The Influence of Workplace Context on Fathers’ Use of Parental Leave in Canada

by

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Abstract

Much research has examined fathers’ use of parental leave in the international context, focusing on the role of state policies and/or the influence of the family in shaping fathers’ leave decisions. Missing from these analyses is an examination of how the workplace context might shape fathers’ leave use. The current thesis attempts to fill this gap by investigating variation in fathers’ leave use and leave length in Canada as these relate to cultural and structural features of the workplace context. Using data from the nationally representative Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, I run logistic regression and negative binomial regression to test the effects of occupational culture and structural features such as workplace sector and size on fathers’ use and length of leave, respectively. Results indicate a positive and significant effect for management and science-related occupations on leave use but this effect disappears upon the introduction of individual-level control variables. Other work-related predictors include large workplaces and having a permanent job, both of which positively and significantly predict leave use. Length of leave was not found to be related to workplace context. These findings point to the importance of structural features of the workplace in shaping fathers’ use of leave, but not necessarily the length of their leave.
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Dedication

To my family
1. Introduction

A significant change in work patterns over the past thirty to forty years is the increase in the number of women and mothers in the paid work force\(^1\). At the same time, this advancement of women into the paid labour force has not been met with equivalent advances of men and fathers into the household to participate in domestic labour. As Doucet (2006) confirms, “there remains an outstanding stability in mothers’ responsibility for children and for domestic and community life” (6, italics in original), where women remain primary caregivers even as they increasingly become primary breadwinners. Reasons for this include men’s own high participation rate in paid labour. However, even with the offer of state-funded work-life policies, such as parental leave\(^2\) that specifically have the aim of helping parents manage their care responsibilities while maintaining their connection to the paid labour market\(^3\) - a lower-cost option, relative to exiting the workplace entirely – few fathers take advantage of these measures, leading researchers to question why gender role reversals have been so striking in the case of women, but not in the case of men. Indeed, men’s uptake of leave remains low – in 2006, only 20 percent of Canadian fathers collected leave benefits compared to just over 60 percent of mothers (Marshall 2008).

\(^{1}\) In 1976, around 40 percent of women over the age of 15 were working for pay. By 2006, this figure had increased to just under 60 percent (Statistics Canada 2011). The number of dual-earner breadwinning couples (married or common-law) has also increased, rising from just over 30 percent in 1965 to around 70 percent in 2002 (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2010). As well, the percentage of working mothers with young children has increased: in 1973, around 37 percent of mothers were engaged in paid work; in 2002, that number had increased to just under 80 percent (Phipps 2006).

\(^{2}\) A family leave is a job-protected period of absence from a new parent’s job, immediately following the birth or adoption of a child that often (but not always) includes a benefits package and has the aim of allowing parents to bond with their children (OECD 2007). In general, there are three types of leave: Maternity (leave reserved for the mother), paternity (leave reserved for the father), and parental (leave that can be shared between parents) leave in one, two, or all of these forms is available in all OECD countries, including Canada (OECD 2007).

\(^{3}\) The fact that jobs are protected during parental leave (by employment standards acts and human rights law) is not without exception. For example, if a workplace closes, there is obviously no job to return to. More subtly, an employer may refuse to reinstate an employee for reasons unrelated to the leave. This loophole has been used in the case of a mother who was not reinstated because, following her temporary replacement, one of her important clients no longer wanted to work with her (Lublin 2012).
While important differences exist between men and women’s leave use, many researchers have opted to examine the considerable variation that exists across fathers and their use of parental leave policy (Bygren and Duvander 2006; Lappegard 2008; Naz 2010; Sundstrom and Duvander 2002; Whitehouse, Diamond and Baird 2007). Instead of examining what differentiates women from men, this approach enables an examination of what differentiates men from other men, thereby allowing researchers to consider both the constraints on fathers’ equal engagement in caregiving and the factors that facilitate this participation. For example, comparisons of men in Quebec and outside of Quebec indicate that the former are significantly more likely to take parental leave, likely because of important policy differences between that province and the rest of Canada (Marshall 2008). The purpose of the current study is therefore to further examine differences in men’s leave use and some of the possible explanations for these differences.

To explain fathers’ lower use of leave and variations in their leave use, three factors are generally emphasized – work, family, and the state. The influence of the state is evident – the state creates the policies that enable if and how parents can take parental leave. To further explain leave use, however, a number of scholars have turned to the workplace context (embedded in a broader policy and cultural context) to examine the persistent gendering of parental leave. This focus acknowledges that although decisions about parental leave are affected by family relations and resources, there are reasons to believe that the family may not exert the same normative influence over parental leave use as the workplace context – a point I will return to shortly. In effect, these scholars argue that the workplace context – with its particular occupational culture and accompanying structural characteristics – represents a “gender factory” within which ideal worker norms and norms of masculinity generate powerful incentives for fathers to conform to traditional gender roles (Ely and Meyerson 2010; Williams 2010).
Importantly, the extent to which a workplace context constitutes a gender factory depends upon its particular features, such as the occupational composition of its work force, its sex composition, its sector and size (Ely and Meyerson 2010). Knowing that the work context holds men accountable to gender norms begs the question: how might these contextual features of the workplace be affecting men’s use of leave in Canada? Are the differences in men’s leave use related to their respective occupations and the structural characteristics of their workplace?

Several studies have examined parental leave use in Canada (see Marshall 2008 for a quantitative examination of parents’ leave use and McKay and Doucet 2010 for a qualitative examination of how couples share parental leave). To date, however, no research has quantitatively examined leave use in Canada in relation to occupation and other relevant workplace characteristics. This study thus contributes to the literature on fathers, caregiving and work by examining the relationship between key employment variables identified as important in the literature and men’s parental leave use in a relatively under-explored context.

This study also has broader relevance for issues of individual flourishing and gender equality. The addition of a child to the family is a pivotal event in shaping how families negotiate and construct the division of labour, both in the short and long terms (Deutsch 1999; Doucet 2006). The parent who leaves the work force in order to care for a child becomes knowledgeable in child-rearing. Possessing this specialized knowledge means that this parent can then subsequently be deferred to regarding matters of child care. Kershaw (2006) explains that compounding this solidification of the care/domestic role is the tendency of partners to increase their hours of employment outside of the home in order to compensate for the other parent’s lost income. This time spent at work prevents a partner from developing the same bond with a child, as well as the expertise necessary to look after him or her. Thus, from birth onwards, couples’
duties are more firmly cemented in gender roles, a specialization which has consequences for both partners. Due to the extended period of time removed from the sphere of market employment, taken in the form of maternity/parental leave, women may experience skills erosion as well as a loss of experience and seniority (Kershaw 2005), which can impact negatively on earnings (OECD 2007). Other researchers have found a significant and positive effect of maternity leave policy on gender earnings inequality due to statistical discrimination by employers (Mandel and Semyonov 2005). In terms of upward mobility, researchers have found a reduced likelihood of making an upward occupational move for maternity leaves of 15 months or longer upon mothers’ return to their job and within a ten year period following their return (Evertsson and Duvander 2010). For male partners, the costs of not taking leave come in the form of missed opportunities for care work and the fulfillment associated with it (Kershaw 2005). More specifically, Kershaw (2005) cautions that fathers who miss out on caregiving lose out on the “emotional and psychological rewards that can shape one’s sense of self, history, belonging, and purpose.” (96). For children with involved fathers, the benefits they experience are numerous: improved cognitive functioning, improved emotional development and well-being, enhanced social development, better physical health, and improved health outcomes (Allen and Daly 2007). In other words, all members of heterosexual families may experience the deleterious effects of gender role specialization. Besides benefits for children, the promotion of gender equality through both the maintenance of women’s labour market attachment and men’s participation in domestic duties, and the temporary ability parental leave gives couples to simultaneously spend time with and take care of family members while maintaining their job, generous parental leave and its use has been shown to increase a country’s fertility rates.
(Duvander, Lappegard and Andersson 2010). For these reasons, it is important to understand the possible causes behind the variations in fathers’ use of leave.

The present paper will empirically examine some of the possible work-related determinants of fathers’ use and length of parental leave in Canada using the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID), a longitudinal, nationally representative dataset. I will begin by discussing why we might expect the workplace context to affect fathers’ use of leave. This will entail an overview of the recent research on the cultural factors (occupational norms and masculinity) that may affect fathers’ use of leave followed by a brief discussion of structural factors, such as sex composition, workplace size and sector. I will then describe the empirical findings on fathers’ use of parental leave in the international and Canadian contexts. Following this, I will present the Canadian policy context in more detail. The latter half of the paper will consist of descriptions of my data source, methods of analysis, and results, concluding with a consideration of the implications of my findings, some policy concerns, and limitations of this project. First, however, I will briefly elaborate on my reasons for privileging the workplace context over the family in my analysis.

1.1. Why Not Family?

Some researchers have posited that resources within the family largely determine how domestic labour, including caregiving, is allocated, consistent with rational choice theory. This is known as the “economic resource hypothesis” (Lappegard 2008) which suggests that men as the higher earners in most cases have greater bargaining power to negotiate freedom from domestic work. This argument assumes that “the solution to work-family conflict is for women to bargain more effectively for men to share in household work” (Williams 2010: 2). Ability to bargain more effectively should arise from the increased presence of women in the labour market and
their increased access to economic resources. Indeed some studies have found women’s higher incomes to be important factors mediating men’s decision to relinquish full-time work for caregiving (Doucet 2006) as well as parental leave decisions (Lappegard 2008; McKay and Doucet 2010). According to this logic, differences in men’s leave use should relate to how much bargaining power their respective female partners have. However, if it were the case that women who out-earned their husbands were then able to wield more power in determining household labour, there would likely be a significantly higher proportion of fathers who not only use parental leave, but also stay home full-time, given how many women now represent the primary breadwinners (Selmi 2006). In Canada, for example, the rate of wives out-earning husbands, as a proportion of total dual-earner couples, was 29 percent in 2003 (Sussman and Bonnell 2006). Meanwhile, the percentage of stay-at-home fathers (as a proportion of all stay-at-home parents) was 8 percent in 2000 and 13 percent in 2011 (representing 2 percent of all Canadian fathers) (Father Involvement Research Alliance 2012). Thus, it is unlikely to be mothers’ breadwinning status alone that determines men’s participation in caregiving. And while working-age men’s participation in domestic labour has increased recently from an average of 1.0 hours in the mid-1980s to 1.4 hours in 2005 (Marshall 2006), suggesting that women’s increased labour market participation (and earning power) could be playing a role in increasing men’s daily domestic participation, this rise could be considered moderate (especially over a twenty year span), given the striking surge in women’s labour force participation rates over the past forty years. Empirical research supports the argument that it is more than women’s economic resources shaping men’s participation in domestic labour. Several studies document that even after controlling for pay, number of hours and sex-role ideology, men do not participate as much in the household work as
women (Brayfield 1992; Casalanti and Bailey 1991; Deutsch 1999), suggesting that much of the gap in household work cannot be explained by negotiations within the family.
2. Theoretical and Empirical Background

There are a number of reasons why the workplace context might influence the caregiving behaviour of fathers. Fathers spend a lot of time at work: almost 92 percent of new fathers were working mainly full-time in the year 2000 and from the mid-1980s to 2005, fathers (with children up to 18 years of age) increased the amount of time they spent in paid work, from 6.4 hours per day in 1986 to 6.9 hours in 2005. However, besides the sheer amount of time spent in paid work, there are other reasons to believe that the workplace context plays an important role in shaping fathers’ caregiving decisions. These reasons are both cultural and structural in nature. In the first place, occupational norms as well as norms within the broader culture emphasize and reinforce men’s performance as ideal workers, their attachment to the sphere of paid work and their accountability to masculine ideals. At the structural level, variables such as sex composition can shape both workers’ perceptions of workplace supportiveness of leave-taking activities and the extent to which a leave-taking precedent exists, while the size of the workplace and its location in either the public sphere or private industry can determine the availability of resources enabling leave use. Variations in cultural norms across white- and blue-collar contexts, as well as differences in the structures of work contexts could explain some of the variation in fathers' leave use.

2.1. Cultural Determinants of Men’s Leave Use

2.1.1. The Ideal Worker Norm

One particularly powerful norm operating in the workplace context is that of the “ideal worker”. Being an “ideal worker” requires appearing wholly committed to paid employment. This is evidenced when workers put in long hours, organize and accommodate their outside responsibilities, such as care giving, to their paid work, and are willing to relocate or travel upon
request (Acker 1990; Kelly, Ammons, Chermack , and Moen 2010; Williams 2000). Being evaluated and perceived as a good worker entails living up to this standard. This norm has also been described as the “act as though” principle (Moss Kanter 1989), demanding that workers act as though they have “no other loyalties, no other life” (84). Historically, it reflects the compromise made on the part of the modern organization between total control (characteristic of a total institution) and reduced control, relative to the traditional institution of the family. The problem lies in that organizations can only “exclude [the family] from business; they cannot eliminate it completely” (Moss Kanter 1989: 84)). Therefore, the solution for many organizations is the “act as though” principle and the ideal worker norm. Stated explicitly, the organization does not wholly subsume workers and exercise complete control over them, nor does it expect complete devotion. However, it does demand that while at work, employees at least pretend that family concerns are non-existent and that they are in fact wholly committed to the organization, above all other competing loyalties. As one mother poignantly notes, “I’ve learned that in terms of survival and success [in the organization] you almost have to pretend that they (the children) are not there” (Deutsch 1999: 88).

2.1.2. Men as Ideal Workers under Separate Spheres Ideology

While both women and men are implicitly and explicitly held accountable to ideal worker expectations (Acker 2006), men may be evaluated more stringently in relation to them, given

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4 The family is seen as a competing loyalty because of its combination of both sexuality/intimacy and authority. Sexuality, an instinctual drive, undermines the discipline and civility of work organizations while the intimacy of family members can draw them together into natural coalitions and cause them to make decisions on grounds other than those which are relevant to the organization. Traditional familial authority, (husbands over wives; older members over younger) can also be threatening to the organization, as the former can undermine the power of the latter which relies on authority to have its interests met. Thus, the modern organization is faced with a dilemma – whether to include and coopt the family into serving the organization’s interests or whether to exclude it altogether. Although the former may have originally been the intent, exclusion is the modus operandi of the modern organization (Moss Kanter 1989).
their traditional association with paid work under separate spheres ideology (Deutsch 1999; Williams 2000; 2010). This ideology defines women’s and men’s positions in society as complementary and as rightfully suited to the family and paid work spheres, respectively. Thus – although the person filling the abstract job “is a disembodied worker who exists only for work… [with no] other imperatives of existence that impinge upon the job” (Acker 1990:149) and it might seem that this abstract worker could just as easily be male or female (by virtue of being disembodied) – it is male workers who have historically resembled this ideal of work-centered existence. Indeed, this ideal assumes that there is another person – usually a woman – taking care of the worker’s personal needs and his children. This breadwinner model becomes necessary because as Acker notes “too many obligations outside the boundaries of the job would make a worker unsuited for the position” (ibid). The underlying organizational logic of a disembodied worker filling an abstract job – a job therefore structured in terms of the autonomous male body – helps to create and reinforce ideal worker norms that assume workers’ uncompromising commitment to paid employment.

Reinforcing separate spheres ideology are the sanctions that men face in their everyday interactions when engaging in care. Indeed, for mothers who work, their motherhood status might be a fairly salient role in the workplace context, rendering a caregiving-related exit unsurprising and altogether consistent with how our society views women (i.e. as mothers, caregivers). On the other hand, “men’s status as fathers doesn’t enter into everyday conversations in the same way. So for a mother to say she has to leave because of child care would feel natural, but for a father to say so would feel like it was coming from left field” (Williams 2010: 60). Empirical research supports the idea that fathers may be perceived negatively when participating in care work. In their examination of whether leave-takers are
perceived to be good organizational citizens, Wayne and Cordeiro (2003) examined perceptions of altruism – helping others with an organizationally relevant task such as providing support to coworkers – and generalized compliance – behaviours that indirectly help others within an organization such as attendance and working overtime. They found that female workers were not perceived negatively when they took leave because doing so is consistent with appropriate gender roles. On the other hand, male workers who took leave for a child’s birth were seen as less altruistic, relative to men who did not take leave and women who took leave for the same reason, while male raters also gave lower compliance ratings to father who took leave (Wayne and Cordeiro 2003). These differences in evaluation reflect separate spheres ideology and its prescriptions about women’s and men’s rightful places in society as caregivers and ideal workers, respectively. As I shall illustrate shortly, while many men are held accountable to ideal worker norms, professional and managerial fathers may be evaluated more strictly against these norms than blue-collar men or those who work in other types of white-collar work. Differences in the salience of the ideal worker norm may help account for differences in men’s leave use across occupations.

2.1.3. Performing as an Ideal Worker means being a Good Father

While it might seem that fathers – because of the expectations they face to perform as ideal workers – could be vulnerable to the accusation that they are not adequately caregiving, the opposite is the case. Fatherhood is normatively defined in terms of care-through-provision (i.e. breadwinning). Whereas motherhood is culturally and morally (Doucet 2006) defined as “child centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labour-intensive, and financially expensive” (Hays 1996: 8), a normative image of motherhood that all but precludes paid work, being a good (morally upstanding) father means being a good provider (Doucet 2006; Lamont 2000; Townsend 2002; Williams 2010). As one caregiving father succinctly puts it, “There’s a certain
male imperative to be bringing in money, to feel like you are actually caring for your family, a sense of providing” (Doucet 2006: 195). Fathers have identified being a good provider as even more important than emotional closeness, protection and endowment (of opportunities and attributes) in terms of the things they do for their children, expressing their feelings of responsibility towards breadwinning. In this context, caregiving takes on an alternative form from how it is usually conceived (i.e. in terms of emotional closeness, for example). The care that fathers engage in comes in the form of not only being able to purchase the necessary things for living, but also in terms of enabling the security that comes with financial stability, the provision of opportunities, and setting up the conditions for mothers to stay home (Townsend 2002). The importance of breadwinning to fathers’ identity renders the ideal worker norm normal. In other words, it can act as a standard for guiding behaviour that goes unquestioned because if there is nothing more important to a father than being able to provide for his family, in theory at least, there should be no other competing imperatives on his time. Breadwinning is his duty as a father.

The relationship between paid work, caregiving and fatherhood is reinforced by several factors. First, unlike women, men may be seen as “plugged in” when they appear in family life but they do not carry family memberships with them to work in the same way that working women do (Moss Kanter 1989). In other words, they appear in the working world as separate, unattached, and autonomous employees and are assumed to exist as such. At the same time, this appearance of autonomy does not prevent their inclusion in family life. The normative link between fatherhood and breadwinning is so strong that in many cases, fathers may actually receive ‘daddy bonuses’ in pay (Correll, Benard and Paik 2007; Hodges and Budig 2010), attesting to the fact that not only are fatherhood and paid work culturally associated, but
fatherhood may actually give men an advantage in paid work if men with children are seen as more committed, stable and responsible (Townsend 2002). And indeed, absence from caregiving and family life, for work-related reasons is more often seen as defensible and legitimate for men than women (Moss Kanter 1989; Townsend 2002). This is related to the fact that within the family, men’s paid work is often perceived as more important and essential to family functioning as compared with women’s paid work, which can be seen as supplementary and non-essential (Townsend 2002).

2.1.4. Norms of Masculinity

It is not just men’s parental status as fathers that is strongly linked to paid work, but also their status as men more broadly – their masculinity. For many men, their sense of worth and of who they are links inextricably to paid work (Doucet 2006; Townsend 2002: 118). As Williams poignantly states “a man who fails to perform as an ideal worker risks being seen as both a bad father and a failure as a man” (80). Masculine identity needs to be proven and re-proven by living up to conventional norms of masculinity and indeed men may feel pressure to engage in “continually occurring status negotiations” in order to keep or regain (lost) status (Williams 2010: 88; Ely and Meyerson 2010). Caregiving – being the low-status activity that it is – is unlikely to be drawn upon as a way to boost status (ibid) whereas paid work is likely to be one of the main ways fathers forge the battle for status and worth and mitigate risks of “losing face” (Williams 2010). If they shirk these norms, there are costs. In severe cases, when men fail to live

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5 This contrasts with motherhood, which can negatively affect how women are perceived in the workplace in terms of commitment and can lead to unequal outcomes in terms of pay (Budig and England 2001; Waldfogel 1998) as well as hiring and advancement (Correll, Benard and Paik (2007). In fact, bias and discrimination against mothers – “maternal wall bias” – has been extensively documented to the point where it is now seen as having replaced glass ceiling bias as the major source of workplace discrimination against women (Williams and Segal 2003).
up to conventional masculine norms, they may be subject to harassment or exclusion on the part of other men. In more mundane instances, men simply may feel inferior and unworthy.

What is “conventional” and used as the standard measuring stick for evaluating men’s gender performance (West and Zimmerman 1987) is hegemonic masculinity, which varies across time and space, but provides a set of accepted and expected behaviours to which men can be held accountable by themselves and other members of society (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832). It is normative, prescribing appropriate ways of being male and proscribing non-hegemonic masculine behaviours. This version of masculinity is contextually specific, but can generally be thought of as whatever is “not feminine” (Doucet 2006), thereby excluding caregiving as one possible activity in which to participate. As Connell and Messerschmidt note, “[hegemonic masculinity] embodie[s] the currently most honored way of being a man, it require[s] all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimate[s] the global subordination of women to men” (832). Performing as an ideal worker is one of the main ways to enact and conform to hegemonic masculinity. The workplace context – as the arena which houses paid work – becomes tremendously important in these status negotiations. Indeed, as Williams (2010) articulates, “workplaces are gender factories where men forge and enact their masculinity” (88). Thus, for men, whose sense of worth is closely linked to and defined through paid employment – both as men and fathers – it is difficult to eschew the expectations of performing as an ideal worker which entails privileging paid work commitments over caregiving ones. Though, as I will show shortly, these two sets of norms – norms of masculinity and the ideal worker norm – may be more salient in blue-collar and white-collar occupations, respectively, and this may differentially affect fathers’ use of parental leave.
Thus, while it is the actual fact of having a child that prompts parents to consider how they are going to balance their caregiving responsibilities with their paid work, it is “workplace norms and practices that pressure men into breadwinner roles and women out of them” (Williams 2010: 2). When men do take on the primary care of children, they take the precautionary measure of framing it as a temporary departure from what is normatively expected due to contingencies outside of their control (i.e. deskilling) or as a temporary step that would put them back on the right career track (Townsend 2002:40). Otherwise, they may be met with sanctions. As one stay-at-home father confirms, “there is a sense that if a man stays home there is something wrong with him, he’s lost his job, or he’s a little off kilter [sic]. It’s not his job. He shouldn’t be there” (Doucet 2006: 138).

Even with temporary departures, however, men still may be policed by members of the organization to conform to masculinity and ideal worker pressures. In her study of equally shared parenting, Deutsch (1999) documents several examples of fathers who faced disapproval on the part of coworkers for engaging in caregiving or, stated differently, “for putting their masculinity on the line” (90). Much of this criticism came from colleagues who questioned men who left work early, or refused to attend meetings outside of regular work hours, to care for children (Why couldn’t their wives do it?) with expressions of disapproval ranging from explicit reprimand to more subtle glances of displeasure. Even men who normally put in long hours faced disapproval for occasionally privileging family over work. Men were criticized even more so when they sacrificed money for children, as in the case of one father who left a secure job to do freelance work in order to spend more time with family only to be ridiculed. As one father explained, “at his job real men don’t take care of sick children” (88). Indeed, men are viewed as
wimps if they are seen as “caving in” to the demands of their wives, who are perceived as having too much power and control (90).

2.1.5. Cultural Norms and Occupational Class

The extent to which male workers are restricted by ideal worker norms and norms of masculinity in their family involvement varies depending on the occupational context. Indeed, the occupations within which fathers work can shape their views on caregiving more broadly, and on parental leave in particular. Moss Kanter (1989) explains that occupations “not only generate their own cultures and thus views of appropriate lifestyles, they also generate a characteristic outlook on the world because of the conditions in which they occur” (96). Indeed, occupations are important “socializers and teachers of values” (97). People’s occupations provide particular subcultures and identities that can become internalized to the point that they appear as personality traits. In the context of caregiving, both professional/managerial workers and manual labourers might be expected to avoid parental leave, but for different reasons relating to their respective occupational cultures. While both professional/managerial workers and blue-collar workers are held accountable to ideal worker norms and norms of masculinity, the former might be more salient for professional/managerial occupations while the latter might be more salient in the case of blue-collar jobs.

2.1.6. Professional-Managerial Workers

Professional/managerial and high-status white-collar workers have a different orientation to work, as compared with blue-collar workers. Like blue-collar men whom I will discuss shortly, upper middle-class workers are concerned with providing, but important differences also exist between these two groups of workers in their respective values. For example, self-actualization – an emphasis on being all you can be – is an important element of upper-middle class culture (Lamont 2000). Consistent with this, professionals and managers exhibit a strong
work orientation – they work for work’s sake and not simply to pay the bills. This ideal worker orientation makes sense when workers have more control and autonomy in the work that they do and it manifests in a long-hours culture and high performance standards. These pressures are illustrated in Marianne Cooper’s study of Silicone Valley Fathers (all “knowledge workers”, the vast majority of whom had university degrees), who testify to the social pressure they face to maintain a strong work orientation. Indeed, long hours are especially important, as noted by one interviewee: “There’s a lot of see how many hours I can work, whether or not you have a kid… He’s a real man; he works 90-hour work weeks. He’s a slacker; he works 50 hours a week” (382). In terms of performance, Cooper found that in their perceptions and management of work and family, these fathers displayed a “nerd masculinity” – manifested in technical expertise (see also Ely and Meyerson 2010) and actual or perceived social ineptitude. Fathers were held accountable to this masculine way of being in the workplace, which in turn determined their lack of involvement in the family (381). As Cooper notes, “[In the valley], men compete in cubicles to see who can work more hours, who can cut the best code, and who can be most creative and innovative” (382).

For Silicone Valley professionals, flawless performance as a normative standard became internalized to the point where workers’ standards of performance for themselves were measured by this expectation. The workers who met this standard became the ‘go-to guys’ that other team members could rely upon because they seemed to be wholly committed and lacking family responsibilities that may conflict with that identity. Cooper describes them as addicts – always ready and willing to go, but also free of other constraints. In reality, these men did have families

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6 It could be argued that social ineptitude is part of the distancing process from social-relational practices, such as caregiving, which works to bolster the identity of competent worker over relational caregiver.
and their accompanying responsibilities and constraints. Thus, in order to remain the celebrated “go-to guys” (i.e. ideal workers), some fathers lead lives of exhaustion, remained silent about their care demands, or simply ignored them\(^7\).

A difference between blue- and white-collar occupational cultures that might be expected to facilitate professional/managerial fathers’ participation in caregiving is the greater flexibility that can accompany this kind of work. Fathers indeed acknowledge flexibility as facilitating participation in parenting but at the same time admit that they often do not use the flexibility measures available to them (Townsend 2002). In his ethnography of a cohort of American fathers from the same high school, Townsend (2002) found that these fathers – similar to Cooper’s interviewees – emphasized concern about upward mobility as a reason for not engaging in participant fathering. Lamont (2000) provides evidence for the same concern among professionals and managers for success and upward mobility (25). This could be related to the fact that in the white-collar occupational context, workers consist of individuals who have invested considerable time and resources (financial and otherwise) into the development of their human capital. The compensation for their long period of training and credentialing is promotions, but these can be a scarce resource in an organization. Employers therefore can successfully demand total commitment on the part of workers that can absorb their lives and render caregiving secondary. Organizations have an interest in demanding total commitment from their workers, especially those highly trained individuals, the “well-paid people – the least

\(^7\) A fourth, less common response to the responsibilities of family was to opt-out of the career fast track altogether, as in the case of one father. Notably, however, this father still framed the opting-out in terms of conventional masculinity whereby success is measured in terms of paid work. After quitting his job in Silicone Valley, he was forced to renegotiate aspects of his identity, and had to convince himself “that it was okay to fail” (402, italics mine).
replaceable, with the most control over the organization’s resources” (Moss Kanter 1989: 82). In other words, high-level white-collar occupations can demand ideal worker performance from their workers and their workers – having internalized the values of these occupations – will comply with these demands.

2.1.7. Manual Labourers

The occupational context within which blue-collar labourers work is one of increasing economic insecurity. The steady decline of living standards since the 1970s resulting from the stagnation in blue-collar employment (and corresponding increases in service-sector jobs), the contraction of the welfare state (Lamont 2000), frequent lay-offs and stagnating wages (Williams 2010) and rapidly changing workplaces due to globalization and technological advancement (Crompton and Vickers 2000; Gibson and Papa 2000; Jones 2007), have generated considerable economic uncertainty in the lives of blue-collar and manual labourers. In her study of the morality of working-class men, Lamont (2000) found that in the face of this uncertainty, it is through “work and responsibility that they assert control” (23). Being a disciplined breadwinner – waking up every morning and doing the same thing day in and day out to provide for their families– is how these men characterize themselves and others whom they respect. It provides a way of exercising control over an insecure existence and is therefore, a source of pride. As Lamont (2000) notes, “because providing cannot be taken for granted – budgets are tight, bills accumulate, emergencies happen – workers value it as an achievement, and they take consistency in being able to provide for the family to be proof of moral fortitude and masculinity” (34-35). Within this workplace context characterized by insecurity and survival, taking a period of leave from work for the purposes of caregiving might seem counter-intuitive, especially when, according to separate spheres ideology, there is a woman able to fill the caregiving role.
While hard work is a source of honour, self-respect and control, it also signals fathers’ care for others, and in particular, their families. As discussed above, providing for one’s family is central to men’s conceptions of themselves as good men and good fathers. Professionals and managers express a similar set of values, but the family orientation of blue-collar workers is especially pronounced because the private sphere represents the space in which men and fathers are able to exercise more control and have more value. Indeed, unlike professional/managerial occupations, whose employees are invested in performing as ideal workers, working-class men may gain more of their sense of worth from their family involvement. This is not to say that working-class men do not feel pressure to perform as ideal workers, but rather, that they may get greater gains from participation in family life, relative to professionals/managers who have invested more time into getting where they are and who therefore potentially have more to gain in terms of upward mobility.

Given the pronounced family orientation of blue-collar workers, it might be expected that working-class men spend more time at home with family. Greater family participation is in fact documented amongst emergency medical technicians who practice “private fatherhood”, in addition to the public fatherhood exhibited by physicians. That is, these fathers participated in their children’s daily care, in contrast to the high-level, white-collar doctors who put an emphasis on attending their children’s public events (Shows and Gerstel 2009). At the same time, family attachment for blue-collar men can also be conceived through provision and through maintaining the separate spheres model as discussed earlier. Indeed, for some fathers, care-through-provision represents a way of demonstrating care without threatening masculinity. Notes one working-class man: “Family is very important in my life. You need to work to support your family… I don’t care, what I have to do, I’ll go out and do it to support my family” (29). This same man extolled
his wife for staying at home with kids, which he thought was “right” and positioned families with two working parents in opposition to his own, as families who do not care about children. Thus these men had an overriding commitment to family, manifested through their provision, and found greater satisfaction in family life, as compared with upper middle-class men. As Lamont notes, “a key indicator of moral character is how committed one is to one’s family and what one is ready to sacrifice to this goal. Many equate a high equality of family life with ‘being able to keep the wife at home’” (31). Working-class men define themselves in opposition to professionals and managers – and their presumed careerist and materialist orientations – as moral men who have the riches of family instead of financial wealth (Lamont 2000; Townsend 2002; Williams 2010). For them, work is about paying the bills and not self-actualization (Townsend 2002; Lamont 2000).

Maintaining separate spheres is not only a symbol of particular values, but continues to be a symbol of class privilege as well, because it means the wife can stay at home, by choice. By leaving work to attend to child care – which would seem consistent with workers’ privileging family over work – men may be signaling several things. First, in violation of separate spheres, one’s female partner must be in paid employment if she is unable to rear the children, indicating that one’s wage is not sufficient to meet the lone breadwinner ideal. Second, because investment in family and masculine identity are both signaled through paid work, by engaging in caregiving, a female-typed, lower-status activity, workers may be undermining their socially prescribed role in the heterosexual family and in doing so, their masculine identity. Working-class men may also face more explicit evaluation against norms of hegemonic masculinity because these workers may actively shirk a more liberal and progressive ideology and rhetoric emphasizing gender
equality that otherwise acts as a veneer of civility amongst professional/managerial workers (Townsend 2002).

Indeed, in addition to the economic insecurity faced by working-class men and their pronounced orientation to family, these workers are also employed in occupations dictated by salient masculine norms. Masculine norms are likely more salient in blue-collar occupations because of the cultural association of physical labour and masculinity: dangerous physical labour is the “sine qua non of masculinity” (Ely and Meyerson 2010: 4). Occupations in emergency response (such as firefighting and police work), in manufacturing and construction, amongst others, evoke “the dominant cultural image of the ideal man: autonomous, brave, and strong” (ibid) and men are encouraged to demonstrate these characteristics in order to establish their worth. Blue-collar men are then held accountable to these norms through the sanctions they face – in the form of teasing and harassment by superiors, coworkers, family and friends – when they have attempted to take on some or all of the caregiving responsibilities. Attesting to these conservative occupational contexts, Deutsch (1999) in her study of equal sharers, notes the difficulty faced by alternating-shift fathers: “These fire fighters, police officers, electricians, mechanics, and factory workers spend more time taking care of their children than other man, but they also live in social worlds that hardly even pay lip service to changing gender roles” (93). In these environments, men may be questioned for their involvement (“Why don’t you let your wife [change the diapers]?” (93)), teased by other men, who will call participant fathers “pussy-whipped” and “wuss”, and sanctioned in the form of snickers in the background when a wife calls her husband at work to ask where the kids are (ibid). In occupational contexts where “a sense of male bravado [is] spoken into existence by the workers” (Gibson and Papa 2000: 76), where only “real men can make it” and where physically demanding hard work and wholesale
commitment (as evidenced in “50-55 hour work weeks with few vacations, no sick days, and no personal days” (76)) serve as displays of masculinity, fathers may find it difficult to admit to colleagues and supervisors that they are taking time off to care for their child. As one former blue-collar worker and current anthropologist put it, “It makes sense to me that working class men would be less forthcoming about their family responsibilities on the job than woman would. On the factory floor,… [m]en’s status as fathers doesn’t enter into everyday conversations in the same way. So for a mother to say she has to leave because of child care would feel natural, but for a father to say so would feel like it was coming from left field. It would be embarrassing, like making a loud fart in church” (Williams 2010: 60). Another study looking specifically at parental leave, found that working class men in Norway face social expectations to avoid parental leave because it indicates, as articulated by one of the study’s interviewees, “what you as a man are interested in… Perhaps it is not very ‘macho’ to stay home to care for a baby when you are part of the tough male environment by the quayside” (Brandth and Kvande (2002): 200, italics in original). Indeed, the authors note, in reference to this working-class father, that he “works in a type of working-class environment where taking leave from work to care for children is not among the things a man should do. This sets important limitations on the freedom to act…” (200).

One source of the sanctions working-class fathers face may be the pressure to keep up in production lines, to keep the line moving, and at a more basic level, to show up to work in the first place (i.e. to be dependable) (Gibson and Papa 2000). As one blue-collar worker describes, “You walk in there and you know you’re not going to get days off. You know you’re not going to get sick days. You know that you don’t just say, ‘I’m not feeling good and I’m going home.’ If the person after you doesn’t show up [shift replacement], you know that you’re not leaving [the
production line]. Your group depends on you to keep the line going so you can’t just leave” (Gibson and Papa 2000: 79-80). Piece-rate systems may exaggerate the production pressures already felt in blue-collar occupational contexts, especially if norms exist that result in sanctions of work group members who fall above or below designated quotas. Falling above a quota makes other workers appear lazy and falling below – a case potentially brought on by conflicting family responsibilities – makes the worker who does so appear as a liability (Gibson and Papa 2000). Planned parental leave is certainly different than leaving unexpectedly for illness because the company can make plans to accommodate the leave-user, but the underlying ideal-worker logic of work-above-all-else could be expected to apply to absences for caregiving as well. In this sense, occupation-serving ideal worker norms (ibid) render caregiving not only unproductive and interfering – even with planning, it still requires coworkers to pick up the slack generated by the leave-taking employee (Brandth and Kvande 2002) – but also unmasculine, because masculinity is displayed fundamentally through hard work and commitment to paid employment. All told, the traditional masculine norms of working-class occupational contexts are not compatible with caregiving.

As Williams illustrates, it is not that fathers in general do not want to be involved. In both cultural productions and empirical research, there emerges the theme of fathers’ simultaneous desire to spend more time with their family and their inability to do so (see Williams 2010 for a brief review). In fact, for many fathers, there is a desire to spend more time with their children than their own fathers spent with them (Deutsch 1999; McKay and Doucet 2010; Townsend 2002). What is a likelier culprit of low participation in caregiving is the lack of social approval to do so. Fathers fear being perceived as non-committed and non-masculine, in light of ideal worker and masculine norms, if they take leave and this perception can have real consequences. For
example, Doucet and McKay (2010) recount that one father was fired after taking nine weeks of leave. Indeed, consistent with the “doing gender” perspective, both white and blue-collar fathers avoid caregiving because to do so would violate cultural norms of masculinity, norms to which they are held accountable (West and Zimmerman 1987). Norms are powerful and can go undetected, felt as a pressure or force pushing a particular course of action. As Cooper (2000) articulates, “the force causing them to work both surrounds them and is internalized by them, creating normative patterns, understandings, and definitions about work. These normative beliefs are so shared and internalized that the control strategy has no obvious or definite point of origin. Eerily, it is coming from everywhere and nowhere at the same time” (389). Ultimately, these norms help shape fathers’ expectations for themselves and others, cementing the traditional separation of family and work.

2.2. Structural Determinants of Men’s Leave Use

2.2.1. Sex Composition

In addition to cultural norms prescribing appropriate levels of participation in the work and family spheres, structural characteristics of the workplace context may influence fathers’ decisions around parental leave. One structural feature to consider is sex composition. Men in both blue-collar and high-status white-collar occupations are statistically more likely to be employed in male-dominated environments, helping to explain the salience and persistence of ideal worker and masculine norms. Blue-collar occupations, such as occupations in primary industry, in trades, transport, and equipment operations, and occupations unique to processing and manufacturing are all numerically male-dominated in Canada. Similarly, high-status, white-collar occupations, such as management and occupations in the natural and applied sciences are both majority male occupations in Canada (Statistics Canada 2011). Otherwise, occupations tend to be female-dominated, in the case of health occupations, occupations in social science,
education, government service and religion, sales and service occupations, business, finance and administrative occupations, or divided evenly between men and women, in the case of occupations in art and culture (Statistics Canada 2011). Sex composition may have an effect on men’s decisions around leave use for several reasons. First, with more women comes more of a precedent of leave taking. In female-dominated occupations, a leave-taking precedent is more likely to be generated because women are much more likely to use leave (Marshall 2008). Increased frequency of leave use could potentially reduce the social stigma and sanctions against taking caregiving-related absences that may otherwise be present (Bygren and Duvander 2006).

A second reason involves workers’ perceptions of workplace support more generally. Normally measured at the workplace level, Taylor (2010) examined the effect of occupational sex composition on perceptions of workplace support, which could reasonably be expected to affect workers’ use of leave policies. Workplace support was measured in terms of perceived help and support, as well as listening on the part of coworkers and information, help, support and listening on the part of supervisors. She found that on average, men working in female-dominated occupations perceived relatively high levels of workplace support, in comparison to mixed-sex occupations and male-dominated occupations. This might mean that fathers working in female-dominated occupations, such as health occupations, might receive more support on the part of coworkers and supervisors to take parental leave, though this was not the explicit conclusion drawn from this study.

2.2.2. Sector

A second structural characteristic of the workplace context that may influence fathers’ leave use is whether fathers’ employment is in the public or private sector. Public sector workplace may be positively associated with leave use for several reasons. First, in Canada, public-sector workplaces are more likely to give top-ups to their leave-taking employees, relative
to private-sector employers (Marshall 2010). Top-ups are additional benefits – deemed “supplementary (un)employment benefits”, or SUBs – that employers give to workers on leave above and beyond the amount given by the federal government. They are meant to make up some or all of the difference between previous earnings and the federal payment received under Employment Insurance (Marshall 2010). In 60 percent of Canada’s top 100 employers, men are offered these top-ups as well (Jermyn 2011). Second, public-sector employers may be less likely to discourage workers from using leave because of a reduced emphasis on the bottom-line, relative to private-sector work, a factor that is potentially put in jeopardy when employees take leaves of absence (Bygren and Duvander 2006). This may help explain the fact that employment in education, health and social service industries has been associated with increased likelihood of using parental leave (Lappegard 2008).

2.2.3. Size

Number of employees at the workplace may affect fathers’ use of leave because of the amount of resources that fluctuate alongside workplace size. If a period of absence entails replacement by another worker and/or a redistribution of the leave-user’s duties to other members of the work group, then having more resources (in money and workers) aids this process. Resources are required in order to hire and train a replacement and having a larger work group would likely facilitate duty redistribution. Small workplaces may lack the resources to easily handle replacement and/or sufficient work group sizes to redistribute the missing employee’s load without over-burdening one or two workers. Empirical research has indeed found that fathers employed in organizations with fewer than 20 employees were only one third as likely to take leave as those working in organizations with 500 or more workers, possibly reflecting the difficulty small workplaces may have in providing replacement staff (Whitehouse et al. 2007).
2.2.4. Type of Contract

It could be expected that permanent employment would be associated with a higher rate of leave use, a finding reported elsewhere (Whitehouse et al. 2007), given its greater financial security, as well as its greater likelihood of job protection. Non-permanent jobs (temporary/term; seasonal; casual) are often time-limited and it therefore would make sense if they did not guarantee job protection while on leave. Further, these jobs are often associated with lower wages, making it potentially difficult to not only take leave, but to take longer periods of leave (Marshall 2003).

2.2.5. Union Membership/Collective Agreement Coverage

Union membership has been found to have significant effects on fathers’ use of parental leave, possibly due to protection of employees’ rights (Whitehouse et al. 2007).

2.3. Empirical Background

Empirical results support the significance of paid work, and specifically, of the workplace context to men’s parental leave behaviours. Indeed the work context can be considered a site in which a father weighs the possible reactions from workmates, supervisors, and the employer against whether he takes leave and the amount that he takes, if he takes it (Sundstrom and Duvander 2002). Mothers’ preferences figure prominently into this decision as well (McKay and Doucet 2010; Sundstrom and Duvander 2002), but this is established to be such a fundamental feature in most if not all leave-taking situations that the variation between fathers in terms of their use and length of leave is more likely to be related to the variation in workplace contexts and their associated norms.

In their study of Swedish parents, Bygren and Duvander (2006) investigated how the workplace situations of both parents affect fathers’ parental leave use. They found that the workplace situation of fathers was more important than that of mothers: fathers working in the
private sector, in small organizations, in male-dominated workplaces, and in organizations where no leave-taking precedent exists were less likely to use leave. The only variable found significant for mothers’ workplaces was whether it was female-dominated, in which case, women’s partners were found to take shorter leaves. Other than workplace variables, there were also significant effects found for both partners’ incomes, mothers’ education, and mothers’ seniority. Other researchers (Naz 2010) have found significant effects of father’s workplace type on the use of parental leave, where fathers working in female-dominated professions (teaching, health or social services) tended to use more gender-neutral leave than fathers working in male-dominated professions, testifying to the importance of workplace-specific traditions and norms in contributing to decisions around parental leave use. Importantly, workplace type was not found to have a significant effect on individual-entitlement paternity leave, likely due to differences in how the two leaves are perceived\(^8\). There was no significant relationship between mothers’ workplace type and father’s paternity quota or fathers’ use of gender-neutral leave. This same study found significant effects for marital status, mothers’ full-time work, mothers’ education and their incomes on fathers’ use of gender-neutral leave. Fathers’ gender-neutral leave use also decreases with number of children, which is consistent with other studies that have found fathers use a larger portion of parental leave if it is for the first child, relative to the second or third, 

\(^8\) As some researchers have noted, workplace may be especially relevant for parental leave compared to paternity leave, or ‘fathers’ quota’ (Naz 2010). In both cases, fathers are absent from work, generating costs for both employers and colleagues in the form of lost productivity and extra work for coworkers. However, important differences between the two lie in the non-transferability of the paternity leave, which, if not used may be perceived as a waste of an individual entitlement. Norms may emerge that define paternity leave as a period of caregiving that must be taken, or else fathers lose it (ibid). Gender-neutral leave, on the other hand, is often seen as the mother’s entitlement, with the residual, or unused portion going to the father if she decides not to use it (Sundstrom and Duvander 2002). For this reason, it may be seen as optional, relative to the use-it-or-lose-it paternity leave.
potentially due to the positive relationship between gender-based specialization in the household and number of children (Sundstrom and Duvander 2002).

An important study for considering the relationship between workplace culture and the division of parental leave was done by Haas, Allard, and Hwang (2002). They examined the effect of organizational culture on the use of parental leave by fathers in six Swedish private enterprises. Strong independent effects on men’s likelihood of using leave were found for the extent to which company values were consistent with an ethic of caring, the ‘father-friendliness’ of the company’s policies and practices, the company’s position on equal opportunity for women, fathers’ perceptions of the supportiveness of top management, perceived flexibility and adaptability on the part of work groups in responding to fathers’ desire to use leave, and results-based performance evaluations rather than evaluations based on time spent at the workplace. However, they caution that the degree of variance explained was low, relative to that of individual and family-level variables (partner’s willingness to share leave, father’s preferences, lack of financial constraints), underlining the importance of considering these types of predictors as well. The authors speculate that the importance of these variables could relate to ambiguous work contexts, in which both supportiveness of leave and valuation of visible time at work were perceived on the part of fathers. In the face of this contradiction, a father may turn to more concrete decision-relevant criteria, such as what he and his partner want and what they can afford. The ‘masculine ethic’ of organizations was not found to be influential – perhaps because increasingly organizations see the business case (i.e. that work-family reconciliation measures can give a competitive edge to companies looking to secure the best personnel) for allowing parents to use tools of work-family balance, such as parental leave. This finding is in tension with other findings that point to the importance of sector in predicting fathers’ use of leave.
(Bygren and Duvander 2006; Plantenga and Remery 2005; Whitehouse, Diamond and Baird 2007) as a masculine ethic – emphasizing corporate profits and market competitiveness – is typically associated with private sector organizations, rather than public ones. Finally, men’s own attitudes were important predictors in the number of days they took.

Studies outside of Europe have found similar results for effect of workplace context on fathers’ use of parental leave. In their study of Australian fathers, Whitehouse, Diamond and Baird (2007) observed that the most consistent statistically significant influences on fathers’ use of leave were employment characteristics. Specifically, fathers working in small organizations and in non-permanent positions were less likely to use parental leave. At the same time, factors that were seen to increase their leave uptake included employment in the public sector and union membership. Importantly, and consistent with several of the other studies presented here, mothers’ employment characteristics were not found to be influential on fathers’ use of leave. The authors argue that this is perhaps related to the short leave periods typically taken by Australian fathers. Finally, this study also found significant effects for having more than one child in the family.

Two Canadian studies have examined fathers’ use of parental leave. The first one, a quantitative study, examined predictors of parental leave use in Canada. Marshall (2008) found that Quebecois fathers were 10 times more likely to use leave, relative to fathers outside of

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9 While several of these studies emphasize the importance of fathers’ characteristics, and especially father’s workplace, Lammi-Taskula (2008) has noted the relevance of mothers’ characteristics. In particular, mother’s socio-economic position, and particularly her occupational position, has been found to be a greater predictor of father’s parental leave use than the father’s socio-economic position. This same study found significant effects for father’s gender ideology as well. Another study done in Norway pointed to the importance of mothers’ incomes and the gender balance in breadwinning as predictors of fathers’ leave use (Lappegard 2008). However, this study was conducted in Norway, and at the time of the study, father’s eligibility for leave was still dependent on the mother’s work status, but not vice versa. This could potentially explain some of the strong effects found for mother’s labour market characteristics.
Quebec. The higher claim rate in that province is undoubtedly related to the implementation of the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan in 2006 (discussed below), but also likely reflects cultural differences given the high claim rate pre-QPIP (32 percent of Quebecois fathers claimed in 2005, compared to 13 percent of fathers outside of Quebec). These findings are also consistent with Quebecois fathers’ greater participation in housework, more generally (Brayfield 1992). As mentioned above, Quebec fathers may be more likely to claim benefits, but they appear to use a lower share of the parental leave, relative to fathers outside of Quebec. Marshall also found significant effects of education of parents, though after controlling for income and maternal receipt of benefits, this effect disappeared. Indeed, the main reason fathers did not claim benefits was “money-related matters”. As well, Marshall found significant effects for mother’s preferences on fathers’ use of leave and fathers’ inability to take time off from work as reasons behind no leave use. Although this study remains the only quantitative analysis (to my knowledge) of fathers’ leave use in Canada and therefore provides invaluable insights into the gendered division of childcare in this country, the data employed did not allow for investigation of workplace context, which, as evidenced in the European studies, is relevant to fathers’ use of leave. The sample examined in this case was also more restrictive than my sample using the SLID data. Its target population consisted of mothers living with a spouse and children less than 13 months of age whereas my sample includes all fathers, regardless of marital status and age of children.

The second Canadian study – a qualitative examinations of couples’ decisions about who uses parental leave and for how long – found that couples negotiate leave based on the mother’s preferences (prioritized by biological factors such as breastfeeding), workplace and community
norms and ideologies that emphasize traditional patterns of caregiving/breadwinning, as well as the policy structure (Mckay and Doucet 2010).
3. Parental Leave Policy in Canada

The history of parental leave in Canada begins with the introduction of maternity benefits (through Bill C-229) in 1971. Eligible new mothers\(^\text{10}\) were entitled to 15 weeks of benefits, following a two-week waiting period, paid at a rate of 66% of previous insurable wages, to a ceiling amount of $150 per week. This rate of remuneration fell to 60% in 1978. In 1983, adoptive parents became eligible for 15 weeks of paid benefits and in 1990, 10 weeks of parental benefits to be shared between parents were introduced, in addition to the existing 15 weeks set aside for mothers. Both parents were required to serve a two week waiting period prior to receipt of benefits. The replacement rate remained at 60 percent but by the mid-90s, it had been reduced to its current rate of 55 percent. In 1997, the eligibility condition changed from 20 weeks (with at least 15 hours per week) to 700 hours (20 weeks at 35 hours/week). This requirement was reduced again to 600 hours in 2001, the same year parental benefits were extended from 10 weeks to 35 weeks (the current length of time), a period that can be shared between biological or adoptive parents. As an incentive to sharing the parental leave period, the two-week waiting period is no longer required by both parents. The year of 2001 also saw a new rule allowing claimants to earn up to 25 percent of weekly employment insurance earnings with no reduction in benefits (Phipps 2006).

Currently in Canada there is a 50 week paid leave period available for new parents (birth or adoptive). Fifteen of those weeks remain designated for the mother, under maternity leave (Service Canada, 2010). The remaining 35 week period, parental leave, can be shared by the couple in whatever way they choose. The benefits received from the federal government during

\(^{10}\) Mothers were eligible for maternity benefits if they had 20 weeks of insurable employment earnings with at least 15 hours per week or 20 percent of maximum insurable earnings (Phipps 2006).
the leave period are paid at a rate of 55% of the claimant’s previous insurable earnings, an amount that under Employment Insurance cannot exceed $485.00 per week or $45,900.00 per year (Service Canada, 2011). Because of this low rate of remuneration, couples often decide that the mother will take the majority or all of the 35 week period. This is often the case because women tend to have lower earnings than men and in order to reduce income loss couples try to avoid applying the 45% pay cut to the highest earner (Marshall, 2008).

Canada’s model of parental leave falls between what Brighouse and Olin Wright (2008) label equality-impeding policies and equality-enabling policies. The first includes unpaid leaves that all but ensure that mothers will be the ones using them whereas the second offers generous paid parental leave to families as units (instead of in the form of individual entitlements). Canada’s parental leave scheme has the benefit of offering wage replacement and family-based entitlements11 (aligning it with equality-enabling policies) but the rate of payment is fairly low relative to Scandinavia12, considered the champion in terms of equality-enabling policies. The third model – equality-promoting policies – has yet to be implemented anywhere and involves actively putting pressure on families to move towards a more gender egalitarian division of childcare. A radical example of this model is Brighouse and Wright’s proposal that each parent’s leave use be contingent on the other parent’s leave use. For example, if mothers wanted to take leave beyond an initial one-month recovery period from childbirth, fathers would have to as well and the length of time allocated would be contingent on the length of the other parent’s leave.

11 Family-based entitlements are those that are provided to families as units, rather than to individual members of the family. The latter are known as individual entitlements. Canada’s parental leave period is an example of a family-based entitlement because it is a period available to both parents, unlike maternity or paternity leaves, which are allocated to individual mothers and fathers.

12 In terms of parental leave, Sweden offers an individual entitlement of 480 days to each parent, paid at a rate of 80 percent of an employees’ salary up to a maximum of 390 days. In Norway, parents can receive 80 percent of their previous earnings for 39 weeks. In Denmark, each parent is entitled to 32 weeks, paid at a rate of 90 percent (See Plantenga and Remery 2005 for a full review of leave policies across Europe).
In Quebec, there are some significant differences. Under the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP), implemented in 2006, there is some flexibility in how parents can choose to claim benefits: parents have the option of partaking in either the Basic Plan or the Special Plan. The former offers a longer period of time at a lower rate of remuneration whereas the latter offers fewer weeks of time at a greater rate of wage replacement. For example, under the Special Plan the benefits received could be up to 75% of a claimant’s previous insurable earnings for a shorter period of leave (Gouvernement du Québec 2009). Alternately, parents can take 55 weeks of leave paid at a rate of roughly 66%, under the Basic Plan. The maximum insurable amount is $66,000/year or $698 per week. Under QPIP, a paternity leave (5 or 3 weeks) is also offered, a period of non-transferable leave available exclusively for the father. If this period of leave is not used by the father, it is not transferred to the mother; the time is forfeited. Offering a “papa month” or “father’s quota” (Haas, Allard, and Hwang 2002: 322; OECD 2007) has been found to increase the rate of leave-taking amongst men. Indeed, offering a paternity leave is a direct way of addressing the normative expectation that mothers should be the exclusive providers of care. Benefits are available to the self-employed in both Quebec and in the rest of Canada. In Brighouse and Wright’s leave typology, Quebec’s plan would be placed somewhere between equality-enabling policies and equality-promoting policies. On the one hand, its rate of wage replacement is more generous, relative to the rest of Canada, and on the other, it goes towards making entitlements individually-allocated, rather than family-based, such that there is a small amount of pressure put on fathers to use their share of parental leave.

In the previous sections, I outlined why the workplace might be expected to affect Canadian fathers’ use of leave, arguing that professional-managerial and blue-collar workers face constraints that ultimately check their ability to take parental leave. Through a review of the
literature, I demonstrated how these constraints vary between types of occupational norms and workplace contexts, with professionals and managers facing greater ideal worker norms and blue-collar workers confronting norms of masculinity. Both sets of norms exist in opposition to female-typed activities such as caregiving and therefore create barriers to caregiving for new fathers. I further explored structural factors of the workplace context that might be expected to influence fathers’ use of leave, examining variables such as sex composition and workplace size. Through an examination of the empirical literature on fathers’ uptake of parental leave, I offered evidence for the important role of the workplace in inhibiting or facilitating men’s leave. I then positioned the discussion of cultural and structural features of the workplace context in the broader framework of Canadian parental leave policy.

Based on the preceding theoretical and empirical discussions, I propose the following hypotheses:

H₁: Fathers in professional-managerial occupations will be less likely to use parental leave, relative to fathers in white-collar, female-dominated occupations because of their internalization of ideal worker norms.

H₂: Fathers in blue-collar occupations will be less likely to use parental leave than fathers working in white-collar, female-dominated occupations because of their internalization of masculine norms, but will be more likely than professional-managerial workers because of their strong family orientation.

H₃: Fathers in white-collar, female-dominated sectors will take the longest parental leave periods, relative to blue-collar and professional-managerial fathers because of the advantages associated with work in the former, such as workplaces more habituated to and more supportive of caregiving-related absences.
H₄: Those fathers for whom one, or all, of the following apply – employment in the public sector, employment in large workplaces, employment in a permanent job, and/or union membership or coverage under collective agreement – will be more likely than fathers who are in the private sector, small workplaces, without permanent contracts, and not union-protected or covered under a collective agreement to use parental leave.

H₅: Those fathers for whom one, or all, of the following apply – employment in the public sector, employment in large workplaces, employment in a permanent job, and/or union membership/coverage under collective agreement – will be more likely than fathers who are in the private sector, small workplaces, without permanent contracts, and not union-protected or covered under a collective agreement to use longer periods of parental leave.

4. Data and Methods

4.1. Sample

The SLID samples all Canadians, excluding residents of the three territories, of institutions, and of Indian reserves. The sample consists of two overlapping panels (a new panel is introduced every three years, while each panel continues for a period of six years), each consisting of approximately 17,000 individuals. I incorporated three and a half panels into my sample: panels 3 (2002-2004); 4 (2002-2007); 5(2005-2009); and 6 (2008-2009). These panels were then pooled together. The reason I excluded the first half of panel three is that significant changes were made to the parental leave policy scheme in 2001, as described above. It was not part of my analysis to examine the effect of those changes (as this had been done by previous researchers; see Marshall 2008). Such a significant change could also confound my regression results as there would then be significant variation in fathers’ leave use not accounted for by the predictors I am testing. I also restricted my sample to men who reported a birth in the reference year. All variables are
linked by year to the reported birth(s). For example, if fathers reported several different jobs during the period of observation, only the job reported in the same year as the birth was entered into the analysis. My unit of analysis is therefore, men who reported a birth.

4.2. Variables

4.2.1. Dependent Variables\(^{13}\)

The two dependent variables I examined were use of leave and length of leave. The first was measured by a question asking respondents who reported an absence what the main reason was for their absence, with the possibility of answering “parental leave”. The number of fathers who reported a parental leave-related absence during the same year they had a birth was 256. In total, there were 2,715 fathers in the sample, leaving 2,459 fathers who did not report taking parental leave. The second dependent variable, length of leave, was measured in total number of weeks the absence lasted (n = 256, the same number of fathers who reported an absence due to parental leave). The mean number of weeks leave-users took was 8 weeks; the median number of weeks was 5 (reported because of the positive skew on the distribution of length). The means, frequencies and percentages of all variables are displayed in Table 1.

\(^{13}\) All descriptive statistics, with the exception of use of leave, are weighted using pweights. Pweights, or sampling weights, are weights that denote the inverse of the probability that the observation is included because of sampling design. The purpose of this is to account for under- or over-sampling of particular groups, relative to their proportion of the population. Weighting data is also a practice required by Statistics Canada when disclosing data from Research Data Centres.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>%, frequency or mean</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>%, frequency or mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental leave (unweighted)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Province of residence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>Canada (outside of Quebec)</td>
<td>76.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2459</td>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>23.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of leave (in weeks)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>13.60%</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>3.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>Married/common-law</td>
<td>96.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.10%</td>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.78%</td>
<td>More than one</td>
<td>65.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.71%</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>34.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.41%</td>
<td>Highest level of education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 and 8</td>
<td>12.69%</td>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>34.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 – 52</td>
<td>20.61%</td>
<td>grad or high school grad</td>
<td>35.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean length of leave (weeks)</td>
<td>7.98</td>
<td>University graduate</td>
<td>30.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Age category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-dominated, white-collar</td>
<td>39.62%</td>
<td>Not 30 – 34</td>
<td>64.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue-collar</td>
<td>36.48%</td>
<td>30 – 34</td>
<td>35.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional-managerial</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
<td>Mean age</td>
<td>30-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of employees</td>
<td></td>
<td>Major income earner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 20</td>
<td>41.45%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>24.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20</td>
<td>58.55%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>75.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union membership</td>
<td></td>
<td>Permanent job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of a union or covered by a collective agreement</td>
<td>28.21%</td>
<td>Not permanent</td>
<td>11.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>71.79%</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>88.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector of employment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Receipt of employment insurance benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>85.91%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>77.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>14.09%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings (mean)</td>
<td>$51,048.00</td>
<td>Return to work (mean)</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables (Means and Percentages)
4.2.2. Independent Variables

Occupation. Occupation was measured using the National Occupational Classification, divided into 10 possible job codes (e.g. management occupations; health occupations; etc.). I recoded it to form three categories reflecting my earlier theoretical distinctions. It is therefore a proxy measure for occupational culture. The categories are as follows: 1) Business, Finance, and Administrative Occupation; Health Occupations; Occupations in Social Science, Education, Government Service and Religion; Occupations in Art, Culture, Recreation and Sport; Sales and Service Occupations; 2) Trades, Transport, and Equipment Operators and Related Occupations; Occupations unique to Primary Industry; Occupations unique to Processing, Manufacturing, and Utilities; and 3) Management occupations and Natural and Applied Sciences and Related Occupations. In terms of numerical compositions, the first category is female-dominated and the latter two are male-dominated. The first category was the reference category. These categories reflect the earlier distinctions I made between occupational cultures. The reference category is largely comprised of white-collar and female-dominated occupations that could be expected to have reduced salience of masculine and ideal worker norms, relative to the other two categories. Category two represents working-class men and category three represents professionals/managers or high-level white-collar workers in male-dominated occupations.

Other Workplace Context Variables\(^{14}\). The variable measuring sector of employment (coded as 0 = private; 1 = public) should be associated with increased leave if fathers report public-sector employment. Roughly one quarter of leave-users reported employment in the public sector, compared to approximately 13 percent of non-leave users.

\(^{14}\) Industry – measured using the North American Industry Classification System – was originally going to be included as an independent variable but testing for collinearity revealed moderate linear dependency between occupation and industry (condition index of 7).
Number of employees is a categorical variable, with five possible categories, measuring the number of employees at a respondent’s place of work. I recoded it into a dummy variable, setting the lowest category (fewer than 20 employees) as the referent and collapsing the remaining categories together to represent workplaces with more than 20 workers. This reflects the fact that leave-users generally work in large workplaces. This sample is no different – most fathers who did not take parental leave (almost half) reported workplaces with fewer than twenty employees, compared to the majority of leave-users (roughly thirty percent) who reported working in workplaces with between 20 and 99 employees. A sizeable share of leave-users (just over a quarter) reported working in workplaces with between 100 and 499 employees, compared to just over 15 percent for non-leave users. Overall, leave-users reported larger workplaces which is consistent with previous findings pointing to the positive effect of workplace size on leave use (Whitehouse et al. 2007).

To measure whether permanent employment makes a difference in fathers’ use of leave, I included a dummy variable indicating whether job was permanent or not permanent (the reference category). The vast majority of both leave users and non-leave users reported permanent employment as their main type of employment, although 10 percent fewer non-leave users reported this status, relative to leave-users.

Another variable that has been found to have significant effects on fathers’ use of parental leave is union membership and collective agreement coverage. Respondents had three possible answers to choose from in terms of this variable: membership in a union and coverage under a collective agreement; coverage under a collective agreement, but not union member; and neither union membership nor union coverage. However, I recoded it into a dummy variable: 1 = union membership/collective agreement coverage; 0 = neither union membership nor collective
agreement coverage. This makes sense given that a large majority (nearly 75 percent) of non-leave users reported neither coverage, nor membership, compared to just over half of leave-users who reported the same status. At the same time, almost half of leave-users reported both union membership and collective agreement coverage while only about one quarter of non-leave users reported the same status.

Finally, in order to control for workplace support, a factor previously found to influence fathers’ leave use and length of leave (Haas et al. 2002), I merged in a variable measuring one aspect of workplace support from the General Social Survey (Cycle 20) as the SLID does not ask questions about workplace support. The question was part of a larger “return to work” module, asking respondents who took leave about particular factors that may have motivated their return to work. The question of interest was: Was it because you did not want to lose your job? Respondents could answer either Yes or No. I averaged responses by occupation (using the same level of aggregation as my independent variable) and merged this with the SLID data, including it in my analysis of length of leave.

**Individual-level Controls.** Age has been found to be associated with the use of parental leave with younger parents having a higher probability of sharing gender-neutral parental leave, and the age of the father being particularly important (Sundstrom and Duvander 2002). Age is measured categorically, with the mean age category for both leave-users and non-leave users being between 30 and 34 (i.e. the majority of fathers reported this age category). This is consistent with the Canadian average age for new fathers: 59 percent of new fathers fall between ages 30 and 39, reflecting the general trend of having children later (Ravanera 2008). Because of the use of age as a control, rather than a variable of central interest, and because of the
importance of the 30-34 age category, I collapsed categories to form a dummy variable: ages 30 – 34 was coded as 1 and all other ages as 0, the reference category.

Fathers were asked about their earnings\(^{15}\) (wages and salaries before deductions, as well as self-employment income). Mean earnings for leave-users was just under $45,000/year, compared to just over $50,000 per year for non-leave users. In much of the research, earnings play a role in determining the division of parental leave. In general, higher earnings seems to facilitate fathers’ leave use (Sundstrom and Duvander 2002), possibly indicating a greater ability to afford the cut in pay associated with leave. Alternately, fathers’ (higher) earnings could reflect their status and rank at work and a corresponding greater ability to use parental leave without adverse reactions from employers and colleagues (ibid).

Whether fathers are the major income earner may also impact upon leave use. Studies have found that in an attempt to reduce lost earnings, couples often decide the lower earner, usually the mother, will absorb the pay cut associated with parental benefits (Marshall 2008). Related to this motive of maximizing earnings, we might expect major income earner status to predict lower rates of leave, relative to the secondary earner. In the sample, both sets of fathers reported being the major income earner in the household – around 80 percent of leave-users and 75 percent of non-leave users report this status. The reference category is non-major earner.

Another variable related to earnings is whether respondents received benefits during their leave, measured by a binary indicator for whether the respondent received employment insurance benefits (0 = no, the reference category). This is important for distinguishing between respondents who took unpaid leave and those who received benefits. In Canada, length of job-protected leave falls under provincial jurisdiction, whereas the payment of benefits during that

\(^{15}\) For the analysis, earnings was scaled by 1000s in order to increase the size of coefficients.
time is regulated by the federal Employment Insurance program (Phipps 2006). It is therefore feasible that fathers could take job-protected leave without receiving benefits, but the receipt of benefits likely increases the length of leave respondents take. Of the fathers who reported taking leave, the majority (roughly 80 percent) reported receiving employment insurance benefits. The mean amount they reported was just over $2,500. However, amount of insurance benefits was not included in the analysis because of a large amount of missing data on this variable.

Other individual-level factors that may be relevant include number of children. Past research indicates that leave use is usually higher for the first child (Sundstrom and Duvander 2002), for reasons possibly related to the importance of the first child in conferring parental status. Based on the possible importance of the first child for using parental leave, I recoded this continuous variable into a dummy (1 child = 1; more than 1 = 0, the referent). Consistent with broader Canadian trends, the vast majority of both leave-users and non-leave users reported having three children or fewer. The mean number of children for leave-users was 1.8 children compared to non-leave users who reported, on average, having just over 2 children. Marital status may be another potentially important predictor: married and cohabiting fathers may be more likely to use leave, relative to single, separated, divorced or widowed fathers simply because they would then be more likely to have a partner earning money while they are caregiving. In past studies, marital status has been compared to cohabitation, with the former being a significant predictor of leave use (Naz 2010; Sundstrom and Duvander 2002); however, due to small sample sizes, I recoded marital status to combine the categories of married and living common-law. As well, all ‘single’ categories are lumped together (single, divorced, widowed, separated, never-married) as it is likely the fact of having a partner that helps determine whether a parent can leave their job to take leave. Single is the reference category. In
the sample, almost all of the fathers in both leave-using and non-leave-using categories reported being married or common-law.

Fathers’ level of education may impact upon leave use. Research has found that as fathers’ education increases, their leave use does as well (Naz 2010). This may relate to less traditional views that tend to accompany higher levels of education. In the current study, education was measured as a categorical variable with four possible responses (less than high school graduate; high school graduate; non-university, post-secondary certificate; university degree or certificate) although this was recoded to collapse less than high school and high school graduate. The majority of all fathers in the sample reported holding a non-university post-secondary certificate. Slightly more leave-users reported this status than non-leave users. The second most commonly reported category was holding a university degree or certificate for both groups of fathers and approximately the same proportion of fathers reported this status in both groups. The third most commonly reported category was graduation from high school; more non-leave users reported this status than leave-users. The same proportion reported having less than high school graduation (fewer than 10 percent).

Due to the two separate policy structures in Canada, province of residence can also be expected to have an effect on fathers’ use of leave (Marshall 2008) and is thus an important control. In the sample, just over half of fathers who reported taking leave reported their province of residence as Quebec. The remaining half was divided between the rest of Canada: close to 20 percent live in Ontario; approximately 10 percent report the Prairie provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta) as their home; the remaining 10 percent live in Atlantic Canada and British Columbia. For non-leave takers, around 40 percent report Ontario as their residence while Quebec and the Prairie provinces each have about 20 percent of non-leave takers. The remaining
20 percent are in the poles of British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces. Due to the importance of the Quebec-Canada distinction in potentially shaping leave use, I recoded this variable into a dummy indicator with Canada outside of Quebec as the referent.

I have not treated race-ethnicity as explanatory variables because other research has shown the remarkable homogeneity of fathers’ ideas towards fatherhood and breadwinning across these categories (Doucet 2006; Townsend 2002).

4.3. Analysis

I ran four models – one to test the effects of cultural and structural features of the workplace context on fathers’ use of parental leave, one to test the effects of individual-level variables on use of leave, one to test the effects of cultural and structural features of the workplace context on fathers’ reported length of leave, and one to test the effect of individual-level variables on length of leave. All models are based on bootstrapped data\(^{16}\). Most of the analysis was done using the data analysis software, Stata 10.

Use of leave. In order to test the effects of predictor variables on fathers’ use of leave, I ran two logistic regression models, which are appropriate for the prediction of binary outcomes (1/0). In this model, use of leave (the dependent variable) gets a value of 0 if fathers reported no parental leave in the birth year and 1 if they did. The coefficients ($\beta$) indicate the effect of each independent or predictor variable on the likelihood of the dependent variable occurring with bigger values indicating stronger effects. Changes in the odds ratios, $\text{Exp}(\beta)$, point to the degree of change in the likelihood of the dependent variable occurring if the value of independent

\(^{16}\) Weighting is done with bootstrap weights. Statistics Canada recommends the use of bootstrap weights to account for inflated standard errors resulting from the complex survey design of the SLID. Bootstrap weights are generated through repeated sampling of sampling units with replacement.
variable increases by one unit (Lammi-Taskula 2008). Exponentiated betas were calculated in Excel by exponentiating the base of the natural log ($e$) by the coefficient, $\beta$.

In the first model, I included occupation and the structural variables of the workplace context, such as sector and size. In the second model, I included these original variables, plus individual controls, such as age and sex. These models are displayed in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

*Length of leave.* The distribution of fathers’ length of leave indicated a high level of positive skew, with a clustering of values on the low end of the distribution and very few observations for higher values, pointing to the fact that the majority of leave-using fathers report few weeks of absence. The skewness of length and the fact that it is a count variable make it a good candidate for a Poisson model. However, a quick examination of summary statistics indicated that the variance is substantially greater than the mean, pointing to possible overdispersion. Overdispersion can lead to underestimation of the standard errors, and therefore raises the risk of making a type 1 error (i.e. concluding that variables are significant predictors when they are not) (Hilbe 2011; Hutchinson and Holtman 2005). In order to confirm the presence of overdispersion, I ran a poisson model, which generated a dispersion statistic$^{17}$ of 10.7, well above the cut-off of 1.0 recommended by Hilbe (2011). Negative binomial regression can provide a good alternative technique for count data that is positively skewed (and not clustered at zero) because it is based on the assumptions of a Poisson-like distribution, minus the assumption of equidispersion (Hutchinson and Holtman 2005). The interpretation for negative binomial models is the same as that for poisson models where a one-unit change in $x$ changes the

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$^{17}$ The dispersion statistic is the value of the Pearson ($\chi^2$) statistic divided by the degrees of freedom (Hilbe 2011) and can be generated by running a poisson model using the ‘glm’ command in Stata.
expected count by a factor of \( \text{Exp}(\beta) \). For example, in examining the relationship between earnings and number of weeks fathers take, we might say that for every thousand dollar increase in earnings, we see a corresponding exponentiated beta increase in the number of weeks taken.

In a similar fashion to the logistic models, I ran two negative binomial models, testing the effects of workplace context variables and occupation in the first model and adding in individual controls in the second. Neither the occupation or workplace context variables were significant so in fact the second model just includes individual-level variables. Both of these models are displayed in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.
5. Results

Table 2: Logistic Regression Testing Effects of Occupational and Workplace Context Variables on Fathers’ use of Leave.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Exp(β)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1 (N = 1808)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation (majority female)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades and Industry</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and Science</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>** 0.27</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 employees</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>** 0.24</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Member</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>** 0.20</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Job</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>*** 0.43</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings (scaled in 1000s)</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>*** 0.00</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

Table 3: Logistic Regression Testing Effects of Occupation, Workplace Context and Individual-level Variables on Fathers’ use of Leave.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Exp(β)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 2 (N = 1702)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation (majority female)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades and Industry</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and Science</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 employees</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>* 0.33</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Member</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Job</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>*** 0.60</td>
<td>8.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings (scaled in 1000s)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>*** 0.29</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One child</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 30-34</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Level of Education (high school or less)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-university postsecondary certificate</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University degree or certificate</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Income Earner</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received Benefits</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>*** 0.35</td>
<td>25.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

Results from the logistic regression indicate significant results for occupations in management and natural and applied sciences, relative to health occupations, occupations in the
social sciences, and other female-dominated, white-collar jobs, in predicting fathers’ use of leave (Table 2). Surprisingly, the coefficient is positive (β = 0.84, p < .01), indicating that fathers in these types of jobs are 2.3 times more likely to use parental leave, relative to workers in female-dominated occupations. This could be related to the fact that the occupations to which they are being compared – health occupations amongst others – could include a variety of jobs, including less well-paid assistant positions that are not necessarily associated with the conditions – such as the availability of top-ups – that promote parental leave use. Indeed, this relates to the broader issue of using this particular occupation variable which does not necessarily capture the within-group variation that a more finely detailed measure might tap into.

Several of the other predictor variables are also significantly related to leave use. First, number of employees is related to fathers’ use of leave: for fathers who reported workplaces with more than 20 employees, the odds of using leave, relative to not using leave, are just over 2 units higher than fathers who reported workplaces with 20 employees or fewer (β = 0.76, p < .01). Union membership is also positively related to fathers’ leave use (β = 0.65, p < .01): fathers belonging to unions or who are covered under collective agreements have almost 2 times the odds of using leave, relative to fathers who are not covered under unions or collective agreements. Not surprisingly, respondents who reported permanent jobs had higher odds of using parental leave (β = 1.66, p < .001), relative to respondents who reported non-permanent jobs. Their odds of using leave were nearly five and a half times the odds for non-permanent job-holders. This makes sense given the eligibility requirements for collecting employment insurance, including 600 hours of insurable employment. Finally, earnings is negatively related to leave use (β = - 0.02, p < .001), indicating that as income increases, the odds of using leave decreases. This might make sense if we consider that fathers earning higher incomes may work
in more demanding kinds of jobs, like management and professional jobs. However, the fact that management and professional work is positively associated with leave use undermines that hypothesis. What is more likely is that income – regardless of type of work – is a primary determinant of leave use. Consistent with past researchers’ findings on this topic (see Marshall 2008), fathers who earn significant amounts are unlikely to use leave because to do so entails having a wage penalty applied to their (potentially greater share of) earnings. At the same time, fathers with management jobs and fathers who work in natural and applied sciences are more likely to use leave, even after controlling for income, pointing to some underlying feature of these jobs, other than compensation, that shapes fathers’ leave use.

In the second model (Table 3), after adding in individual-level controls, some of the originally significant coefficients became non-significant, indicating that their portion of the variance explained is captured by other variables. For example, management and natural/applied science work is no longer significant. Number of employees in the workplace remains significant, but is reduced somewhat in its significance and the size of its coefficient\(^{18}\) (\(\beta = 0.69, p < .05\)). At the same time, permanent work, relative to non-permanent work, has a larger coefficient (\(\beta = 2.13, p < .001\)) than before (\(\beta = 1.66\)) and remains significant at the .001 level, pointing to the import of this variable for explaining fathers’ leave use. What is likely capturing some of the variation formerly accounted for by other workplace-level variables is receipt of employment insurance benefits. Fathers who received benefits were significantly more likely to use leave (\(\beta = 3.23, p < .001\)), relative to fathers who reported receiving no benefits. The size of the coefficient and its corresponding exponentiated beta point to the importance of this variable –

\(^{18}\) Mood (2009) warns against comparing coefficients across logistic models for the reason that these changes can also depend on unobserved heterogeneity. These results should therefore be interpreted with caution.
fathers receiving benefits had 25 times greater odds of using leave, relative to fathers who did not. At the same time, the direction of causality should be interpreted with caution because most leave-users receive benefits. Thus, it may not be the case that receipt of benefits predicts leave use, but rather that using leave predicts receipt of benefits. Unsurprisingly, province of residence is related to leave use. Relative to fathers in Canada (outside of Quebec), Quebecois fathers are significantly more likely to use leave (β = 1.13, p < .001), exhibiting odds three times higher than fathers outside of Quebec. This is consistent with what we would expect, given the greater flexibility, higher payment ceilings, and use-it-or-lose-it paternity leave of the Quebec policy structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors (reference category)</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Exp(β)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupation (majority female)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades and Industry</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and Science</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Member</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 employees</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Job</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to Work for fear of job loss</td>
<td>-3.32</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings (scaled in 1000s)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.
Results from the negative binomial model point to the relevance of individual-level variables for fathers’ length of leave (Table 5). The only predictors that are significant are number of children, major income earner and receipt of benefits. In the first case, fathers with one child are less likely to use longer leaves ($\beta = -0.55$, $p < .01$), relative to fathers with more than one child. Specifically, fathers with one child exhibit a decrease in the expected number of weeks they take by a factor of 0.57 units, relative to fathers with more than one child. This contradicts previous findings that point to the importance of the first and only children in predicting fathers’ leave use, but makes intuitive sense in that fathers with more children may see a greater need to stay home longer given the greater work load. Fathers who are the major income earner are more likely to use longer leaves ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < .01$), relative to fathers who are not major income earners. The expected number of weeks on the part of the former increases, on average, by a factor of 1.7 units, relative to non-primary earners. Finally and unsurprisingly, fathers who reported receiving benefits showed a significant increase in their length of leave ($\beta =$...
0.98, p < .05), relative to non-recipients. For benefit-receiving fathers, the length of their leave increased by a factor of 2.7.
6. Discussion and Conclusion

For Canadian fathers who work in high-level white-collar and blue-collar employment, there does not appear to be significant differences in the use and length of their parental leave, relative to fathers in female-dominated, low-level white-collar work. Although results indicated a positive and significant effect for fathers in management and science-related occupations on using leave, this effect disappeared upon the introduction of individual-level controls. Importantly, this study points to the relevance of variables previously found significant in parental leave research: larger workplaces, having a permanent job, living in Quebec, and receiving employment insurance benefits all significantly predict fathers’ use of leave. For fathers in both large workplaces and who have permanent work, the underlying reason explaining their increased use of leave is likely related to resources. Large workplaces simply possess the necessary resources to compensate for an absent employee (and therefore may be less likely to discourage fathers from using leave) while permanent work continues to be associated with greater availability of benefits. For fathers in Quebec, having access to a use-it-or-lose-it leave is likely behind their increased use of leave, but some commentators have also identified cultural aspects unique to Quebec (Marshall 2008; Brayfield 1992) that may help in encouraging fathers to take a more participant role in parenting. In terms of the length fathers take, the number of weeks increases when they have more, not fewer, children, when they are the major income earner, and when they receive employment insurance benefits. Having more children potentially provides parents with even greater reason to stay home if they lack sufficient child care or alternative kin care and their children are still young. Future research might test the effect of having multiple young children on fathers’ use of leave. Interestingly, this finding contrasts with previous findings pointing to a positive effect on leave use of having only one child. Being
the major income earner is also an unexpected result. Although previous findings have highlighted the negative effect primary breadwinner status has on leave for men, this finding makes more sense if we consider that non-primary earners may not be eligible to take parental leave. If the other partner is not employed for example, this would render them ineligible to collect benefits. Unsurprisingly, receipt of benefits increased length of leave. Neither the occupation, nor the workplace context variables were significant predictors of length of leave. One possible interpretation of this is that the workplace context (including occupational culture) may be influential on decisions around whether to take leave or not because this may represent the more difficult first step in the leave-taking process. Length of leave may be secondary, or not as stringently evaluated against cultural norms because the decision has already been made to take leave in the first place. If this were the case, it makes sense that variables influential on length of leave were individual factors.

Limitations of the study include a small sample size. Future research could usefully extend these results by employing a larger sample and a survey more narrowly focused on work context. In addition, one of the reasons for non-significance of the occupation variable might relate to the fact that I used a broad measure of occupation, instead of a more finely detailed measure. Using this measure fails to capture the variation that might exist between doctors and nurses, for example, when they both fall under the broad banner of “health occupations”. Because of this, this study was not able to capture the power dynamics underlying workers’ decisions to take advantage of workplace policy. For example, doctors have more autonomy than nurses, while nurses may be more constrained by administration. These dynamics could be expected to affect workers’ decisions to take a leave of absence from the workplace. Other limitations include the exclusion of partners from the sample. Indeed, several past studies have
found significant effects of women’s own workplace dynamics on fathers’ leave use (Bygren and Duvander 2006; Naz 2010).

Even though occupational culture was not significantly related to fathers’ parental leave use, this study nevertheless points to the importance of the workplace context in shaping family decisions about the gendered division of labour. Indeed, workplace features – especially structural characteristics such as size and having a permanent contract – do matter in shaping men’s leave use. This is not surprising given the sheer amount of time people spend at work and the practical concern of workplace resources in shaping workers’ leaves of absences. However, if expanding the size of workplaces, increasing the rate of permanent employment and changing provinces (because of differences in policy) are the keys to facilitating fathers’ leave use, then it may become challenging to move towards a more gender equitable model of caregiving. Indeed, individual-level solutions – relying on workplaces to expand and individuals to change locations (either to Quebec, or to secure a permanent contract) – may not be optimal if, as a society, we are striving towards a gender egalitarian model of participation in paid and unpaid work. Instead, the solution might be to adopt what Brighouse and Wright (2008) label “equality-promoting policy” – policy that could be adopted at the national level that not only allows both parents to take leave, but encourages it. Brighouse and Wright’s model creates contingencies because one parent’s leave use depends on that of other, beyond an initial period for mothers’ recovery. This model has been critiqued by some (Gheaus and Robeyns 2011) who decry its affront to individual freedom. As an alternative, Gheaus and Robeyns put forth a model based on “defaults”. Upon informing her employer of her pregnancy, the father too would inform his employer and be given 4 weeks of leave. This period of leave would be taken immediately following the birth so that the father has an opportunity to cultivate the experience and skills in
caregiving crucial for an equitable division of labour down the road. In addition, a longer period of parental leave would be offered to both parents – 5 non-transferable months for the mother, and then 5 non-transferable months for the father, in that order (due to the possibility of breastfeeding during the initial period). Key to their proposal is that all three periods of leave – maternity, paternity, and parental leave – would be given by default to all expecting parents through an online registration system, once they inform their employers of their due date. There would be the possibility of opting out, but as Gheaus and Robeyns point out, people generally “choose” to do what is already in place as opting out generates costs of time and energy. This model cleverly protects individual freedom while also making it more costly for parents to preserve the traditional division of labour, falling under “equality-promoting schemes” (Brighouse & Wright 2008).

This research has filled an important gap in the literature on parental leave by examining the influence of occupation and other workplace-level variables on fathers’ use and length of leave in the Canadian context. Future research could usefully extend these results by considering the effect of workplace context on men’s leave use at multiple levels of analysis. Indeed, an interesting study might look at the firm-level to see how interactional dynamics shape fathers’ decisions around parental leave uptake. Future research may also look to parse out the individual effects of sex composition and occupational culture by controlling for sex composition in the model, a limitation of the current study.
References


