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Author(s): Huttunen, Jouko; Eerola, Petteri

Title: Finland

Year: 2017

Version:

Please cite the original version:

Huttunen, J., & Eerola, P. (2017). Finland. In M. A. Adler, & K. Lenz (Eds.), Father Involvement in the Early Years : An International Comparison of Policy and Practice (pp. 29-60). Policy Press.

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Jouko Huttunen (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)

Petteri Eerola (University of Tampere, Finland)

Finland

This chapter is originally published in Marina Adler & Karl Lenz (eds) Father involvement in the early years. An international comparison of policy and practice. Bristol: Policy Press, 2016.

Please cite the original version: Huttunen, J. & Eerola, P. 2016. Finland. In M. Adler & K. Lenz (eds) Father involvement in the early years. An international comparison of policy and practice. Bristol: Policy Press, 29–60.

The cultural and policy context of fatherhood

As one of the northern social-democratic welfare states, Finland has striven for gender equality since the 1960s and persistent political struggles have borne fruit: in both 2012 and 2013, the World Economic Forum (WEF) placed Finland as the world's second-ranked country in closing its gender gaps in various areas of living, such as educational attainment, health and survival (WEF, 2013). This standing did not affect Finland's economy negatively: according to the WEF's Global Competitiveness Index, in 2013/14, Finland held the third position among 148 countries (Schwab, 2013). Finland also boasts wellfunctioning and highly transparent public institutions (first place) and private institutions (third place), and is considered to be one of the best-run and most ethical countries in the world. In addition, Finland occupies the top position in 'health and primary education' and in 'higher education and training', which is the result of a strong focus on education over recent decades (Schwab, 2013). This success is based on a culture of struggling for economic, social and educational equality (Välijärvi et al, 2007). Another factor may be the latent contribution of shared parenting, dual-earner parenthood and a relatively high paternal involvement in children's educational development.

The contemporary cultural context of moving towards gender equality appears to bode well for involved fatherhood in Finland, especially because there has been a consensus among politicians to offer coherent egalitarian family policies. The Finnish government has promoted the implementation of the principle of equal pay and the development of more equal and flexible family leaves (Hearn and Lattu, 2002). In fact, the allocation of family leave costs between the mother's and the father's employers and the options for increasing the father's leave-taking quota have been on the governmental agenda since the 2000s. Recently, it was specifically declared that 'the objective is to increase the amount of leave days earmarked for fathers, provide more flexibility to how and when fathers use their family leave, and enable home childcare for longer, supported by the parental allowance' (Programme of the Finnish Government, 2011: 110)

Finland's general spending for family benefits was 3.3% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009, which is clearly above the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 2.6%. Finnish family benefits include: (1) child-related cash transfers to families with children, such as child allowances; (2) public income support payments during periods of parental leave; and (3) public spending on services for families with children, such as the direct financing and subsidising of childcare providers and early education facilities (OECD, 2012). Unlike in some other OECD countries, financial support for families provided through the tax system does not play an important role in Finland. In 2009, the proportion of total social spending on early childhood was 30.2%, which was above the OECD average (25.4%), and was the fifth-largest proportion among OECD countries (OECD, 2012). Spending on maternity and parental leave payments per birth as a percentage of GDP per capita was in third place at 66.6%, compared to the OECD average of 32.3%.

This high public expenditure on services for families with children is typical of the Nordic model and has been quite expensive and challenging to manage. The proportion of GDP that is allocated to release women from

family duties is high, and the provision of long and generous parental leaves combined with high-quality public day care are a particular challenge in times of international financial volatility, economic recession and the ageing of the population (see also Datta Gupta et al, 2008).

Leave provisions

In the Finnish context, the term 'family leave' refers to paid maternity, paternity, parental and (child) home-care leaves, as well as leave to care for a sick child. At present, the full family leave 'set', except leave to care for a sick child, starts around one month before the calculated date of delivery and covers the child's first three years (Kela, 2013). The earliest form of family leave – maternity leave – dates back to Finland's independence (1917), and it has been incrementally modified since then into its current format (Salmi and Lammi-Taskula, 1999; Duvander and Lammi-Taskula, 2011). A noteworthy milestone was attained in 1964, when an overall nine weeks of paid maternal leave was introduced (Rønsen, 2004). Paternity leave is 60 years younger; Finland and Norway were the first countries in the world to both introduce it in 1977. Following Sweden's lead (1974), Finland was the second nation to enact parental leave in 1980.

Both maternity and paternity leaves are specifically targeted at mothers and fathers, and unlike parental leave, they cannot be transferred or shared between parents. The length of maternity leave is 18 weeks, which is followed by a shareable 26 weeks of parental leave (Kela, 2013). The length of paternity leave is nine weeks, of which the father can take one to three weeks immediately after the child is born or at the same time as the mother is using the maternity or parental leave. The rest of the paternity leave (or all of it) must be taken after the maternity and parental leaves end, but before the child is two years old. Paternity leave can also be divided into shorter periods. Either parent is allowed to use the temporary childcare leave (currently a maximum of four days at a time) if a child under the age of 10 gets ill (Kela, 2013). Compared to other Nordic countries, the Finnish paternity leave of nine weeks is slightly shorter than the paternity leaves for fathers in Sweden and Norway and is notably less than in Iceland (Lammi-Taskula, 2012).

All these three forms of family leave are wage-related and adjusted to parents' annual income. The approximate average compensation rate is 75% of the monthly income of the recipient (Kela, 2013). These forms of family leave include job security for the parent who is taking the leave. The benefits are resident-based, requiring the parent to live permanently (permanent address) in Finland, and are not dependent on labour-market participation (Salmi and Lammi-Taskula, 2007). After these forms of family leave are taken, either the mother or the father is allowed to stay at home to take advantage of the child home-care leave, during which a modest flat rate benefit is paid to the mother or father. The basic rate is currently €340 per month, but some additional allowances are available according to family conditions and place of residence. In 2012, the average paid monthly amount was €462 (Kela, 2013; OSF, 2013).

The necessary preconditions for women's labour force participation (LFP) have been created by legislation, services and financial support relating to the care of small children and the job security of parents (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2013). Concurrent with the development of family leave arrangements, local authorities have been under pressure to organise day-care opportunities for families with children under school age. The public day-care system has been available since 1973 as a general social service. Since 1996, every child under school age has the right to day care, and local authorities have to offer a day-care placement for each child based on parental request (Salmi and Lammi-Taskula, 2007).

After parental leave, parents have three government-assisted alternatives for their childcare arrangements until the child starts school, usually at the age of seven. These are: (1) public day care – either in a day-care centre or in the home of a family day-care provider; (2) private day care – either in a day-care centre or in the home of a family day-care provider, subsidised through a private day-care allowance; and (3) one of the parents staying at home on child home-care allowance if the child is under the age of three (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2013). The fees in both public and private day care are related to the family's total income;

the maximum fee for a family's first child is €264 per month and for subsequent children, it is €238 per month (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014). Finland's coverage of publicly provided childcare is lower than that in other Nordic countries for all age groups, but less so for children aged three to six.

Overall, Finland has a generous social policy regime with a dualearner family model and high state support for paternal leave uptake (Lammi-Taskula, 2007; Haataja, 2009). Promoting gender equality in access to both paid work and care work has been the focus of Finnish social and family policy since the 1960s (Forsberg, 2005). The synchronised effort to provide public day-care coverage in order to allow women's participation in the labour market, as well as the family leave system to care for toddlers at home, constitute the context in which 'father-friendly' policies are delivered (Vuori, 2009).

Nevertheless, this governmental enthusiasm regarding egalitarian family policies is not necessarily reflected in the actual everyday practices and family leave usage patterns of parents with small children. Compared to the other Nordic countries, there seems to be a delay in mothers' and fathers' actual use of all the options available to them under Finnish father-friendly family policies. For example, Finnish fathers have not taken paid family leaves, especially the parental leave options, as extensively as they could (Lammi-Taskula, 2006, 2007; Haataja, 2007, 2009). Also, despite some movement towards greater gender equality since the 1990s, mothers still continue to spend more time providing childcare, even in families with two working parents (Ylikännö, 2009).

Family policy experts have recognised that the 'new father' ideology is worth pursuing – both in political decision-making and in family counselling and supervision – because of the many beneficial consequences related to 'new fathers' (Vuori, 2009). Men who spend a lot of time playing, helping, nurturing, monitoring, listening, reading and talking to their children may be more likely to commit to generative social activities that are designed to benefit children (Palkovitz, 2002; Knoester et al, 2007). Unfortunately, Finnish men have not collectively acknowledged and supported the advantages of involved fatherhood, and neither have they expressed considerable political support for 'new father' policies (Holli, 2003). The vast majority of the progress in fathering policies has been the result of activism by feminists – both politicians and publicly engaged mothers – in their individual lives and in the political arena (Leira, 2002).

Despite men's general inaction, fathering has been a popular topic of debate among parental experts and family specialists (Vuori, 2009). Their perspective is that fathers make a difference in children's development and that fathers should participate in childcare from the very onset of parenthood. In addition, the mass media has contributed to promoting a father-friendly culture in Finland. For the last two decades, images of caring fathers with their babies have emerged in mainstream advertisements, magazines and, most recently, social media. Also, support directed towards new fathers via institutional maternity and childcare clinics has become a significant part of Finnish family policies (see Rantalaiho, 2003).

Historically, more efforts have been directed to bringing mothers into paid work than to increasing fathers' share of childcare at home (Anttonen, 1998; Pascall and Lewis, 2004). Yet, according to the Nordic gender regime, and especially in feminist thinking, men's participation in care work at home is as important to achieving gender equality as is women's participation in paid work (Pascall and Lewis, 2004). In this respect, the degree of sharing of childcare responsibilities is a crucial measure of progress towards gender equality. Compared to Sweden, Norway and Iceland, it appears that in Finland, the sharing of childcare is less emphasised than a family's freedom of choice, especially among politicians (Rantalaiho, 2003). In 2003, the implementation of 'bonus days' for fathers who take the last two weeks of parental leave was the first step towards the father's quota, which encourages fathers to share parental leave with mothers (Haataja, 2009). Although the father's quota may increase the proportion of fathers taking parental leave, tentative data analysis indicates that the more clearly certain days or months are the exclusive entitlements of fathers, the

more they will use only these specific days rather than the more general entitlements (Duvander and Lammi-Taskula, 2011).

Contextual demographic and family trends related to fatherhood

This section presents key information on demographic trends, features of family structure and LFP patterns that may affect fathers. The statistical sources include the national databases of Official Statistics of Finland (OSF), the OECD and the European Union (EU) (European Commission, Eurostat).

Table 1.1: Selected indicators related to parenting for Finland, 2000 and 2012[1]

Indicator	**2000**	**2012**
Crude marriage rate (per 1,000 population)	5.1	5.3 (2011)
Crude divorce rate	2.7	2.5 (2011)
Total fertility rate	1.7	1.8
Crude birth rate	10.9	11.0
Mothers' mean age at first birth	27.4	28.5
% non-marital births	39.2	41.5
Births per 1,000 men	22.4	22.3
% of family households that are:		
Husband/wife	31.1	35.7
Unmarried couple	11.4	13.9
Husband/wife with children	36.7	30.0
Reconstituted family with children	3.4	3.6
Mother only with children	11.4	10.2
Father only with children	2.1	2.1
% of 0–6 year olds living with:		
Two parents	87.6	87.3
Father only	0.6	0.8
Mother only	11.7	11.9
% of married-couple families that are:		
Dual-earner families	NA	65.7 (2008)
Male-provider families	NA	26.0 (2008)
Labour force participation (LFP)		
LFP rate, men (15–64)	77.6	77.3
Fathers (20–59) of kids under 18	NA	95.0 (2011)
Fathers, youngest child under 3 years	NA	94.4 (2011)
Fathers, youngest child 3–6 years	NA	95.8 (2011)
Men, % full-time	92.9	90.3
Men, % part-time	7.1	9.7
Men, mean number of hours/week	40.2 (2001)	39.1
LFP rate, women (15–64)	72.1	73.4
Mothers (20–59) of kids under 18	NA	80.0
Mothers, youngest child under 3 years	NA	52.6 (2011)
Mothers, youngest child 3–6 years	NA	86.6 (2011)
Women, % full-time	86.1	83.5
Women, % part-time	13.9	16.5
Women, mean number of hours/week	35.7 (2001)	34.9

As Table 1.1 shows, per 1,000 population, the current marriage rate is around 5.3 and the divorce rate is around 2.5. Both Finnish marriage and divorce rates are among the highest among the Nordic countries (Haagensen, 2012). While both rates have remained quite stable over the last decade, there has been a slight upturn in marriages, as well as in cohabitation. This phenomenon is one of the causes of the growth of the total number of families. Despite this, the number of families with children continues to decrease.

Recently, increased attention has been paid to reconstituted stepfamilies in Finland, particularly in terms of stepfathering (see Vikat et al, 2004; Broberg, 2010). The number of stepfamilies as a subset of families with

children is now approaching 10%. The absolute number of stepfamilies has not increased for seven years; however, because the total number of families with children is decreasing, the proportion shows a slight upturn. Reconstituted families are established equally through marriage or cohabitation, and in both cases, the children in these families are most often the mother's children (60%). Only one third of the children in stepfamilies are shared children, meaning that they were born within the reconstituted family (OSF, 2014b).

As in many other EU countries, family formation has been postponed in Finland. The average age at first birth for women has risen from 27.4 to 28.5. The crude birth rate (CBR) has stayed at around 11.0 over the last decade, and the total fertility rate (TFR) has remained at around 1.8. Since 1969, the number of annual live births has been below the replacement level, at approximately 2.1 children per woman. Births to unmarried women have increased from 39.2% of all births in 2000, to 41.5% in 2012. At the same time, the share of solo mother families has decreased from 11.4% to 10.2%, and the percentage of solo father families has continued to stay at around 2.1%. The data also show that the percentage of husband–wife–children families has been reduced from 36.7% to 30.0%. However, by far, most of the children under age six (87%) are currently living with two parents, and this picture seems to be quite stable.

The most typical number of children in a Finnish family is one child and the average number of children in a family with children has been about 1.8 children per family since the 1990s. While the number of families with one child has stayed quite constant, the number of families with two or three children is decreasing (OSF, 2014b).

In 2011, the LFP rate of fathers (aged 20 to 59) of children under age three was considerably high (94.4%) compared to all fathers, as well as to non-fathers. The LFP rate of men in general (aged 15 to 64 years) has been around 77%, and among those aged 18 to 64 years, it is around 80%. The LFP rate of Finnish fathers is higher than the EU-27 average, but the LFP rate of Finnish men in general is close to the EU-27 average. The high LFP rates of Finnish fathers of small children have been explained by the typical male life course: during the first years of his marriage, a Finnish young man usually builds his work career, works on his permanent home and becomes a father (Eerola and Mykkänen, 2013). In many families, it is understood that the man's continuous LFP ensures the optimal family income (Salmi et al, 2009).

Mothers (aged 20 to 59) of three to six year olds have a significantly higher LFP rate (86.6%) than women aged 15 to 64 in general (73.4%). About 84% of employed women (aged 15 to 64) worked full-time compared to 90% of men. These proportions have been declining both in men and in women, possibly because of the increment in the amount of part-time work. The percentage of men working part-time has increased from 7.1% to 9.7%, close to the average of OECD countries. Even though the proportion of women in part-time employment has also increased simultaneously from 13.9 to 16.5%, the share remains below the OECD average of 26.4%.

In families with the youngest child under two years old, the percentage of families where both parents worked full-time was only 38.5% in 2008, but that of families where only one parent (presumably the father) was employed full-time was 45.8%. This male-breadwinner pattern is more common in Finland than in Sweden, where the proportion was only 20.8% (OECD, 2010).

Fathers and parental leave

In 2013, around 83% of fathers took paternity leave after their child was born. Despite the fact that men's share in taking parental leave has risen, fathers still take parental leave significantly less often than do mothers (Kela, 2014). The leave periods that men take are usually relatively short compared to those taken by mothers. The problem is that in cases where leave is not father- or mother-specific, it is more often taken by mothers (Lammi-Taskula, 2012). According to the OSF (2013), in 2012, 18% of parents receiving paid parental leave allowance from the Social Insurance Institution of Finland were fathers (see also Kela, 2014).

Of these fathers, 94% used their entitlement for the father's quota, but fathers' share of all the paid days provided was only 4%. Since the father's quota was established in 2003, fathers' proportion of parental leave users has increased annually from around 5% to the current 18%, but fathers' proportion of all paid days has only risen from 1.5% to 4%. Therefore, the impact of the father's quota appears to be twofold: it will encourage fathers to take the father-specific parental leave, but it may change parents', or at least fathers', understanding of the shared parental leave. As Lammi-Taskula (2012) has put it, if a certain portion of parental leave is not particularly identified as fatherspecific, it is assumed to be mothers' leave. This issue has also been identified in internationally comparative analysis (see O'Brien, 2009).

Overall, while paternity leave in Finland is now taken by the majority of fathers – regardless of their educational or occupational background – parental leave is taken only by a small minority of a more specific group of fathers (Lammi-Taskula, 2003). Fathers with higher education and those working in health-care occupations or doing professional work are more likely to take parental leave, whereas fathers with lower education or those who are self-employed are less likely to take leave (Takala, 2005). In addition, it appears that mothers' education is a remarkable intervening variable: if a well-educated father has a significantly less-educated spouse, the likelihood of him taking leave is significantly lower than in a family situation where both of the parents have higher education (Salmi et al, 2009).

So far, the option for two years' child home-care allowance has been paid to either parent, but in the autumn of 2013, the government proposed that, in the near future, the home-care allowance should be allocated equally to both parents. This proposal is driven by the goal of increasing fathers' share in care work and to facilitate mothers' faster return to the labour force after their parental leave period. The supporters of this reform come mostly from employers with a majority of female employees, and those who oppose are mainly advocates of families with small children, especially mothers living in precarious conditions. Fathers have been relatively silent and invisible in this debate.

Fathers and childcare

In 2011, 63% of Finnish children aged one to six used public or private day-care services (Säkkinen and Kuoppala, 2011). Due to the Finnish home-care allowance system, which makes it possible for one of the parents (usually the mother) to stay at home until the child is three years old, only 41% of children between aged one and two utilised out-of-home day care. Among children aged three to five, the rate was 74%. By far the most frequent arrangement chosen by parents (92%) was the public day-care option, although the private day-care sector is gaining some popularity (Säkkinen and Kuoppala, 2011). Compared to other Nordic countries, Finland has a much lower coverage of outof- home day care, both for under two year olds and for three to five year olds (Haagensen, 2012). In part, this pattern reflects the fact that Finnish mothers tend to take advantage of all family leave options. Moreover, many mothers are willing to exceed the compensated stayat- home leave time.

Together with the fact that non-parental childcare is rarely used among parents of birth to three-year-old children, there is also another thought-provoking detail in EU statistics (OECD, 2012): Finnish families do not resort easily to informal childcare arrangements by relatives, friends, neighbours, babysitters or nannies provided either at home or elsewhere. In 2008, only 1.3% of children under the age of two had been in informal childcare, and among three to five year olds, the percentage was only 4.2%. After Denmark, these numbers were the lowest in Europe.

According to Reich's (2012) analysis, Finnish fathers do not appear to provide a significant amount of childcare for young children as the primary carer during the mother's work hours. However, at other times, they are more often the sole or partial provider of childcare. This may happen after the mother's work hours, on weekends or occasionally in circumstances when the children are not (yet) in another care arrangement (Salmi and Lammi-Taskula, 2004).

Research on father involvement

While Finland is part of the Nordic countries in terms of geography, history and culture, linguistically, and to some extent ethnically, it is quite different from its neighbours. Despite increased migration and the arrival of some refugees, Finland remains a relatively homogeneous country ethnically. Consequently, the mainstream of fatherhood research deals almost entirely with the Finnish population; however, family researchers are increasingly recognising that there are multicultural changes in fatherhood.

In addition to some ethnic diversity, current changes in fatherhood are often referred to as 'new fatherhood', or 'involved' (Forsberg, 2007), 'generative' (Hawkins and Dollahite, 1997) or 'postmodern fatherhood' (Eerola and Huttunen, 2011). In the Finnish context, the 'new father' entails an involved, nurturing and gender-egalitarian father, engaged in the daily care of the child, such as changing nappies and feeding the baby. At times, a full-time commitment to childcare is expected because the new father will take his share of parental leave. In this respect, the new father concept has adopted features that have traditionally been attached to a mother only (Johansson, 2011). However, paternal involvement does not necessarily imply the perfect realisation of gender equality in men's everyday lives. A father may be an exceedingly child-oriented parent, spending a lot of time with his children, while taking on only minor responsibilities for specific childcare and household tasks (Forsberg, 2007).

According to recent studies, men's own accounts of their paternal responsibilities and duties have become more care- and nurtureoriented, probably influenced by changes in overall fathering culture. That is, men's commitment to the nurturing of infants, beginning from birth, has become almost a cultural norm (Paajanen, 2006; Eerola and Mykkänen, 2013; Eerola 2015). At present, most men interpret nurturing as a key feature of responsible fathering and as a key attribute of a 'good father' (Eerola, 2014). Breadwinning still has an essential role in men's understanding of their parental responsibilities, but, at present, it is considered more as a shared parental responsibility than as a fatherspecific responsibility. Although there may be a gap between men's accounts of their activities and their actual practices, it appears that contemporary Finnish men's fathering practices are in line with the concept of the new father used in scholarship (Eerola and Huttunen, 2011). However, some studies (Paajanen, 2006; Miettinen and Rotkirch, 2012) show that there are some variations relative to the educational and socio-economic background of fathers: young, highly educated, city-dwelling fathers are in the vanguard of the shifting practices of male parenting.

Nevertheless, the 'new father' concept is still somehow ambivalent, involving some controversy in terms of time and place. Whereas the nurturing norm of 'new fatherhood' pushes fathers to spend more time with their children, the deep-rooted provider ideal leads to their strong commitment to the workplace when they become fathers (McGill, 2014). Thus, the provider requirement draws fathers out of the home because the 'ideal worker' norm demands a high number of work hours from men. Currently, it appears that the provider norm is somewhat more powerful than the 'new father' norm in situations that demand choices between staying at home and going to work.

McGill's (2014) analysis of US data shows that while there is a negative relationship between fathers' work hours and the physical care they provide for their children, there is no correlation between fathers' work hours and their time in play or achievement-related activities with children. A reasonable explanation is that physical care is bound to a certain time and place, and may occur at times when fathers are still at work. This is also the case in Finland as the time-constrained physical childcare activities occur mostly between the first and third year of a child's life. During that time, most Finnish mothers are taking parental or child home-care leave and most fathers work longer hours (OSF, 2014b).

Time engaged with children

The Finnish father-friendly and gender-equality-promoting policies have had several positive outcomes in terms of father engagement. Probably the most interesting – and most important – development that has occurred is that since the late 1980s, men's daily time devoted to caring for their young children has increased by over 60%, and the time gap between fathers and mothers has narrowed substantially from 52 minutes per day in the late 1980s (mothers 104 minutes; fathers 52 minutes) to 35 minutes per day in 2010 (mothers 118 minutes; fathers 83 minutes) (Miettinen and Rotkirch, 2012). Hence, the childcarerelated daily activities ratio between fathers and mothers is at present 42% versus 58%.

According to the study of Miettinen and Rotkirch (2012), there are no remarkable variations in men's participation in different forms of care work (hands-on care, monitoring, accompanying, transportation and care work in general). Fathers performed both hands-on care activities and indirect childcare. Nevertheless, men working in professional occupations spent significantly more time in childcare activities than men in blue-collar employment (Miettinen and Rotkirch, 2012).

Recent official Finnish statistics show that from 2000 to 2010, in general, fathers have increased and mothers have decreased their time with their children under age 10 (see Table 1.2). The increment in fathers' time is not remarkable, and it is mostly due to spending more time with children on weekends and holidays. Mothers, however, spend significantly less time with children both on workdays and days off. At present, Finnish working fathers spend similar amounts of time with their under 10-year-old children on days off (6 hours 31 minutes) as the mothers do (6 hours 47 minutes).

Table 1.2: Working fathers' and mothers' daily time with their under 10-year-old children on workdays and days off, 1999–2000 and 2009–2010 (hours: minutes per day)[2]

	Fathers		Mothers	
	1999–2000	2009–10	1999–2000	2009–10
All days	4:09	4:14	6:27	5:55
Workdays	2:52	2:52	4:03	3:41
Days off	7:04	6:31	8:22	6:47

According to a recent study by Halme, Åstedt-Kurki and Tarkka (2009), fathers in traditional families spent less time with their young children (three to six years old) and regarded the interaction with their children as less important than did fathers in non-traditional families. For example, fathers in husband–wife families with biological children had less positive attitudes towards father involvement than did cohabiting fathers. In addition, fathers who did not consider father involvement as very important, and who had not discovered much pleasure in fatherhood, spent less active time with their young children and were less accessible to them.

Level of father engagement

In order to understand some of the nuances of Finnish fathers' engagement with children, two key studies by the Family Federation of Finland will be examined in more detail: a family survey on men's parental practices by Paajanen (2006); and a time-use study by Miettinen and Rotkirch (2012). The data of the first study are based on a survey conducted in 2004, which included a representative sample of Finnish fathers with children aged three or under. The second study is based on a representative sample of the time-use diaries of fathers with children aged six or under conducted in 2009/10. These two studies are the most recent and extensive studies available that emphasise paternal practices and give a statistical overview of contemporary Finnish fathers.

As shown in Table 1.3, both 'caring and monitoring' and 'reading and playing' are the most time-consuming care activities performed by working fathers with their under six-year-old children. The average daily time devoted to these activities as a primary activity is about one hour. It seems that Finnish fathers do not spend much time with their children as a secondary activity.

Table 1.3: Working fathers' daily time use for childcare activities when the youngest child is under six years old, 2010 (all days of a year, childcare as a primary or secondary activity)[3]

	Primary activity	Secondary activity
Caring and monitoring	0:35	0:08
Instruction and tutoring	0:01	0:01
Reading and playing	0:25	0:03
Outdoor activities	0:06	0:00
Discussing, talking	0:02	0:07
Other care activities	0:01	0:00
Transportation and accompanying	0:13	0:00
Total childcare	1:23	0:20

Over 90% of fathers considered engagement with childcare from the very onset of parenthood as crucially important (Paajanen, 2006). Working fathers participated significantly in childcare when at home, and most of the fathers definitely wanted to spend one-on-one time with their infants, including time without the mother, to increase their parental skills and develop their father–child relationship. However, while fathers found spending time with their children important and satisfying, they also worried whether they were competent and accessible enough as parents (Halme, 2009).

Fathers do engage in many kinds of activities and practices with their children (Paajanen, 2005; Halme, 2009; Miettinen and Rotkirch, 2012). In terms of basic physical care activities, such as feeding, clothing and getting the child to sleep, about half of the fathers participated as much as the mothers, indicating that the activities were equally shared. The remaining fathers also performed those activities but not to the same extent as the mothers (Paajanen, 2006). Only a few fathers stated that they did the majority of – or, alternatively, did none of – the basic care work. Over 60% of the fathers said that playing, reading and doing outdoor activities with their children were either mainly their responsibility or were shared equally with the mother. However, only 40% of the fathers reported that they took time off work when the child was sick (Paajanen, 2006).

According to these studies, fathers' relationships with their children appear relatively close and intense. Almost all fathers reported expressing their love and caring every day by nurturing, cherishing and holding their children. In addition, over 90% demonstrated their involvement by participating in their children's hobbies. Most of the fathers emphasised that an important role in child-rearing relates to their teaching of values and ethics. However, only 50% of the fathers emphasised their parenting responsibilities as gendered or diverging from the mothers' responsibilities (Paajanen, 2006).

In terms of indirect care work, which is done for, rather than with, the children, father involvement was less pronounced than with basic care activities. For example, over 60% of the fathers stated that the transfer of the children to and from day care was either done mainly by the fathers or shared equally with the mothers. Fewer than 30% stated the same about taking the child to the doctor. Buying new clothes for the children was mainly (over 80%) mothers' responsibility, as was filling out official documents, such as day-care applications or personal data forms of the children (Paajanen, 2006).

Determinants of father engagement with young children

According to Halme (2009), fathers' time spent with their young children is a complex phenomenon affected by numerous factors. Her quantitative analysis shows that the overall stress related to fathers' parenting explained 35% of the variance in the time they spent with children: the less stressful parenting is for fathers, the more time they spend with their children. The second most important explanatory variable for fathers' time involvement was a characteristic of the child: the more a father assessed his child as 'easy' (mostly jovial, behaving according to the father's wishes and not demanding), the more time they spent with the child. The third best predictor was the father's satisfaction with his couple relationship, which also reduced the father's parenting stress level. Interestingly, a father's use of alcohol significantly affected both the father's satisfaction with his couple relationship and his parenting stress, and, consequently, a father's alcohol use reduced his time involvement with his children.

Another important factor in shaping father involvement is the particular way in which parents share childcare and parental leaves. Salmi and Lammi-Taskula (2007) noticed in their national survey that the younger the mother was, the more conventionally she saw childcare as her responsibility. This attitude was strongest among women in lower-paid white-collar positions. Thus, when mothers use all of the gender-neutral leaves, it is very likely that they will continue to do the brunt of childcare work afterwards. However, if both parents share relatively equal stay-at-home periods, fathers will also remain more engaged thereafter. For instance, Duvander and Jans (2009) discovered in their Swedish data that the fathers who used parental leave were more likely to reduce their working days during their child's first years, compared to fathers who did not use the leave.

Research on father involvement and father well-being

Worldwide research on fathering practices suggests that father involvement may be related to fathers' own well-being. For example, some results from Canada show that devoted fathers have higher social capital (Ravanera, 2007), that fatherhood rebalances the importance of self and other, and that it can lead to a reorientation towards time and scheduling in fathers' everyday lives (Daly et al, 2013). However, unexpectedly little research has examined the impact of father involvement on fathers' own well-being on a large scale in general, and in Finland in particular. Hence, there is very little information available concerning this issue.

A recent study based on a sample of Finnish fathers in nuclear families emphasised that close social ties and networks increase father involvement and fathers' sense of well-being at the early stages of their fatherhood (Lähteenmäki and Neitola, 2014). This research shows that strong support from the fathers' relatives, especially from their own parents or parents-in-law, was very important in helping fathers manage their daily lives and in providing psychological support. Father involvement and father well-being appeared to be related in such a way that those men who were most concerned about their parental engagement were also those most willing to look for support as a strategy to preserve and improve their well-being. Hence, it might be stated that the men who take care of themselves are best able to care for their children as well.

Work-related behavior

Balancing employment with family obligations is still one of the most problematic concerns for fathers of young children. According to the OSF (2014a), men with young children (under seven years) spend more time at work per week (38 hours) than fathers of older children or childless men.[4] In addition to family-related factors prompting fathers of young children to work long days and overtime, there are also workplace-related motives that may affect the behaviour of fathers. For example, many young fathers experience the workplace as so competitive that they do not risk asking for accommodations to reduce work–family conflict (Salmi and Lammi-Taskula, 2004).

A recent study (Salmi et al, 2009) found that fathers face less work– family conflicts than mothers (20% versus 40%). Work-related travelling was mentioned by fathers as a major problem. Fathers working in the public sector experienced the workplace as more father-friendly than fathers working for private employers. This may be due to the higher priority given to equality issues in the public sector. Fatherfriendliness implies, above all, support for taking family leaves, but also encouragement to share family-related problems. Another study (Lahelma et al, 2005) revealed that the gender differences in perceived work–family conflicts disappeared among well-educated working mothers and fathers in leading positions: both reported relatively high amounts of work–family conflicts.

Finnish fathers with young children tend to work full-time and they also do more overtime work than other groups (Lyly-Yrjänäinen, 2013). As men's time spent in childcare has grown, this has led to a higher total number of hours spent in employment and care work for men than women in families with young children (Miettinen and Rotkirch, 2012). This shows that Finnish fathers increasingly face challenges in coordinating their work and family time, and, consequently, this work–life conflict can pose serious risks for father involvement and well-being.

The term 'burned-out father' has not yet been part of the general public discourse on parents' coping abilities, but it may become a topic in the near future. These challenges are reflected in data showing that about one in every three working fathers with children from birth to six years old felt that they do not have enough time to spend with their child or their spouse. Also, the same proportion of fathers was concerned about their own coping ability, and over 40% felt that they had neglected their housework (Lammi-Taskula and Salmi, 2014).

Fatherhood programmes

Finland has a long tradition of promoting shared parenting and 'new fatherhood' by introducing a number of family leave options for fathers, but much less has been done to find new ways to support fathers in their choices and behaviours for shared parenting. Even if different kinds of fatherhood programmes may offer a solution to the challenge of how to get fathers to take parental leaves and increase their childcare activities, there have not been any systematic, countrywide programmes. Some local maternity and child welfare clinics offer classes for expectant fathers, but this is mostly on a small scale and is dependent on locally available resources. In practical terms, this kind of programme plays only a minor role in the general maternity classes for expectant women, and father-focused activities usually involve only two or three meetings in a small group of men under the leadership of a nurse from the local clinic. The resources vary at the local level and depend on the overall state of the economy; in times of a recession, funds for this type of programme are often cut.

An important agency in this area has been the Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto (Mannerheim League for Child Welfare) (MLL).[5] This voluntary organisation, founded in 1920, is the largest child welfare organisation in Finland. MLL is a non-profit non-governmental organisation (NGO) and membership is open to everyone. The MLL offers families an opportunity to get acquainted with and take part in volunteer work, and to participate in a diverse range of activities. Local associations arrange clubs, groups for parents, excursions, training and special events. Most of the activities – like father–child groups – are based on volunteer work and are organised by local associations. Father–child groups are typically peer groups led by experienced fathers. Although quite new, this is a growing form of peer group activity at the local level. However, studies on men participating in father–child groups have not been conducted yet.[6]

As Grusec (2006) maintains, it is vitally important to provide parent education programmes that teach about the factors that increase effective parenting in general rather than to focus exclusively on 'problem parenting' stemming from a lack of knowledge or skills. Thus, the inclusive nature of MLL's fatherhood programme and its cultural sensitivity is important because fathers voluntarily enter the group with the intention of having

an enjoyable time with other fathers and their children. In the MLL programmes, as in some other NGO programmes[7], no assumptions are made about the history or background of the families attending group activities. For example, the father–child group activities are targeted at all fathers – not only at those in families with problems. The support programmes focus on the general challenges of everyday parenting rather than specific problems. However, there are also programmes in the NGO field specifically for fathers in fragile families, such as groups for alcoholic or violent fathers, and for divorced fathers[8].

Unfortunately, there are currently no studies evaluating the outcomes of fatherhood programmes in Finland, so the overall effectiveness of these programmes is unclear. Due to the voluntary nature of these programmes, it appears likely that participating fathers may be more enthusiastic and positive about nurturing issues compared to nonparticipants.

The Finnish fatherhood regime

In this book, the concept of fatherhood regime is utilised to bring to light the institutional and cultural framework for fatherhood in a particular national context because policy regimes are thought to potentially affect everyday fathering practices. Policies can encourage measureable changes in fathers' behaviour in circumstances where financial support for active fatherhood is high and workplaces are supportive of fathers who want to use their entitlements to family leaves or nurture their father–child relationship after divorce (Brandth and Kvande, 2009).

Previous studies (Hobson and Morgan, 2002; Gregory and Milner, 2008) construct fatherhood regimes based on fathers' rights and obligations, breadwinner regimes, care regimes, family policies, and gender arrangements. With respect to fathers' rights and obligations, the long policy history of making gender equality a priority has had a significant influence in Finland. Thus, in governmental family policies, parental rights and obligations are generally the same for both parents. However, there is still an exception: at present, maternity leave is approximately twice as long as paternity leave. Compared to many other advanced countries, a paid paternity leave of nine weeks is regarded as very generous, but from the Finnish perspective of gender equality, this arrangement means that mothers are given more opportunities to establish an intimate parent–child relationship than fathers from the very onset of parenthood.

In terms of breadwinner regimes Finland is a 'solidaristic gender equity regime' (Mutari and Figart, 2001), which means that it features a relatively high proportion of married women in paid work and a small gender wage gap. Thus, breadwinning is no longer a crucial male-specific obstacle to father involvement because it is shared. In addition, shared parenting can be perceived as a key feature of the Finnish fatherhood regime in terms of fathers' time use with childcare (Miettinen and Rotkirch, 2012) and fathers' own accounts of their father involvement (Eerola and Mykkänen, 2013; Eerola, 2014). It is quite well-documented that in families with young children in which both parents are employed, the parents do share childcare and other parental duties relatively equally. In families with a stay-athome mother, the majority of fathers also do their share of childcare outside of their working hours. Finnish fathers stress the importance of involvement in childcare and in hands-on nurturing as being part of their basic paternal duties from the very beginning of a child's life (Eerola and Mykkänen, 2013; Eerola, 2014).

As Gregory and Milner (2011) have put it, a shift towards a more egalitarian sharing of care responsibilities requires a new alternative male model among existing models of appropriate masculinity. The 'new fatherhood' model is intended to offer this alternative, and it appears that in the Finnish context, it is gaining general acceptance. The data presented here highlight how a father-friendly culture and policies have been successful in influencing fathers' practices and their understanding of active fatherhood as part of contemporary masculinity. Current studies imply that the cultural atmosphere accept and even emphasises active fathering as a desirable expression of modern masculinity. Recent studies (Eerola and Huttunen, 2011)

capture a portrait of the nurturing father as one of the most common types of father as the current understanding of appropriate masculinity allows men to narrate fatherhood in a more familistic and emotionally rich way. Interestingly, all fathers in this study narrated themselves as 'family men' and emphasised the importance of 'being there' for the family (Eerola and Huttunen, 2011).

Nevertheless, a narrow focus on the image of the nurturing father would exclude some crucial features of the Finnish fatherhood regime. Foremost is fathers' relatively low uptake of leave during the first years after the birth of a child, especially when compared to mothers. Although the Finnish family leave system enables equal participation in stay-at-home periods during parental and home-care leaves, this has not been a popular choice for fathers. Only in few cases is the father's share of family leave equal to that of the mother. Hence, like in other countries, it appears that this imbalanced uptake of family leave reflects the continued importance of fathers' breadwinning obligations in families with young children. Despite the fact that in Finland, official policies, high women's LFP rates and fathers' own accounts support the dual-earner model, male-breadwinning patterns are resisting government efforts for change. Together, fathers' extensive LFP and mothers' higher uptake of family leave show the continued gap between real-life practices and family policy ideals.

Within the Finnish fatherhood regime, it appears that fatherhood is more diverse than ever. While a growing number of men want to be involved fathers, there are also more fathers who step into the background or out of their child's life. This happens most often through divorce because children usually reside with the mother after divorce (Hakovirta and Broberg, 2014). Simultaneously, as family forms have become more diverse over the last decades, men live out their role as fathers in increasingly varied situations. For example, single, remote and stepfathers have already become increasingly common types of fathers, and fathers living in same-sex couples or different kinds of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) families have become more visible and culturally accepted. This diversity in the forms of fatherhood has to be understood better by researchers because shifts in the current types of fathers may have a major impact on the Finnish fatherhood regime.

Conclusion and recommendations for policy

As a Nordic welfare state, Finland has been an early adopter of egalitarian policies within a dual-earner family model and a family leave system including high levels of income replacement, reduced work hours for parents, family income support and a system of publicly provided childcare. These policies are believed to positively affect men's share of childcare, maternal employment and women's relative earnings and household bargaining power (Hook, 2006).

This review points to several implications for research, policy and practice. Although Finnish men's share in childcare is at an internationally comparatively high level (Miettinen and Rotkirch, 2012), there is an urgent need to expand men's participation in early care further. Thus, the next phase would involve support for and the encouragement of fathers to realise that they can deal with childcare without any gendered restrictions. Fathers' increased engagement in early care benefits fathers, mothers, children and the entire society, especially in terms of well-being and gender equality in work and family life. To realise fathers' potential in nurturing, the most important factor would be to encourage fathers' own effort. However, support from mothers, other women and men, the workplace, and family policies would make it substantially easier.

Finnish fathers' work hours in families with small children appear to be high, whether due to families' financial restrictions, workplace constraints or fathers' own preferences. From both the US (Gerson, 2010) and the Nordic (Esping-Andersen, 2009) perspective, there remain numerous real and perceived barriers in the workplace that prevent cutting back fathers' work hours. Moreover, economically disadvantaged fathers

may consider a reduction of their work hours unfeasible for their family's budget, even if workplace circumstances permit it.

In addition to norms of masculinity or workplace restrictions, 'intensive mothering', or mothers as gatekeepers, have been barriers to faster progress towards involved fathering (Hays, 1997). The high level of parental leave uptake by mothers shows that mothers are willing to sacrifice their careers and much of their personal time for their children, disregarding their employment history. Also, public discourse – among parents as well as family experts – continues to debate whether the care of very young children remains 'woman's work', and whether exclusive mothering should remain the dominant parental ideal and practice rather than shared parenting (Vuori, 2009). The discourse of exclusive mothering is still strong among young women.

Although the cultural shift towards involved fathering is noticeable, the terms 'unfinished revolution' (Gerson, 2010), 'incomplete revolution' (Esping-Andersen, 2009) or even 'stalled revolution' (England, 2010) aptly characterise the contemporary Finnish state of new fatherhood. The theory of 'lagged adaptation' (Gershuny et al, 1994) is useful in understanding the behaviour of fathers. The authors postulate that men will devote more time to domestic and childcare work if women are not there to do it, for example, because they are engaged in full-time employment. The LFP rate of Finnish women with children under age three is significantly lower (66%) than that of women with children aged three to six (81%). The Finnish family leave system offers the opportunity to stay at home until the child is three years old, which keeps many mothers out of the labour force for several years, and which, in turn, lets fathers devote themselves to employment. This situation cannot be blamed on the father – or the mother – but is mainly due to the financial situation of the family. Furthermore, even in Finland, a 'woman's Euro' is still less than a 'man's Euro' (Napari, 2007).

The lagged adaptation argument derives from three common sociological approaches to the understanding of individual behaviour: habits, skills and meanings (Gershuny et al, 2005). The skills of care work need to be built up gradually, and the change of conventional habits and meanings concerning participation in the various care activities may be slow. According to this theory, while observed changes are likely to be in the positive direction, the scale of such changes may be uneven and much smaller than anticipated. The imbalance between mothers' and fathers' use of parental leaves supports the lagged adaptation view in fathers' – as well as in mothers' – behaviour, so that the path towards completely realising new fatherhood may be long and uneven.

Gaps in research

Finnish research has focused mostly on the uptake of parental leave and the effect on women's LFP, as well as on men's leave uptake. This kind of research has mainly been completed by individual researchers, and systematic follow-up studies are often lacking. Recent research has compared leave schemes, their uptake and their consequences in the Nordic countries, and has also widened the focus to workplace attitudes and practices in connection with leave-taking. However, the connection to fathers' agency in daily practice is missing. Furthermore, more research examining the impact of father involvement on fathers' own well-being is needed.

In addition, there are studies that examine decision-making patterns between parents, men's and women's reasons for leave-taking, as well as the consequences of leave-taking on the economic position of families. However, longitudinal panel studies designed to understand the effects of fathers' leave-taking on their activities with children or on their own well-being are lacking. Moreover, there are currently no studies evaluating the outcomes of fatherhood programmes in Finland, so the overall effectiveness of these programmes is unclear. This is an important issue because more and more fatherhood programmes are on the agendas of various NGO actors, and they are competing with each other for the minimal resources that are available.

Promising initiatives and suggestions for change

At the level of family policies, action towards more equally shared infant care should be taken. As the statistics imply, men do use the leaves that are allocated for them. Thus, extending fathers' paid quotas would most probably increase men's share of the leaves, just as it has in Norway and Iceland. Brandth and Kvande (2009) found that in the Norwegian context, fathers' quotas represent the crucial break with the dominant gender order, and, thus, may present the most promising path towards more equality in family issues.

A new parental leave arrangement could be implemented along with the so-called '6 + 6 + 6-model' sketched by Salmi and Lammi-Taskula (2010) from the National Institute for Health and Welfare. Their proposal is based on three six-month periods: one for the mother, one for the father and one to be arranged as the parents wish. While this model would probably be highly effective in terms of increased father involvement and child and family well-being, it might also be too expensive to implement in the current economic climate. However, as a first step towards the equal sharing of family leaves, the proposed model could be applied with shorter time periods. For example, one option might be to maintain the three periods but to make them each for fewer months, which would not raise the total duration of parental leave radically, but could significantly improve men's opportunities to invest in early care.

According to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2007), an autonomous body of the EU, the basic building blocks for a shift in the existing gender division of labour via increasing fathers' uptake of parental leave are generous financial support and a period of leave dedicated to fathers. While only a minority of workplaces report problems with parental leave, it remains a policy concern (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2007), and companies have to pay attention to work–life conflicts, men's family leaves and other family-related absences. In recent years, workplaces have become more family-friendly, but many employer policies remain mostly directed at women, and, thus, men who take leave may fear being considered lazy and disengaged workers (Salmi et al, 2009). However, compared to other European fathers, Finnish men find it easier to take parental leave, mainly because only 16% of Finnish fathers consider their job situation insecure (Hobson and Fahlen, 2009).

An efficient way to reduce fathers' work–family conflict would be a joint initiative of employers and labour organisations to promote fatherfriendliness at work, spearheaded by family and child organisations, such as the MLL and the Finnish Parents' League. These kinds of initiatives can encourage fathers to take family leaves, to invest in family life and to reduce their work hours. In fact, the current atmosphere in Finnish workplaces, especially in the public sector, appears to be quite receptive to men's taking paternity and parental leaves. According to Salmi, Lammi-Taskula and Närvi (2009), around 80% of men who had used at least some weeks of parental leave said that they had not noticed any effects in terms of their working conditions or work prospects.

With such projects, it would be possible to enhance men's awareness of their possibilities to reconcile work and family. This would also promote a father- and family-friendly work culture, with the message that fathers can be replaced at work, but not at home. In addition, those employers who are successful in promoting family-friendly work cultures could be rewarded with a 'father-friendly workplace' certification that acknowledges their efforts and enhances their reputation.

Another way to increase father involvement with young children is the clear acknowledgement of fathers in maternity and child welfare clinics, which have a long history in Finland of producing excellent outcomes in terms of mothers' and newborns' well-being. First, men's participation in the activities of the clinics should become the norm, and, second, the name 'maternity clinic' should be changed to 'parental clinic', in which fathers participate on an equal footing. The visits before childbirth can encourage men to embrace shared parenting, to prioritise family responsibilities over other activities and to gain independent nurturing

experiences. At the same time, mothers could be advised to more readily share parenting with the father. For example, parents should learn to discuss childcare and stay-at-home arrangements before the birth so that the early care can be shared by both parents. As child welfare clinics provide the most respected source of information on childcare, fathers' active participation in the clinics would be one of the most efficient ways to engage both them and mothers with shared parenting.

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