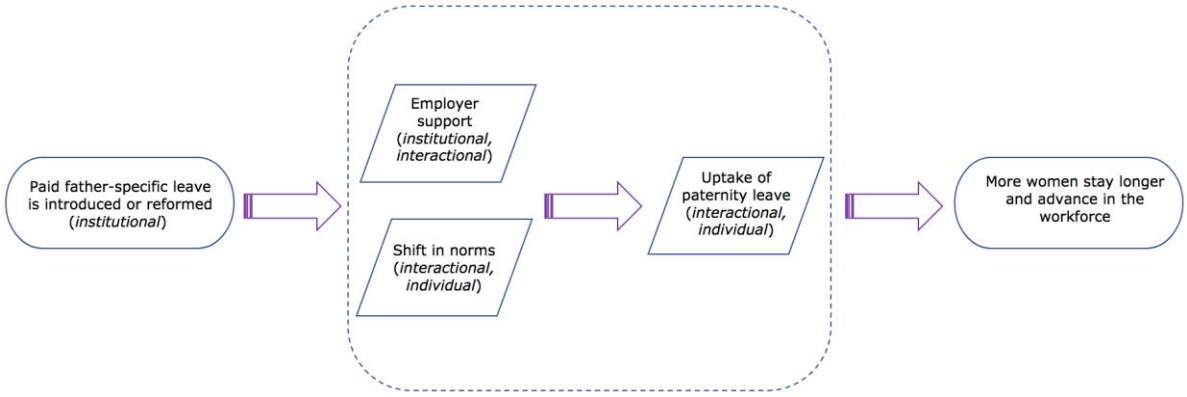

Figure 4. The missing link in the relationship between paid father-specific leave and women's workplace advancement.

To explore these different dimensions, this study entails a mixed-methods research design: 1) a quantitative analysis using a panel regression analysis to determine how paternity leave affects women's workplace advancement and 2) a qualitative analysis through modified process tracing of within-case studies of Japan and Portugal

— two of the countries that offer some of the longest paid father-specific leave and have made significant reforms to their paternity leave policies in the OECD in the last decade — to expose the underlying mechanisms (or the "missing link" represented by the middle part of Figure 4) that have influenced the uptake of paternity leave in the OECD. While the former is geared toward the more institutional aspects of the relationship between paternity leave and women's workplace advancement and the latter is oriented toward the individual and interactional components, it must be noted that neither of these analyses is restricted to any single dimension.

Aside from addressing the gap caused by the lack of data on the actual use of paid father-specific leave, a mixed-methods strategy also bridges the divide between quantitative and qualitative approaches (Tarrow, 2010) by incorporating both positivist and interpretivist perspectives[3] — epistemological positions that rely on either deductive or inductive reasoning, respectively — into the research design. A purely quantitative or qualitative analysis alone, after all, would be inadequate in investigating the various factors that affect the link between paid father-specific leave and women's workplace advancement as well as the actual use of paternity leave because neither data nor descriptive evidence by itself can fully explain such complex relationships. A mixed-methods design is therefore invaluable in triangulating both quantitative and qualitative methods, uncovering the intervening causal process that connects the independent and dependent variables analyzed in this study, and enriching the understanding that may not otherwise arise from using only either quantitative or qualitative analysis for a subject that demands a more careful treatment.

[3] A positivist approach relies on systematically gathered evidence to arrive at a logical conclusion. An interpretivist approach, on the other hand, emphasizes the interpretations that humans attach to their actions. Since the former assumes that objective knowledge about the world can be achieved, it tends to be associated with natural sciences and more quantitative methods. The latter, which assumes that knowledge is subjective, tends to be lumped together with social sciences and qualitative methods.

4.2 Quantitative analysis

4.2.1 Dataset construction

One of the contributions of this study is an original panel dataset that scholars and policymakers can use for further research on paid father-specific leave in the OECD. The dataset, which for methodological and availability considerations alike includes information for each OECD member country from 2005 until 2018, uses country-level indicators from the OECD, the WEF, and the World Bank. It also narrows down the 91 countries from the Noland et al. (2016) dataset into a significantly smaller subset: 36 OECD member countries.[4]

Paid father-specific leave, which includes any entitlements that are for the sole use of fathers, is the primary independent variable in this study. Female corporate advancement, the main dependent variable in the analysis, is represented by five indicators: (a) the score depicting women's ability to advance to corporate leadership, (b) women's share of board seats in the largest publicly listed companies, (c) the percentage of female managers, (d) the female labor participation rate, and (e) the gender wage gap.

The first indicator, which is taken from the WEF's Executive Opinion Surveys, has been included in the annual Global Gender Gap Report since its first publication in 2006. The score for each country is based on the question, "In your country, do businesses provide women the same opportunities as men to rise to positions of leadership?" Between 2006 and 2015, the responses were scored in a scale of 1 ("No, women are unable to rise to positions of leadership") to 7 ("Yes, women are often in management positions"). The scale was changed in 2016, when the responses were scored from 0 to 1, with 0 and 1 being the worst and best possible score, respectively. To make these responses comparable, the scores were standardized using the updated scale.

A significant limitation of using the score representing women's ability to advance to corporate leadership is that it is a perception-based indicator, which means that

[4] See Annex A.

responses are likely to vary depending on individual attitudes, norms, and societal expectations because what constitutes corporate leadership opportunities for women can be markedly different across countries. The media attention that the Global Gender Gap Report has garnered in recent years could also compel certain respondents to inflate the scores they give to make their countries rank higher. Due to the highly subjective nature of this indicator, it is necessary to include more objective measures, such as the female share of board seats in the largest public companies and the percentage of female managers. Female labor participation and the gender wage gap, which like the proportion of women with company board seats and the share of female managers are expressed in percentages, are also included in the analysis as dependent variables to determine how paid father-specific leave influences not only the advancement of women at the highest ranks, but also wider female participation.

Aside from paid father-specific leave, maternity leave, which like paternity leave is expressed in weeks in the dataset created for this study, is used in a parallel panel regression analysis as an independent variable to compare how differently, if at all, it affects women's career progression. The dataset also includes GDP per capita and unemployment rate, which are used as control variables because they are assumed to be sufficiently correlated with any relevant variables that may have been overlooked in the analysis. They serve to reduce any omitted variable bias, which could misattribute the impact of any excluded variable in the analysis to the estimated effect of the variables that are present in the dataset.

A notable drawback to assessing a significantly longer period than the Noland et al. (2016) study is that several variables have missing data for certain years and countries, resulting in an unbalanced panel dataset. While Stata, which was used to conduct the quantitative analysis for this study, drops cases with missing values in a regression by default, this process of listwise deletion is not always ideal since it could lead to a biased sample and, consequently, biased results — especially if the missing data does not fulfill the "restrictive and often unrealistic" (van Buuren, 2018) Missing Completely at Random

(MCAR) assumption, which implies that the likelihood of data being missing is the same across cases. Since the information included in the panel dataset created for this study was acquired from datasets produced by different institutions that have their own methodologies, it is difficult to establish whether the missing data passes the MCAR test.

4.2.2 Panel regression model specification

Since panel regressions are meant to moderate the effect of unobserved time-invariant heterogeneity — variables that either are unobservable or are different across time but not entities — there is a need to confirm whether a panel regression is the appropriate model for this study. Table 1 and Table 2 show the descriptive statistics for the independent and dependent variables, respectively.

Independent variable	Number of observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Paid father-specific leave	450	7.26	12.33	0	52.60
Maternity leave	450	18.58	10.25	0	52
Log GDP per capita	504	10.37	0.62	9.10	11.63
Unemployment rate	504	7.61	4.10	2.07	27.47

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for each of the independent variables in the panel regression analysis.

Dependent variable	Number of observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Women's ability to advance to corporate leadership (standardized scores)	466	0.66	0.10	0.43	0.87
Female share of board seats in publicly listed companies	264	19.75	10.40	2.10	48.10
Share of firms with female top managers	288	4.82	2.76	0.30	11.90
Female labor participation	504	52.89	7.71	23.05	73.17
Gender gap	273	14.75	7.02	1.00	39.60

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for each of the dependent variables in the panel regression analysis.

Table 1 and Table 2 show that almost all variables have considerable variation and confirm that a panel regression is the appropriate model for the study. The equation[5] for the panel regression analysis used for each of the five models — one for each dependent variable — in this study is:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1it} + \beta_2 \, logX_{2it} + \beta_3 X_{3it} + \alpha_i + u_{it}$$

where:

- Y_{it} is the dependent variable (women's ability to advance to corporate leadership, female share of board seats in publicly listed companies, percentage of female managers, female labor participation, or the gender gap, depending on the panel regression analysis) where $_i$ = entity and $_t$ = time;
- β_0 is the constant term;
- X_{1it} represents either paid father-specific leave or maternity leave (both independent variables), depending on the panel regression analysis;
- β_1 is the coefficient for paid father-specific leave;
- X_{2it} represents GDP per capita (a control variable);
- β_2 is the coefficient for GDP per capita;
- X_{3it} represents the unemployment rate (a control variable);
- β_3 is the coefficient for the unemployment rate;
- α_i is the unknown intercept for each entity ($_i$ = 1 .... n); and
- u_{it} is the error term.

[5] The "log" in this equation represents the logarithmic transformation of the GDP per capita variable, whose distribution is highly skewed to the right.

Based on the assumption that there are individual-specific effects correlated with the explanatory variables, each panel regression uses a fixed-effects model to more reliably assess the net effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable in each of the models.

GDP per capita and unemployment rate — indicators that are available for all countries and years — are used as control variables in all five regression models. To account for the delayed effect of these control variables, as well as the main independent variable (either paid father-specific leave or maternity leave, depending on the analysis), on the dependent variable in each model (women's ability to advance to corporate leadership, female share of board seats in publicly listed companies, percentage of female managers, female labor participation, or the gender wage gap), these explanatory variables are lagged in the panel regression.

The dependent variable, however, is not lagged in any of the five regression models precisely to control for the delayed impact. Lagging dependent variables could also lead to downwardly biased coefficients of independent variables if residual autocorrelation — that is, if the differences between observed and predicted values, or residuals, as a function of the time lag between them are similar — is present (Keele & Kelly, 2005).

4.3 Qualitative analysis

4.3.1 Case justification: Japan and Portugal

Japan and Portugal offer some of the longest paid father-specific leave in the OECD. These generous paternity leave entitlements did not always exist; they were put in place in the last 10 years when both countries saw the need for sweeping changes of paid father-specific leave policies (OECD, 2017b; Kotaka & Mera, 2010). While both countries have low birth rates, however, only Japan explicitly used the motivation to

increase female labor participation and ultimately reverse its population decline in framing its reform of its paternity leave policy (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2010).

Although the revision of its paternity leave policy has led to Japan having one of the lengthiest leave entitlements for fathers in the OECD — with 52 weeks of paid father-specific leave, Japan is second only to South Korea (see Figure 1) — the uptake of paid father-specific leave among Japanese men remains low (Chzhen et al., 2019). Offering over 22 weeks of paid father-specific leave, Portugal has less than half of Japan's paternity leave entitlement, but it has seen a marked increase in the percentage of fathers using the leave allocated to them (Wall et al., 2019). The share of women with company board seats in Portugal, unlike in Japan, has also grown since it expanded its leave entitlements for the exclusive use of fathers (OECD, 2010-2018).

By examining the individual, interactional, and institutional factors that have influenced the uptake of paid father-specific leave in each country through a modified process tracing research design, these case studies pinpoint the missing variable in the theoretical link between paid father-specific leave and women's workplace advancement depicted in Figure 4 and provide insights that could have important implications for both theory and public policy.

4.3.2 Modified process tracing and the "missing middle"

To add inferential leverage to the panel regression analysis — especially since there is a dearth of comparable data on the uptake of paid father-specific leave across all OECD countries — process tracing is used in examining the cases of Japan and Portugal, which draw heavily on Collier's (2011) definition of process tracing:

> Process tracing … is an analytic tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence — often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomena. (p. 824)

While the panel regression analysis focuses on two main indicators[6] — paid father-specific leave and women's workplace advancement — the qualitative analysis attempts to concentrate on the crucial but not as easily measurable factors that mediate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in this study. Process tracing helps in this regard because it can further unpack the so-called "black box" (Trampusch & Palier, 2016) of the causality between paid father-specific leave and women's workplace advancement by focusing on the intervening variables illustrated in Figure 4 — that is, the "missing middle" that represents the uptake of paternity leave, which is not explicitly accounted for in the panel regression analysis.

The analysis uses a slightly altered version of the guidelines outlined by Ricks and Liu (2018). Each country case study involves analyzing public interest in paternity leave through Google Trends, using primary documents and Google News to construct a timeline of relevant events starting from the reform of paid father-specific leave until 2018, coming up with a primary and rival hypothesis for the qualitative research question ("What has influenced the uptake of paid father-specific leave in the OECD?") based on this sequence of events, and testing the hypotheses systematically by evaluating the evidence available.

Four process tracing tests are used for hypothesis testing: the straw-in-the-wind test, which provides neither a necessary nor a sufficient basis for accepting or rejecting a hypothesis; the hoop test, which establishes a necessary criterion but not a sufficient one for accepting the hypothesis; the smoking-gun test, which gives a sufficient but not a necessary standard for establishing causation; and a doubly-decisive test, which confirms the hypothesis and eliminates the others as it fulfills both the necessary and sufficient criteria for determining causal impact (Collier, 2011). Table 3 is a summary of these tests along with the implications of either passing or failing them.

[6] Although maternity leave is included in a parallel panel regression analysis, the emphasis of the study is on the relationship between paid father-specific leave and women's workplace advancement.

		Sufficient for Affirming Causal Inference	
		No	*Yes*
Necessary for Affirming Causal Inference	*No*	Straw-in-the-Wind	Smoking-Gun
		Passing: Affirms relevance of hypothesis but does not confirm it.	**Passing**: Confirms hypothesis.
		Failing: Hypothesis is not eliminated but is slightly weakened.	**Failing**: Hypothesis is not eliminated but is slightly weakened.
	Yes	Hoop	Doubly-Decisive
		Passing: Affirms relevance of hypothesis but does not confirm it.	**Passing**: Confirms hypothesis and eliminates others.
		Failing: Eliminates hypothesis.	**Failing**: Eliminates hypothesis.

Table 3. Process tracing tests (Collier, 2011, p. 825)

Although process tracing is usually described as a positivist-oriented method, it can in fact combine both positivist and interpretivist perspectives, "allowing the researcher to explore both the causal 'what' and the causal 'how'" (Vennesson, 2008, p. 232). Integrating an interpretivist approach into the traditionally positivist-leaning nature of process tracing can more effectively interrogate the impact of beliefs and perceptions on the given outcome — in this case, how opinions on paternity leave affect the use of leave entitlements. While they are at best imperfect indicators of attitudes, news stories and Google searches — as measured by Google News and Google Trends, respectively — can be a revealing tool for painting a picture of what the public wants information on (Stocking & Matsa, 2017).

A major limitation of in-depth process tracing, however, is its inability to generate external validity, which would make the findings applicable to cases outside the context of this study. This weakness inherent in process tracing is offset by the method's power to enhance internal validity (Waldner, 2012), making it possible to establish the most credible cause of a given outcome.

5. Discussion of findings

5.1 Panel regression results

Table 4 shows five different models to show the impact of paid father-specific leave, with GDP per capita (log) and the unemployment rate as lagged control variables, on each of the five dependent variables: (a) the score indicating the public perception of women's ability to advance to corporate leadership ("Female corporate leadership score"), (b) the female share of seats on the boards of the largest publicly listed companies ("Share of women with company board seats"), (c) the percentage of female managers among employed women ("Percentage of female managers"), (d) women's labor force participation rate ("Female labor participation rate"), and (e) the gender wage gap ("Gender wage gap").

	(A) Female corporate leadership score	(B) Share of women with company board seats	(C) Percentage of female managers	(D) Female labor participation rate	(E) Gender wage gap
Paid father-specific leave (lagged)	-0.000613** (0.016)	0.193*** (0.007)	0.00856 (0.309)	-0.0229*** (0.003)	-0.0278 (0.295)
Log GDP per capita (lagged)	-0.287*** (0.000)	-26.25*** (0.002)	1.862* (0.063)	7.977*** (0.000)	11.21** (0.015)
Unemployment rate (lagged)	-0.00493*** (0.000)	-0.481** (0.023)	0.0136 (0.588)	0.0982*** (0.004)	-0.0257 (0.799)
Constant	3.802*** (0.000)	304.0*** (0.001)	-11.37 (0.299)	-29.03* (0.052)	-106.6** (0.035)
N	412	244	264	414	230

Table 4. The impact of paid father-specific on five dependent variables representing women's workplace advancement. P-values are in parentheses: *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Model A shows that paid father-specific leave has a statistically significant effect — that is, the p-value associated with it in this model is less than 0.05 — on the indicator of the ability of women to advance to corporate leadership, which is scored from 0 (worst) to 1 (best). While the numerical coefficient associated with it is negative, therefore implying that an increase in paternity leave, which is measured in weeks, leads to a lower female corporate leadership score, the magnitude is so small that it is almost zero. Since the dependent variable in this model is a score based on survey responses, these results point to the fact that extending the length of paid father-specific leave has a negligible impact on the public perception of women's ability to rise to top positions in business — an unsurprising finding given that the link between longer paid father-specific leave and women's workplace advancement has only started to emerge in the literature in the past few years.

In Model B, the results show that paid father-specific leave has a highly statistically significant, positive impact on the female share of board seats of the biggest public companies: a one-week increase in paternity leave entitlements leads to an almost 0.2 percent increase in the proportion of women with company board seats. This result is consistent with the Noland et al. study finding that paternity leave, not maternity leave, has a strong, positive correlation with the share of women with company board seats. Model C, meanwhile, shows that paid father-specific leave has no statistically significant effect on the percentage of female managers. While the findings from both Models B and C may seem to be contradictory, they are not necessarily incompatible with each other. A company's board of directors and its management team have different functions; the former is focused on the strategic direction of the company and the latter is tasked with steering the more day-to-day operations of the business. These responsibilities occasionally overlap as the nature of various industries continues to evolve, but they are generally distinct — and distinguishable — duties.

Going beyond women who have the highest and most visible positions in companies, Models D and E attempt to gauge the effect of paid father-specific leave on

the wider spectrum of women's workplace advancement. Model D shows that paternity leave has a highly statistically significant, negative effect on the female labor participation rate — that is, a one-week increase in the paternity leave entitlement is associated with an almost 0.02 percent decrease in female labor participation. This finding goes against an increasingly common rationale for paternity leave: to help more women stay in the workforce. One possible explanation for this seemingly counterintuitive result is that fathers who do use their leave allocation may have a supporting role at home, inadvertently forcing women to leave their jobs to take on a greater share of domestic responsibilities. The lack of active involvement from fathers may also explain Model E, which shows that paid father-specific has no statistically significant effect on the gender wage gap. Since there is no measure of the degree of fathers' commitment to household responsibilities in the dataset, however, this aspect of paid father-specific leave will be addressed by the qualitative analysis.

Table 5 displays the same panel regression models used in Table 4 but with maternity leave as the independent variable. Although not directly covered by the quantitative research question, the subject of how differently, if at all, maternity leave affects women's workplace advancement is a worthwhile inquiry because it can either confirm or challenge the theoretical assumptions established in existing literature and provide useful insights about how paternity leave can be better designed and implemented.

	(A) Female corporate leadership score	(B) Share of women with company board seats	(C) Percentage of female managers	(D) Female labor participation rate	(E) Gender wage gap
Maternity leave (lagged)	-0.000139 (0.845)	-0.801*** (0.004)	0.0823*** (0.009)	0.0546** (0.011)	0.0891 (0.416)
Log GDP per capita (lagged)	-0.295*** (0.000)	-24.07*** (0.004)	1.854* (0.061)	7.568*** (0.000)	10.56** (0.024)
Unemployment rate (lagged)	-0.00489*** (0.000)	-0.431** (0.042)	0.0108 (0.663)	0.0831** (0.016)	-0.0377 (0.713)
Constant	3.886*** (0.000)	284.8*** (0.002)	-11.72 (0.278)	-24.68* (0.099)	-100.00* (0.050)
N	412	244	264	414	230

Table 5. The impact of maternity leave on five dependent variables representing women's workplace advancement. P-values are in parentheses: *p<0.10, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

The results for Model A show that maternity leave has no statistically significant effect on the public perception of women's upward career mobility. As Model B shows, however, maternity leave does have a highly statistically significant, albeit negative, effect on the share of women with board seats in publicly listed companies: for every one-week increase in maternity leave, there is a corresponding 0.8 percent decrease in the proportion of women with company board seats. This finding — especially when juxtaposed with the highly statistically significant, positive coefficient associated with paid father-specific leave in Model B from Table 4 — could point to one facet of the so-called motherhood penalty at work: while maternity leave is explicitly a policy that is intended to benefit women, longer entitlements could adversely affect women's career trajectories by hindering their entry into the highest ranks of the company hierarchy. Existing research on the impact of maternity time-off on women's incomes in the OECD (Aisenbrey et al., 2009; Ejrnæs & Kunze, 2013) is consistent with this insight. The contrasting Model B results from both Table 4 and Table 5 therefore illustrate the importance of complementing maternity leave policies with more generous paternity leave entitlements to facilitate women's upward career mobility.

Model C from Table 5, however, shows that maternity leave has a highly statistically significant, positive impact on the share of female managers: every one-week increase in maternity leave leads to an almost 0.08 percent increase in the share of female managers. Moreover, Model D shows that — unlike paid father-specific leave, which has a statistically significant, negative impact — maternity leave has a statistically significant, positive effect on the female labor participation rate. For every one-week increase in maternity leave, there is a nearly 0.05 percent increase in the female labor participation rate.

These findings, especially when paired with the results for paternity leave from Models C and D in Table 4, lead to two important insights: (a) paid father-specific leave tends to benefit women who are already at the highest positions — in particular, those who are involved in more strategic roles and (b) although maternity leave tends to help women at different levels — it leads to an increase in both the share of female managers and the female labor participation rate — the magnitude of these effects is small.

The difference between the nature of the impact of paternity leave and maternity leave can likely be attributed to several factors that straddle the individual, interactional, and institutional considerations behind the use of paid father-specific leave. For instance, unlike the uptake of maternity leave, which is often mandatory, the use of paternity leave involves a deliberate decision that hinges on cultural norms, employers' awareness and support of national paternity leave policies, and internalization of gender roles — to name a few relevant variables. The next section, which delves into the factors affecting the uptake (or lack thereof) of paternity leave in Japan and Portugal, explores the complex interplay of government policy, company culture, and public attitudes behind every decision to use paid father-specific leave entitlements.

It is also worth noting that neither paid father-specific leave nor maternity leave has a statistically significant effect on the gender wage gap (see Model E in both Table 4 and Table 5). While the objective of both kinds of entitlements is to enable women to

remain in the workforce even after childbirth, it is evident from the results that parental leave alone has not been enough to reduce, let alone have an impact, on the pay gap between men and women — an issue that, like paternity leave itself, is multifaceted and is challenging to address with just a single intervention.

5.2 Country case studies

5.2.1 Employer support: Japan's missing paternity leave puzzle piece

Next to South Korea, Japan has the second longest paternity leave entitlement in the OECD. The expansion of paid father-specific leave to 52 weeks and the relatively high compensation rate attached[7] to it came after a 2010 law, which was spurred by growing concerns about the country's steadily declining birthrate (Kotaka & Mera, 2010). The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2010) confirmed this motivation in an English-language presentation prepared for companies based in the country. Noting that over half of Japan's working households were double-income families, the ministry recognized the need to bolster the uptake of paid father-specific leave to reverse the country's population decline. While enabling more women to keep their jobs played an important role in this objective, it was nevertheless a secondary aim of the reform of paid father-specific leave:

> Men's little involvement in childcare and housework, along with excessive childcare and housework burdens on women as a result, it [*sic*] is making it more difficult for women to continue to work and contributing to the declining birth rate. (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2010, p. 23)

Boosting female labor participation only became an explicit goal when Prime Minister Shinzo Abe started his second term in December 2012. One of the pillars that

[7] The average compensation rate for paid father-specific leave in Japan is 58 percent. See Annex A for more information.

underpinned "Abenomics," as his economic policy — which targets Japan's intertwined problems of increasing social welfare spending, an aging population, a slump in birth rates, and a labor shortage — eventually came to be known is its growth-driven structural reform strategy (Yoshino & Taghizadeh-Hesary, 2014; Chanlett-Avery & Nelson, 2014). In accordance with Abe's promise to work toward a society "where all women can shine" (Kantei, 2013), this growth strategy acknowledged that almost 40 percent of Japanese women were forced to leave the workforce after childbirth because of the onerous demands of both professional life and childcare (Song, 2015). Such an insight provided the impetus for a push for increased female participation in the labor market — a significant course correction for a country that has long relied on a male breadwinner model.

One of the Abe administration's efforts to ease the difficulties faced by Japanese women in remaining in the labor force was to set out targets to promote the uptake of paid father-specific leave. In 2014, the government aimed to have at least 13 percent of fathers using their entitlements by 2020 (Guilford, 2014) — an ambitious goal given that the actual use of paternity leave has remained minimal since the reform of leave policies took place. For instance, despite the lengthy paternity leave entitlement, data shows that only around 5 percent of working fathers in Japan used their paid father-specific leave in 2017 (Chzhen et al., 2019) — which is already almost five times higher than the figure recorded in 2011 but still far short of the 10 percent target for that year (Otake, 2014). Among fathers who have not used their entitlements at all, three reasons stand out for the lack of uptake: company staff shortage, employers' failure to offer the leave, and an unfavorable work environment against fathers using their paternity benefits (Chzhen et al., 2019).

The length of leave taken also leaves much to be desired. A mere 1 percent of fathers use as much time as the policy offers (van der Gaag, 2019); the rest typically take less than a month of paternity leave if they do file a request (OECD, 2017a). Shorter leaves are also the norm for even male politicians who are featured prominently in the media

simply for announcing their plans to take some time-off. For example, Shinjiro Koizumi, the first of Japan's top ministers to have taken paternity leave, committed to use just two weeks out of the allocated 52 weeks for fathers and spread his leave over three months to ensure that there would be no major disruptions in the workplace (Koizumi, 2020). His announcement of his plan to use his paternity leave entitlements was nevertheless a much-lauded move in Japan, where doing so is still seen as a risky career move (Rich, 2020).

In order to better understand the factors affecting the inadequate use of paid father-specific leave in Japan, there is a need to first map out the developments following the reform of the policy. Drawing on the process tracing guidelines laid out by Ricks and Liu (2018), Table 6 presents an overview of important events starting from when Japan implemented the reform of paid father-specific leave in 2010 until 2018, which is also the last year with observations in the dataset used for the panel regression analysis.

Date	Event
June 2010	Japan's Child Care and Family Care Leave Law was revised to encourage more fathers to use their paternity leave entitlements; the Ikumen Project, which is meant to encourage Japanese men to have a more involved role in childcare, was launched by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.
April 2010	Hironobu Narisawa, the mayor of Tokyo's central Bunkyō ward, became the first local government official to use paternity leave.
October 2010	Hiroshima governor Hidehiko Yuzaki announced his plans to take a paternity leave and became the first prefectural governor to do so.
January 2011	"イクメン" ("ikumen") as a Google search term reached its peak popularity (see Figure 5).
January 2014	Initial media reports of alleged "paternity harassment" — being subjected to harassment at work for applying for paternity leave or being denied paternity leave altogether — started to emerge.
August 2014	Masako Mori, then the Minister of State for Measures for Declining Birthrate, announced that she would promote men who use their paternity leave entitlements; Prime Minister Shinzo Abe set a target to increase the percentage of men taking paternity leave to 13 percent by 2020 (Guilford, 2014).
January 2016	Kensuke Miyazaki became the first member of the Japanese parliament to take paternity leave and encouraged other Japanese fathers to do the same.
November 2017	Media reports about Mitsubishi allegedly demoting an employee after taking his paternity leave were published.
October 2018	Data from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare showed that only 6 percent of men who were eligible for paternity leave in private companies used their entitlements (The Mainichi, 2020).

Table 6. Timeline of paid father-specific leave developments in Japan.

Figure 5. The popularity of the term "イクメン" (*ikumen*) as a Google search term in Japan between June 2010 and December 2018. The values represent the search interest relative to the peak (January 2011) shown on the chart. (Note: Google Trends' data collection system was enhanced on both January 2011 and January 2016.)

Two main hypotheses can be derived from the timeline in Table 6: (a) there is a lack of paternity leave role models in Japan and (b) "paternity harassment" happens in Japanese workplaces. To determine which one of these hypotheses is more likely to explain Japanese attitudes toward paid father-specific leave, the diagnostic pieces of evidence taken from primary and secondary documents alike are subjected to analytical testing using the four process tracing tests in Table 7.

	Primary Hypothesis: There is a lack of paternity leave role models in Japan.	Assessment	Rival Hypothesis: "Paternity harassment" happens in Japanese workplaces.	Assessment
Straw-in-the-Wind	The Ikumen Project, an online community designed to encourage fathers to have a more active involvement in child-rearing, was launched in 2010 by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare.	Pass	While attitudes toward fathers' role in childrearing are gradually changing and are not as rigid as usually depicted, men are still expected to be the breadwinners of the family.	Pass
Hoop	Prominent men who use their paternity leave entitlements make the headlines in both Japanese and international news.	Pass	Despite having the second longest paid father-specific leave in the OECD, many Japanese men remain reluctant to use their paternity leave.	Pass
Smoking-Gun	Public officials decide to use their paternity leave partly to serve as role models for the country's working male population.	Pass	When paternity leave is used, the length is significantly shorter than the allocated entitlement — usually less than a month.	Pass
Doubly-Decisive	No evidence available.	Fail	Employees have filed lawsuits against their employers for alleged unfair treatment after taking their paternity leave.	Pass

Table 7. What has influenced the uptake of paid father-specific leave in Japan?

Currently, more evidence exists to support the rival hypothesis that "paternity harassment" causes the low uptake of paid father-specific leave in Japan. Surveys and media reports in the latter half of the past decade have shown that several Japanese fathers have reported experiencing hostile treatment from their supervisors and colleagues after filing their requests to use their paternity leave entitlements or returning from their time-off (Otake, 2014; Zaugg & Wakatsuki, 2019; Reynolds & Nobuhiro, 2019).

Such harassment can be in the form of lower performance evaluations (Vandello et al., 2013) or decreased promotion chances — if not outright demotion (Rich, 2019). Even in situations where the problem is not harassment but a sheer lack of awareness about paternity leave on the employers' and employees' side alike, the absence of information given about entitlements available to fathers shows that paid father-specific leave is not considered a priority and is sometimes even discouraged by employers (Nazakato, 2017). All these impediments represent the tension between the individual and institutional dimensions that fathers face in deciding on whether to use their entitlements.

Still, it would be imprudent to completely disregard the explanation offered by the primary hypothesis. Instead of focusing on the number of paternity leave role models, however, the nature of fathers' involvement at home may be more relevant to scrutinize. Men's short paternity leave breaks, after all, point to the auxiliary role that fathers continue to play in the household — a reality that an increase of paternity leave role models alone cannot change. Despite its well-intentioned efforts to make the *ikumen* figure — a portmanteau of *ikuji* ("childcare") and *ikemen* ("hunk") — more appealing in a country where the company-loyal salaryman remains the dominant reference image for men, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has perhaps inadvertently sent the counterproductive message that work is still more important to men than women and that fathers are passive participants in carrying out domestic responsibilities. Two notable illustrations of this messaging are the official song and the "Work-Life Balance Handbook for Fathers" of the Ikumen Project, an initiative the ministry launched in 2010 to promote the idea that fathers should have a more active role at home. For instance, the "Family Harmony" song — a duet between a mother and a father — reinforces the idea that mothers are still the primary caregivers in the family:

> One line sung by the father reads: 'Taking care at work, taking care at home, there's no place for me to relax.' The father then states that his childrearing is motivated by 'my child's smile and my wife's health.' These two lines represent fathers' childrearing as a self-sacrificial act, which requires as much effort as a day at work.

> However, fathers' family commitment is still portrayed as inferior to the domestic exertions of mothers, as seen in the father's line: 'I know that actually this is far tougher for mothers,' and also the mother's line: 'I have no time to do anything else (but childrearing).' (Vassallo, 2017, p. 42)

Meanwhile, the guidelines laid out in the Ikumen Project handbook recommend a significantly shorter leave for fathers than mothers (Vassallo, 2017) even though, after the 2010 reform, men have an even longer parental leave entitlement than women. While the Ikumen Project is meant to aid fathers in becoming more engaged members of the household, its execution seems to stand in contrast to the Abe administration's goal of enabling more women to stay in the workplace by encouraging men to take on a bigger role at home. This disparity between the idea and implementation of the Ikumen Project could partly explain why, since the 2010 reform was implemented, female labor participation in Japan has grown by just 1.7 percentage points (World Bank, 2018b).

There is also support for the claim that the low uptake of paternity leave in Japan is a case that exemplifies how individual behaviors have not kept up with actual attitudes toward paternity leave (Miyajima & Yamaguchi, 2017), which have not been as unyielding as is widely assumed and whose evolution may even be partly credited to paternity leave role models. According to this line of reasoning, male employees' reluctance to use their entitlements can be attributed to pluralistic ignorance — a social psychology concept that uses inaccurate assumptions about others' attitudes to explain the disconnect between one's own actions and privately held beliefs (Prentice & Miller, 1996). Overestimating their colleagues' negative perceptions of paternity leave, many Japanese men restrain themselves from even filing for a request to spend more time at home (Miyajima & Yamaguchi, 2017). The misperception-driven aversion to use paid father-specific leave is also exacerbated by the guilt that employees feel about giving their colleagues more work to do while they are away, even for just a brief period (Nazakato, 2017). While the pluralistic ignorance argument is slightly weakened by the fact that socioeconomic factors were not considered in assessing whether these findings apply

only to Japanese men of a certain background, it underscores the conflict between the individual and interactional dimensions in the private negotiation of an institutional policy.

5.2.2 Portugal: Equal parental leave rights, unequal implementation

In 2009, a reform of leave policies in Portugal expanded the entitlements reserved for fathers to more than 22 weeks of paid leave (OECD, 2017b), which included 20 fully compensated days of fathers-only leave, a 30-day bonus scheme for parents who split the entitlements between themselves, and a complementary leave of up to three months subsidized at 25 percent of earnings that can be taken by both parents (Cunha et al., 2017). Another important change involved terminology: the law replaced "maternity leave" with "initial parental leave" and "paternity leave" with "fathers-only parental leave." While seemingly a stylistic adjustment, the new terms seemed to signal a gradual shift in attitudes in Portugal: by 2018, 74.1 percent of fathers[8] were using the compulsory leave[9] allocated to them (Wall et al., 2019). There has also been a marked increase of parents availing of the additional leave, although the entitlements are still largely used by women (Wall & Leitão, 2018).

Unlike Japan, however, Portugal did not explicitly frame the reform of its leave policies in the language of female labor participation and the wider goal of economic growth although, like Japan, it also has one of the lowest birth rates in the world (Dartford, 2020). But despite the lack of a stated goal of promoting women's advancement, Portugal has seen a steady growth of its share of women with board seats in publicly listed companies: from 2010, a year after it reformed its leave policies, to 2018,

[8] The percentage is based on the number of fathers who used their leave in relation to the estimated number of births in 2018 (Wall et al., 2019).

[9] Full uptake has not been achieved because: (a) the data excludes civil servants, bank employees, and all employees under special social protection schemes (b) some employees do not meet the eligibility requirements, such as an adequate amount of social contributions and (c) there has been an implementation gap resulting from employers not giving their male employees these entitlements (Wall et al., 2019).

the share grew from 5.4 percent to 21.6 percent (OECD, 2010-2018). Female labor participation, however, fell 2.6 percentage points between 2009 and 2018 (World Bank, 2018b).

For a better understanding of how, if at all, paid father-specific leave contributed to these figures, Table 8 summarizes the most important milestones related to paternity leave in Portugal from 2009 to 2018, which is the endpoint of the analysis in this study.

Date	Event
May 2009	A new labor law, which replaced the term "maternity leave" with the more neutral-sounding "initial parental leave" and "paternity leave" with "fathers-only parental leave," came into effect. The reformed policies included an increase from five days to 10 days of compulsory leave for fathers, a sharing bonus of 30 days for parents who decide to share the leave entitlement, and an additional leave of up to three months that can be used by both parents.
July 2009	The term "*licença de paternidade*" ("paternity leave") reached its peak popularity as a Google search term (see Figure 6).
March 2016	A new law increased the number of compulsory leave days for fathers from 10 days to 15 days.
December 2018	Most fathers who took the compulsory 15 days of leave also used the 10 days of fathers-only optional leave (Wall et al., 2019).

Table 8. Timeline of paid father-specific leave developments in Portugal.

Figure 6. The popularity of the term "*licença de paternidade*" ("paternity leave" in Portuguese) as a Google search term in Portugal between May 2009 and December 2018. The values represent the search interest relative to the peak (July 2009) shown on the chart. (Note: Google Trends' data collection system was enhanced on both January 2011 and January 2016.)

The events presented in Table 8 lead to two hypotheses: (a) progressive policies at the national level have led to the increase in the uptake of paid father-specific leave in Portugal and (b) changing notions of fatherhood are influencing Portuguese fathers to use their entitlements. As shown in Table 9, these hypotheses are analyzed systematically using four process tracing tests to establish which one can better explain the higher uptake of paternity leave among Portuguese fathers since the 2009 reform was instituted.

	Primary Hypothesis: Progressive policies at the national level have led to the increase in the uptake of paid father-specific leave in Portugal.	Assessment	Rival Hypothesis: Changing notions of fatherhood are influencing Portuguese fathers to use their entitlements.	Assessment
Straw-in-the-Wind	The switch to a more gender-neutral term for "maternity leave" reflected a policy shift toward a model that relies less on mothers for childcare responsibilities.	Pass	Men who have decided to use their paid father-specific leave in the last decade have described themselves as "forerunner fathers" (Wall & Leitão, 2017, p. 53).	Pass
Hoop	There is an increasing acceptance of the dual-earner model in Portugal — a marked shift from the predominant male-breadwinner setup promoted before the country's transition to democracy in 1974 (Wall & Leitão, 2017).	Pass	One of the main motivations for fathers to use their paternity leave entitlements is to enable their wives to keep working.	Pass
Smoking-Gun	Fathers are fully compensated for their fathers-only leave, which since 2016 has totaled 25 working days.	Pass	Men who use their paternity leave have a more active role at home.	Pass
Doubly-Decisive	The reform of leave policies in 2009 introduced several incentives, such as a sharing bonus and additional leave, to encourage fathers to spend more time at home.	Pass	No evidence available.	Fail

Table 9. What has influenced the uptake of paid father-specific leave in Portugal?

Table 9 shows that there is more evidence to support the primary hypothesis that the uptake of paternity leave in Portugal has been influenced more by the implementation of national-level policies — which sent a strong message that fathers and mothers alike

are responsible for domestic duties — than a radical cultural shift. That the height of the popularity of the search term "*licença de paternidade*" ("paternity leave" in Portuguese) happened two months after the reform was introduced demonstrates that public interest in the new policy was high. This initial interest seems to have been sustained: the design of the policy — in particular, the compulsory nature of fathers-only leave and the full compensation for these entitlements — has been effective in persuading Portuguese men to use the leave available to them. While a mere 0.6 percent of fathers shared the parental leave prior to the reform of parental leave policies in 2009, a year later, the proportion of parents sharing the initial parental leave rose to 20 percent (Wall & Leitão, 2017).

The path toward greater use of paternity leave, however, has not been entirely straightforward. Self-described pioneer fathers have reported that the negotiation of what should be their right to their leave entitlements had to take place in both the private and public spheres: at home with the mother of the child and at work with their employers (Wall & Leitão, 2017). While the dual-earner model, which is gradually becoming the norm in Portugal, makes the former relatively easy to do, the latter is complicated by the fact that private-sector employers are often reluctant to allow male employees to use their paternity leave allocation. Such opposition stems from operational considerations, a lack of awareness of the policy, and the perception of paternity leave as a privilege rather than a right (Wall & Leitão, 2017). The tendency among private-sector employers to see paternity leave as a fringe benefit that has to be doled out at their discretion shows a discrepancy with the progressive parental leave policy in Portugal and highlights the occasionally clashing individual, interactional, and institutional considerations that a father incorporates into his decision on whether or not to use his paid father-specific leave entitlement. In recent years, however, labor inspection services have started to address this implementation gap by monitoring the use of paid father-specific leave (Wall et al., 2019).

The rival hypothesis that the evolution of the family model — and, more importantly, the idea of fatherhood — has been an important factor in getting more men

to use their leave entitlements should not be fully discounted. Among the top reasons that Portuguese fathers have cited when asked about their intentions to use paternity leave, after all, are the mother's full-time participation in the workforce and the desire to distribute childcare responsibilities more equally (Wall & Leitão, 2017). These motivations are aligned with the relatively more gender-equal priorities (Monteiro et al., 2017) that emerged in Portugal in the aftermath of the fall of a right-wing regime that for decades placed women at the center of housework (Schouten, 2019) and even formalized women's dual roles as homemakers and caregivers in the constitution (Wall, 2015). Indeed, while the recent surge in the uptake of paid father-specific leave in Portugal can largely be attributed to the 2009 law — despite its rather uneven enforcement — without the necessary norms in place to support its implementation, little success could have been expected from even the most radical reform.

6. Conclusion and final remarks

Paid father-specific leave in the OECD was introduced to both distribute domestic responsibilities between fathers and mothers and help women, who were traditionally seen as the ones responsible for the demands of childcare, advance in the workplace (OECD, 2017b). Through Risman's (2004) analytical framework of gender as a social structure and a mixed-methods approach, this study has sought to both examine the impact of paternity leave on women's career progression in the OECD as a whole and determine the factors that have helped or hindered the uptake of paid father-specific leave in Japan and Portugal, two OECD member countries that have significantly expanded their paternity leave policies in the last decade but have seen divergent outcomes from their reforms.

The quantitative analysis paints a mixed picture of the impact of paid father-specific leave on women's workplace advancement. In line with the findings of Noland et al.'s (2016) work, which served as a springboard for this study, the panel regression analysis has found that an increase in paternity leave, and not maternity leave, is strongly associated with a rise in the percentage of women with board seats in the largest publicly listed companies in the OECD. Paid father-specific leave has no statistically significant effect, however, on broader female labor participation. The combination of these two findings confirms the complexity of the evidence available on the impact of paternity leave on women's career outcomes (Farré, 2016; Ruhm, 1998).

The case studies reveal the underlying mechanisms that may have been responsible for paid father-specific leave's lack of impact on the advancement of women who are not at the highest positions. Through a modified process tracing research design, this study has shown that, despite the relatively high payment rate available for paid father-specific leave to Japanese men, who have one of the most generous paternity leave entitlements in the OECD, the uptake of paid time-off has been low among fathers

because the policy lacks the necessary cultural and institutional infrastructure, such as a supportive work environment for fathers taking paternity leave, to see significant growth.

Portugal, in contrast, showed that even with a shorter paternity leave entitlement than Japan and a less-than-perfect implementation of its paternity leave policy, it has fared better at increasing the use of paid father-specific leave partly due to an increasing cultural acceptance of the dual-earner model. It has also demonstrated that the compulsory element of a paternity leave policy may be more important than the length of the leave or the payment rate attached to the entitlement. That female labor participation has decreased in Portugal despite the increase in the share of its women with company board seats since it implemented its reform of paternity leave policies in 2009 also lends support to the finding that paternity leave tends to benefit women who are already at the top.

These findings, however, should be viewed with the following constraints in mind: (a) an unbalanced panel dataset due to missing data and (b) a modified process tracing design based on mostly English-language sources, which could have privileged international sources of information over domestic ones despite efforts to incorporate local views into the qualitative analysis. While the dataset issue is addressed through conservative regression models that include lagged independent variables and fixed effects in the analysis, the imputation of missing values, for example, could have yielded more accurate estimates. The absence of national-level board gender quota policies in the quantitative analysis could have also led to an overestimation of the impact of paid father-specific leave on the share of women with company board seats.

Despite these limitations, this study's findings contribute to the still rather scant but gradually growing literature on paid father-specific leave, which has often been analyzed through either purely quantitative or purely qualitative methods. Beyond the interpretation of the results, the dataset and the design of the study can also prove useful. For example, scholars can use and improve on the dataset created for this study to explore

other research questions related to paid father-specific leave. The analytical framework and the mixed-methods design employed by this study can also be applied to construct a research methodology appropriate for other contexts, such as developing countries, although the different dynamics in those countries must be addressed in the analysis.

This study also has theoretical and practical implications. On the theory side, more research needs to be done to determine whether paid father-specific leave can benefit women beyond the highest ranks. Policy-wise, the contrasting cases of Japan and Portugal point to an important lesson: a policy cannot operate on a vacuum. Implementation issues arise when a policy is designed based on the preferred outcome — no matter how desirable the outcome is — rather than the actual context (Lewis, 2001). This context is composed of individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions that policymakers should consider in the design and implementation of policies, especially those that explicitly straddle one's private and professional lives, such as paternity leave.

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Annexes

Annex A: A 2018 snapshot of the 2005-2018 panel dataset

OECD member country	Length of paid father-specific leave (weeks)	Average payment rate of paid father-specific leave (%)	Share of women with company board seats in the largest publicly listed companies (%)	Percentage of female managers (%)	Female labor participation rate (%)	Gender wage gap (%)
Australia	2	43	31.5	8.8	59.18	11.7
Austria	8.7	76	26.1	3.1	54.92	14.9
Belgium	19.3	26	32	5.7	47.84	-
Canada	0	0	27	5.9	60.56	18.5
Chile	1	100	8.4	1.5	50.79	15.1
Czech Republic	0	61	13.8	2.8	51.84	-
Denmark	2	53	27.7	1.5	59.08	4.9
Estonia	2	100	8	9.3	56.21	-
Finland	9	63	34.5	2.2	54.68	18.9
France	28	19	43.9	5.2	50.47	-
Germany	8.7	65	33.8	3	55.07	15.3
Greece	0.4	100	9.1	1.9	45.28	-
Hungary	1	100	14.9	3.8	47.88	-
Iceland	13	68	45.7	9.3	72.48	-
Ireland	0	27	18.7	6.8	52.71	-
Israel	0	0	24.5	7.6	59.32	29.7
Italy	0.4	100	36.4	2.4	39.42	-
Japan	52	58	6.4	0.7	50.42	23.5
Korea, South	52.6	29	2.3	0.3	52.18	34.1

Latvia	1.4	80	29	8.8	55.04	-
Lithuania	4	100	10.8	7.1	55.93	-
Luxembourg	26.4	71	13.3	1.2	52.31	-
Mexico	1	100	7.3	3	44.28	14
Netherlands	0.4	0	30.7	2.9	57.91	-
New Zealand	0	0	30.2	11.9	63.79	7.9
Norway	10	94	40.2	6.7	60.8	5.8
Poland	2	100	21	5.9	48.54	11.5
Portugal	22.3	6	21.6	3.9	53.04	9.6
Slovakia	0	0	24.1	3.1	52.24	15.7
Slovenia	2.9	90	27.9	6.2	51.38	-
Spain	2.1	100	23.7	2.9	51.97	-
Sweden	14.3	76	36.1	5	60.85	7.1
Switzerland	0	0	22.3	7	62.84	15.1
Turkey	1	100	15.3	2.5	32.23	-
United Kingdom	2	19	29.9	8.7	56.86	16.3
United States	0	0	23.4	9.3	55.48	18.9

Annex B: Thesis report

Does Paid Father-Specific Leave Affect Women's Workplace Advancement in OECD Countries? Assessing Policy Effectiveness through a Panel Regression Analysis of OECD Countries and a Structured, Focused Comparison of Japan, France, and Portugal

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Declaration of authorship

I, the undersigned Anna Patricia Valerio, hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis report. To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis report contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language. This is a true copy of the thesis report, including final revisions.

Date: August 31, 2019

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Signature:

Introduction

While there have been significant strides to introduce maternity leave for women around the world (International Labour Organization 2014), paternity leave, or paid father-specific leave, has not had the same momentum. The provision of paternity leave was briefly mentioned in the 2009 International Labour Conference resolution focusing on gender equality at the core of decent work, but no International Labour Organization (ILO) standard concerning paternity leave has yet been established (ibid.). The World Economic Forum (WEF)'s Global Gender Gap report, which is arguably the most comprehensive and most cited report on gender inequality around the world, did not even mention paternity leave until 2011, five years after the inaugural report was published in 2006. Such an omission points to the policy inertia behind paternity leave even as evidence of the positive impact of father-specific entitlements on women's advancement in the workplace is emerging.

A study of gender diversity in almost 22,000 firms from 91 countries found that paternity leave, instead of maternity leave, has a strong correlation with women's share of corporate board seats (Noland et al. 2016). On the surface, the result runs counter to the seemingly intuitive idea that only leaves that specifically target mothers can affect women's career progression. The underlying implication of this finding, however, is that the length of maternity leave is not directly proportional to women's workplace advancement. Rather, more inclusive policies that explicitly encourage fathers to be more actively involved in childcare may be more helpful to women.

When asked about what they deemed the biggest hurdle for women in the workplace, male and female respondents participating in a global survey answered that work-life balance was the biggest challenge (International Labour Organization and Gallup 2017). Although the rise of paid maternity leave has been a boon for women looking to keep their jobs as they assume their roles as mothers, the wide gap between the leaves available solely to women and men — a disparity that is evident in how these entitlements are reported, with maternity leave and paternity leave often counted in months and weeks or mere days, respectively — highlights the persistent perception that women are still largely responsible for the demands of childcare.

Indeed, there has been evidence that the disproportionate burden of domestic responsibilities placed on women restricts female advancement in the workplace through a so-called motherhood penalty. Contrary to the conventional notion of maternity leave as a measure designed to give women a leg up in the career ladder by enabling them to retain their professional roles, studies have shown that maternity leave could even have a detrimental effect on women's careers.

For example, a post-birth fixed effects model designed to estimate the wages of mothers returning to full-time employment in Germany after having their first child found that, in a maternity leave period of less than 3.5 years, there is a wage penalty of 3 percent to 6 percent for every year of leave, with higher-skilled women facing bigger dents to their incomes (Ejrnæs and Kunze 2013). Meanwhile, a comparison of Germany, the United States, and Sweden — three

countries with markedly different policies addressing the work-family conundrum faced by working women — found that in all three countries, longer time-off periods had a destabilizing effect on women's careers (Aisenbrey et al. 2009). In the United States, where both the length of the maternity leave and the history of such a policy are the shortest, even brief periods away from work were found to have a negative impact on women's career mobility (ibid.). Even in Sweden, which is known for being the most "family-friendly" country among the three for its relatively long and well-compensated leaves, women are better off professionally if they do not spend a significant time away from their jobs (ibid.). These findings may underline the need for fathers to take on a greater share of childcare responsibilities and use more of their leave entitlements.

Although investigating the impact of paternity leave on women's career advancement at such a large scale was not its main objective, Noland et al.'s study was the first to do so. Nevertheless, the authors cautioned researchers from making sweeping statements based on their findings given the fact that the study was restricted to 2014 data. This thesis project is partly an attempt to build on Noland et al.'s work by constructing and analyzing a panel dataset of countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), where since 1990, most countries, with the United States as one of the notable exceptions, have introduced some form of paid father-specific leave (OECD 2017). A qualitative analysis — which will involve a structured, focused comparison of Japan, France, and Portugal, or three countries that in recent years have expanded their paid father-specific leave — will complement the panel regression analysis to show how women's career advancement has improved, if at all, in these countries.

By investigating whether paid father-specific leave affects women's career progression, this study aims to contribute to the burgeoning literature on paternity leave — a body of work that has primarily focused on the contribution of the use of such entitlements to children's well-being (Nepomnyaschy and Waldfogel 2007; O'Brien 2009; Cools et al. 2015). Its main objective is to generate insights that could be useful to scholars and policymakers alike as they explore the relatively overlooked importance of leave for the exclusive use of fathers and delve into the implications of family schemes that continue to place women at the center of the calculus of childcare. Its more modest aim is to provide some nuance to the traditional thinking that continues to pervade policies aimed at promoting women in the workplace.

Literature review

An overview of paid father-specific leave in the OECD

Paid father-specific leave, which includes paternity leave and parental leave entitlements, shareable parental leave entitlements that are reserved for fathers, and any shareable leave entitlements that must be used by the father for the family to access "bonus" weeks of leave, was introduced to the OECD in 1970 when Spain, Luxembourg, and Belgium put in place one day, two days, and three days, respectively, of leave for the exclusive use of fathers (OECD 2017). Adoption of entitlements reserved for fathers was sluggish: by 1990, the average length of paid

father-specific leave in the OECD was just one day (ibid.). While several OECD countries started introducing paid father-specific leave in the last few decades — South Korea and Japan, where fathers are entitled to a year of paid parental leave, are particularly notable in this regard — and the OECD average length of paid father-specific leave is now a little over nine weeks, there have also been policy reversals. For example, the abolishment of the "father quota" in 2002 in Denmark significantly shortened the length of its paid-father specific leave (ibid.).

The OECD has seen policymakers either mandating or lengthening paid father-specific leave with the explicit aim of supporting women both in the workplace and at home (Cools et al. 2015). A closer look at 2018 data, however, shows that policies and payment rates still vary widely across member countries. For example, the length of paid father-specific leave in the OECD ranges from zero weeks (Canada, Israel, New Zealand, Slovakia, Switzerland, and the United States) to 52.6 weeks (South Korea). For countries with at least one week of leave reserved for fathers, the payment rate can be as low as 19.2 percent (France and United Kingdom) to as generous as 100 percent (Chile, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Turkey). Figures 1 and 2 below graphically depict the differences in lengths of paid father-specific leave and payment rates.

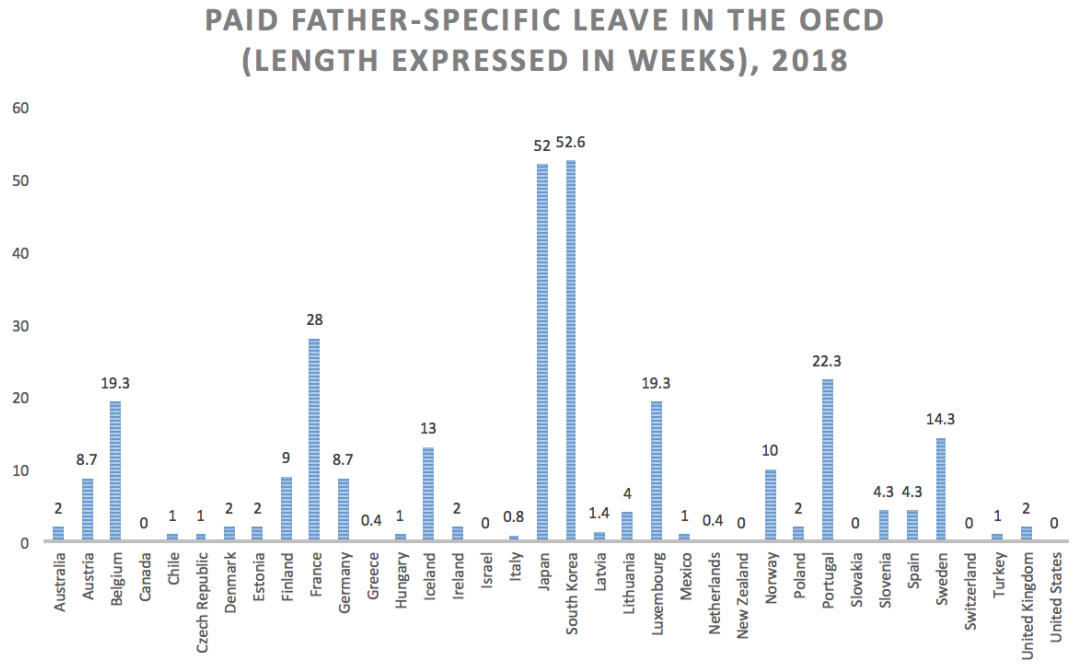

Figure 1: Paid father-specific leave in the OECD in weeks, 2018. Source: OECD.

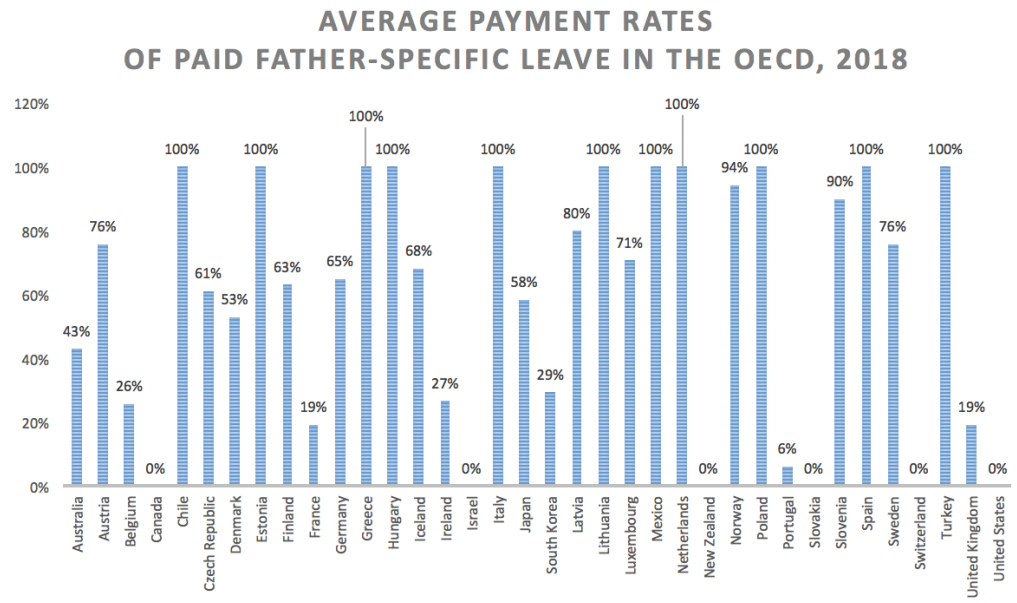

Figure 2: Average payment rates of paid father-specific leave in the OECD, 2018. Source: OECD.

Although the number of fathers using their parental and paternity leave entitlements has increased in most European Union (EU) countries in the last decade, measuring the uptake of these entitlements nevertheless remains complicated by several data collection challenges (Aumayr-Pintar 2019). Variations in national leave systems, contrasting terminologies, and differences in how leave uptake is calculated, for example, make it inadvisable to conduct cross-country comparisons (ibid.).

There is also the issue of fathers forgoing their leaves. The stubborn gap between the earning capacities of men and women — in 2018, the disparity in economic participation and opportunity for men and women was 58 percent, which means that women had just 58 percent of what men had access to (Merelli 2018) — contributes to the perceived opportunity cost of fathers spending more time at home and is just one of the many reasons that the uptake of paid father-specific leave is not higher (Ruhm 1998). Low uptake of paternity and parental leave by fathers, meanwhile, forces mothers to spend a longer time away from their job to care for their children, if not exit the labor market altogether, thereby reducing the potential of their salary trajectories.

Aside from the design of parental and paternity leave entitlements, which affects how much fathers are compensated and how flexible their leaves are, the encouragement (or lack thereof) from employers in promoting parental and paternity leave as well as the administrative requirements for claiming benefits also influence whether fathers use such entitlements (Aumayr-Pintar 2019). For example, survey results have shown that 44 percent of men in the United Kingdom agreed with the statement "Taking time off work to care for a child has a negative impact on a person's job" and an even smaller share — just 38 percent — of men believe that their employer is supportive of shared parental leave (Perraudin 2019).

The impact (or lack thereof) of paid father-specific leave

Most research surrounding paternity leave has focused on the positive impact of more time-off for fathers on their children's well-being (Nepomnyaschy and Waldfogel 2007; O'Brien 2009; Cools et al. 2015). Relatively little attention has been paid to whether fathers spending more time at home could also benefit women professionally. While the Noland et al. study is the most comprehensive in terms of countries covered, the available empirical evidence on the impact of paternity leave on professional outcomes for women in more developed economies has painted a mixed picture.

In Iceland, a 2000 law that lengthened the parental leave from six to nine months, which is distributed in a way that men and women could each take three months of leave, with the distribution of the remainder to be decided by parents themselves, was found to have reduced gender inequality in the labor market as women found themselves in a better position to find better compensated jobs that required more of their time (Anarson and Mitra 2008).

Indeed, one argument for lengthier paid father-specific leave, which includes paternity leave and any other entitlements reserved for fathers, is that the existing design of parental leave policies entrenches gender inequality both in the family and in the workplace: while longer maternity leave entitlements have the positive effect of increasing female labor participation, they may also inhibit post-birth earnings and women's career advancement (Farré 2016; Ruhm 1998). This current system of parental leave schemes, which disproportionately places the responsibility of childcare on mothers through a significantly longer maternity leave, seems designed to set up women to fail professionally (Perraudin 2019).

Farré proposed parental leave that is reserved for fathers' exclusive use and is non-transferable to mothers as a policy instrument that will not only reconfigure the dynamics perpetuated by the current design of parental leave policies but will also expand women's work opportunities (Farré 2016). The design of such a policy, however, must consider the impact of a father quota on household behavior. For example, there is evidence that points to paid father-specific leave having a bigger effect if the reserved weeks are added to the shared parental leave instead of deducted from it (ibid.).

Still, there has been evidence that paternity leave could hurt women's careers — or at the very least, fail to alter the earnings differential between men and women, as policymakers have intended. A difference-in-differences study conducted in Norway has shown that a higher uptake of paternity leave could have negative consequences for women's workplace advancement (Cools et al. 2015). A study in Sweden, a country known for policies that promote work-life balance, showed a similar result, but acknowledged that the findings must be interpreted with caution, especially since the paternity leave reform also increased the uptake of maternity leave (Ekberg et al. 2013), which means that there could be "complementarities in mothers' and fathers' time at home" (Cools et al. 2015).

There are other missing pieces to the paternity leave puzzle (Amin et al. 2016). For instance, the questions of whether paternity leave affects women's employment similarly across

all kinds of companies and whether paternity leave and maternity leave substitute or complement women's employment have no clear answers yet (ibid.).

A spotlight on Japan, France, and Portugal

Japan, France, and Portugal are three of the countries that offer the longest paid father-specific leave in the OECD. The long leaves for fathers in these countries did not always exist; they were put in place after their governments saw the need for sweeping changes of leave policies. In 2009, a reform of leave policies in Portugal expanded the entitlements reserved for fathers to more than 20 weeks of paid leave (OECD 2017). In the case of Japan, the expansion of paid father-specific leave came after a 2010 law, which was spurred by concerns about a declining birthrate (Kotaka and Mera 2010). Lastly, the reservation of least six months of paid father-specific leave in France happened in 2014, when the socialist government at the time introduced shared parental leave after studies showed that a mere 0.03 percent of men in the country used parental leave entitlements (Willsher 2017).

The actual use of these entitlements, however, is another issue altogether. Data shows that, despite the lengthy leave reserved for fathers, only 5.14 percent of fathers in Japan used their paternity leave in 2017 (Chzhen et al. 2019). According to a survey of 1,648 fathers who did not use their entitlements, the top three reasons for the low uptake were staff shortage, companies' failure to offer the leave, and an unfavorable environment against fathers using their paternity benefits (ibid.). In France, 45 percent of fathers did not take advantage of paid entitlements simply because of a lack of interest (Willsher 2017). In the case of Portugal, while there has been an increase in the use of parental leave, the entitlements are still largely used by women (Wall and Leitão 2018, 342).

Theoretical framework

As a study that focuses on the impact of nationally determined policies on women's careers, this thesis project may garner the reasonable criticism that it prioritizes economic empowerment over equally urgent issues that inordinately affect women and, more crucially, that it is not intersectional enough — that is, that it ignores interlocking elements like class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and religion, among many other factors, in its analysis.

Coined as part of an incisive analysis of discrimination against black women by showing that gender and race are not mutually exclusive considerations (Crenshaw 1989), intersectionality has been one of the most dominant ideas to seep into not just feminist theory and activism, but even mainstream discourse. Perhaps its most notable public mention was at the 2018 Academy Awards, where actress Ashley Judd, one of the most prominent figures of the #MeToo movement, used the term to call for more diversity in the film industry (Stamper 2018). Its pervasiveness, however, has also diluted its power. Crenshaw herself has lamented how the term has been widely misused: "... intersectionality can get used as a blanket term to mean, 'Well, it's complicated.' Sometimes, 'It's complicated' is an excuse not to do anything" (Columbia Law

School 2017). While Crenshaw has claimed to have taken steps to ensure that intersectionality can go outside the domain of theory and can be used as an effective advocacy tool (ibid.), the term itself, as well as the lack of conceptual clarity that has come to be associated with it as it has morphed far beyond its original meaning, makes it not the most appropriate lens for this study, which encompasses 36 countries with vastly different policies toward work-family balance.

Because of the wide geographical scope and the policy variations that will be covered in the analysis, this thesis project will instead draw on Barbara Risman's conceptualization of gender as a social structure, which places gender "at the same level of general social significance as the economy and the polity" (Risman 2004, 429) and interrogates how the institutional, interactional, and individual dimensions of this structure determine one another. The latter point about how no one dimension is more important than the others needs to be emphasized because, while this study is about whether paid father-specific leave has an impact on women's workplace advancement, it is not solely focused on the institutional dimension, which is concerned with policies. The mere existence of a policy, after all, does not translate into actual impact. Policy implementation and deep-seated attitudes and behaviors often influence one another and determine the effect — or lack thereof — of any policy. Whether or not men use their leave and what drives them to use their entitlements or leave them unused — both factors are driven by not just institutional decisions, but also by cultural norms and socialization, which can be considered part of the interactional and individual dimensions — are equally essential to understanding how to design better parental leave policies.

Risman used an extension (Martin 2004) of theorist Judith Lorber's 12 characteristics of an institution (Lorber 1994) as a springboard to develop her framework of gender as a social structure:

> … characteristic of groups; persists over time; includes distinct social practices; constrains and facilitates behavior and action; includes expectations, rule/norms; is constituted and reconstituted by embodied agents; is internalized as identities and selves; includes a legitimizing ideology; is contradictory, rife with conflict; changes continuously; is organized by and permeated with power; is mutually constituted at different levels of analysis (Risman 2004, 431).

Conceding that the language of structure, which is contested, is not the most ideal for her purposes, Risman noted that the tendency to treat structure and individuals as opposing forces belies the mutual relationship between the two. For example, the heavy focus on constraint as a component of structure (Blau 1977) minimizes the agency that individuals have in willingly assuming the roles they think they should play: "Not only are women and men coerced into different social roles; they often choose their gendered paths" (Risman 2004, 431). This recursive relationship is a more nuanced explanation of the fact that many men, even with the availability of paid father-specific leave, continue to forgo their entitlements (Aumayr-Pintar 2019). Employers' expectations that male employees should be more visible in the office, as well as the relative absence of public male figures involved in domestic responsibilities, are just some of the signals that indicate to men that they cannot afford, financially or otherwise, to spend time away from work for an extended period, causing them to voluntarily give up much of their paternity leave. Individual decisions, however, also perpetuate the structures that keep these patterns in

place: the low uptake of paid father-specific leave illustrates to other men in the workplace that there are considerable risks — whether financial, social, or both — to using these entitlements.

Using the framework of gender as a social structure helps to identify the causal mechanisms driving the different relationships in all dimensions. While Risman has acknowledged that intersectionality "must continue to be paramount, structures of inequality have different constructions … at any given historical moment" (Risman 2009, 429). For scholars delving into similar issues and looking to make their research more relevant to policymakers, the conceptualization of gender as a social structure could also yield more actionable insights:

> ... the feminist project is better served by finding empirical answers to particular questions and by identifying how particular processes explain outcomes in need of change. If our goal is to do scholarship that contributes to transforming society, the identification of the processes that explain particular outcomes is the first step in effectively changing those processes and subsequently the outcomes themselves" (Risman 2009, 435).

Research design

Panel regression analysis of OECD countries

Dataset creation

Although the Noland et al. study used firm-level data, which for this project could be highly challenging to gather and render comparable across the dataset given the extended period being assessed, this project uses country-level data from the OECD, the WEF, and the World Bank. It also narrows down the 91 countries from the Noland et al. dataset into a significantly smaller subset: OECD countries (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States). The rationale behind focusing on OECD countries stems from the fact that, since 1990, most OECD countries have instituted some form of paid father-specific leave (OECD 2017).

Paid father-specific leave, which includes any entitlements that are for the sole use of fathers, is the primary independent variable in this study. Female corporate advancement, the main dependent variable in the analysis, is represented by the score depicting women's ability to advance to corporate leadership, the female share of board seats in publicly listed companies, and the share of firms with female top managers — indicators that the WEF uses in its annual Global Gender Gap Report. The first indicator, which is taken from the WEF's Executive Opinion Surveys, has been included in the Global Gender Gap Report since its first publication in 2006. The score for each country is based on the question, "In your country, do businesses provide women the same opportunities as men to rise to positions of leadership?" Between 2006 and 2015, the responses were scored in a scale of 1 ("No, women are unable to rise to positions of

leadership") to 7 ("Yes, women are often in management positions"). The scale was changed in 2016, when the responses were scored from 0 to 1, with 0 and 1 being the worst and best possible score, respectively. To make these responses comparable, the scores were standardized using the updated scale.

A significant limitation of using the score representing women's ability to advance to corporate leadership is that it is a perception-based indicator, which means that responses are likely to vary depending on individual attitudes, norms, and societal expectations because what constitutes corporate leadership opportunities for women is different across countries. The media attention that the Global Gender Gap Report has attracted in recent years could also compel certain respondents to inflate the scores they give to make their country rank higher. Due to the highly subjective nature of this indicator, it is necessary to include more objective measures, such as the female share of board seats in publicly listed companies and the percentage of firms with female top managers. The former is derived from the country averages of the percentages of female board members in each company in the OECD ORBIS dataset, while the latter is the share of private-sector firms that report having a woman as the highest-ranking manager or CEO of the company (WEF 2018).

Female labor participation and the gender gap, which are both expressed in percentages and are also taken from WEF data, are also included in the analysis as dependent variables to determine how paid father-specific leave influences not only women in the upper echelons of business, but also broader women's workplace participation.

Aside from paid father-specific leave, maternity leave is also used as an independent variable to compare how differently, if at all, it affects women's career progression. GDP per capita and unemployment rate, which are used as control variables, are also included in the analysis to take into account cross-country differences.

A major drawback to assessing a significantly longer period than the Noland et al. study is that all independent and dependent variables have missing data for certain years and countries. A striking example of this is the female corporate leadership mobility indicator, which is a survey-based score that the WEF only started to collect in 2006. While Stata by default drops observations with missing values for a certain variable in a regression, these gaps have resulted in an unbalanced panel dataset.

Regression model specification

Since panel regressions are supposed to mitigate unobserved time-invariant heterogeneity — variables that either are unobservable or are different across time but not entities — verifying that a panel regression is the suitable model for this study is the first step. Below, Tables 1 and 2 show the descriptive statistics for independent and dependent variables, respectively.

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Paid father-specific leave	828	4.365942	9.537468	0	52.6
GDP per capita	979	34,191.83	20,858.72	5,140.528	111,968.3
Unemployment rate	1,008	7.891807	4.253112	1.47	27.47

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for each of the dependent variables in the panel regression analysis.

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Women's ability to advance to corporate leadership (standardized scores)	430	0.6629701	0.0976272	0.4285714	0.87
Female share of board seats in publicly listed companies	228	19.13465	10.1601	2.1	48.1
Share of firms with female top managers	228	4.636404	2.401035	0.3	9.7
Female labor participation	1,044	51.11117	8.47581	23.051	73.737

Gender gap	244	15.41639	7.462922	1	41.7

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for each of the dependent variables in the panel regression analysis.

The tables above show that almost all variables have considerable variation and therefore confirm that a panel regression is the appropriate model for the study. The equation for the panel regression analysis is:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1it} + \beta_2 X_{2it} + \beta_3 X_{3it} + a_i + u_{it}$$

where:

- Y_{it} is the dependent variable (women's ability to advance to corporate leadership, female share of board seats in publicly listed companies, share of firms with female top managers, female labor participation, or the gender gap, depending on the panel regression analysis) where $_i$ = entity and $_t$ = time;
- β_0 is the constant term;
- X_{1it} represents either paid father-specific leave or maternity leave (both independent variables), depending on the panel regression analysis;
- β_1 is the coefficient for paid father-specific leave;
- X_{2it} represents GDP per capita (a control variable);
- β_2 is the coefficient for GDP per capita;
- X_{3it} represents the unemployment rate (a control variable);
- β_3 is the coefficient for the unemployment rate;
- a_i is the unknown intercept for each entity ($_i$ = 1 .... n); and
- u_{it} is the error term.

Based on the assumption that there are individual-specific effects correlated with the explanatory variables, the model includes fixed effects to analyze the impact of variables that vary over time. By eliminating the influence of time-invariant characteristics, the net effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable can be more reliably assessed.

GDP per capita and unemployment rate — indicators that are available for all countries and years — are used as control variables to reduce the confounding effect of differences in economic growth and total labor participation across OECD countries. To account for the delayed effect of these control variables, as well as the main independent variable (either paid father-specific leave or maternity leave, depending on the analysis), on the dependent variable (women's ability to advance to corporate leadership, female share of board seats in publicly listed companies, share of firms with female top managers, female labor participation, or the gender gap, depending on the analysis), these explanatory variables are lagged in the panel regression.

The dependent variable in each analysis, however, is not lagged precisely to control for the delayed impact. Lagging dependent variables could also lead to downwardly biased coefficients of independent variables if residual autocorrelation — that is, if the differences between observed and predicted values, or residuals, as a function of the time lag between them are similar — is present (Keele and Kelly 2005).

Structured, focused comparison of Japan, France, and Portugal

The qualitative analysis component of this study will entail a structured, focused comparative case study of Japan, France, and Portugal — three countries that offer some of the longest paid father-specific leave in the OECD following reforms in their leave policies.

Because they are usually influenced by easily accessible data and generally lack a theoretical foundation, case studies, as they have traditionally been done, have been rather haphazard. The exercise of case selection itself has often been done out of convenience and has been more descriptive and less analytical: while the cases chosen typically do illustrate different phenomena, the incongruous independent and dependent variables inherent in these cases mean that they can offer neither meaningful comparisons nor a probing analysis (Goodrick 2014).

By using highly similar cases — or situations that are examples of just one phenomenon — a structured, focused comparison can address the weaknesses of conventional case studies (George and Bennett 2005). Highlighting only the components of a case that are relevant to the research question and formulating inquiries centered on both the study's objective and theoretical framework for a more systematic analysis will be more successful at generating insights than typical case studies because it will uniformly apply a particular set of variables to all cases being considered.

This method has implications for scholars and policymakers alike. For the former, a structured, focused comparison, unlike the less clearly structured traditional approach, can better contribute to the expansion of both knowledge and theory in a given field. For the latter, it could form the foundation of more immediately useful policy ideas since this approach could yield lessons that could applied to more than one case.

Preliminary findings of the panel regression analysis

An initial analysis of the impact of paid father-specific leave on women's workplace advancement shows that it not only has a positive, statistically significant effect on the female share of board seats in publicly listed companies; it also has a negative, statistically significant effect on the gender gap. These findings, albeit still preliminary, could reflect how paid father-specific leave contributes to improving women's career outcomes.

Unlike paid father-specific leave, maternity leave has a negative, statistically significant effect on the female share of board seats in publicly listed companies. This could point to the so-

called motherhood penalty at work: while maternity leave is explicitly a policy that is intended to benefit women, longer entitlements, which, when not complemented by paternity leave, make women spend an extended time away from work, could adversely affect women's career trajectories by shrinking their earnings potential and reducing the opportunities available to them. Interestingly, however, maternity leave has a positive, statistically significant effect on the share of firms with female top managers.

While the dataset will have to be refined further to explore these initial findings — more control variables, for instance, could still be included — these results show support for the rationale behind paid father-specific leave as a policy that supports women in the workplace. Further analysis will have to be conducted to determine how paid father-specific leave not only affects women who already have some career mobility, but also those who are either just starting out or in the middle stages of their careers. The same will have to be done for the impact of maternity leave.

Conclusion

Paid father-specific leave in the OECD has been introduced to both distribute domestic responsibilities between fathers and mothers and help women, who were traditionally seen as the ones responsible for the demands of childcare, advance in the workplace. But despite the rather noble aims of such a policy, there has been relatively limited focus on its effectiveness in existing literature, which has largely been about the impact of paid father-specific leave on children's well-being.

This study aims to contribute to the still rather scant but growing literature on leave entitlements reserved for fathers through a panel regression analysis of OECD countries and a structured, focused comparison of Japan, France, and Portugal. The former will determine whether paid father-specific leave has an impact on women's workplace advancement and whether maternity leave affects women's career progression differently, if at all. The latter will focus on three countries that in the last decade have significantly expanded leave entitlements for fathers and assess whether there has been any impact on women's career mobility. Barbara Risman's gender as a social structure framework, which takes into account the institutional, interactional, and individual dimensions and recognizes that there are several causal mechanisms at work when one looks at a policy as personal as a parental leave scheme, is the underlying theoretical foundation of both methods.

Proposed work plan

After the submission of the thesis report to both the Year 1 (Prof. Caitlin Brown, Central European University) and Year 2 (Prof. Ixchel Perez Duran, Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals) supervisors on August 31, 2019, I plan to work on the following tasks:

Task(s)	Date
Improve and refine the panel dataset; finalize the literature review on Japan, France, and Portugal	September to November 2019
Conduct a panel regression analysis based on the improved dataset; write a draft of the quantitative analysis section and submit to Year 1 and Year 2 supervisors for review	December 2019 to January 2020
Write a draft of the qualitative analysis section and submit to Year 1 and Year 2 supervisors for review	February 2020
Start writing a draft of the entire thesis	March to May 2020
Submit a complete draft to Year 1 and Year 2 supervisors for review	Early to mid-June 2020
Revise the thesis draft following feedback from Year 1 and Year 2 supervisor	May 2020
Submit the final thesis	July 8, 2020
Thesis defense	Week of September 9, 2020

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