

UiO : **University of Oslo**



The state intervenes in the battle of the sexes: Causal effects of paternity leave

A. Kotsadam & H. Finseraas (2011).

23 October 2014



EQUALITY • SOCIAL ORGANIZATION • PERFORMANCE

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Motivation

- ▶ Can family policies change gender relations in society?
- ▶ What is the role of paternity leave?

Previous literature

- ▶ Scholars typically rely on cross-national data to get policy variation.
- ▶ Such studies have found cross-national differences into what degree men participate in housework and caregiving (e.g., Fuwa and Cohen, 2007; Hook, 2010).
- ▶ Often hypothesized that relationships between family policies and equality of gender relations might be causal (Sullivan et al., 2009)

But...

- ▶ ... it is difficult to identify causal effects using cross-national data since neither individuals nor countries are randomly assigned to different policy regimes.
- ▶ Comparing families where the father takes parental leave under similar rules is perhaps even more problematic.

What do we do?

- ▶ We instead compare parents within Norway having kids before and after a reform.
- ▶ Thereby program experience varies at the individual level within the same country-specific institutional setting.

The main experiment

- ▶ 1 December 1992 - New policy announced:

4 weeks of parental leave now reserved for the father
(**daddy quota**).

Applies for births on & after 1 April 1993.

What are we estimating?

- ▶ The policy change creates a natural experiment that enables us to investigate the long-term individual level effect of the daddy quota.
- ▶ We compare present attitudes and division of household labor among those who had children before and after the introduction of the quota.
- ▶ By examining attitudes for similar individuals at the same point in time, we are able to compare parents facing the same contextual conditions, including e.g. macroeconomic conditions and gender discourses.

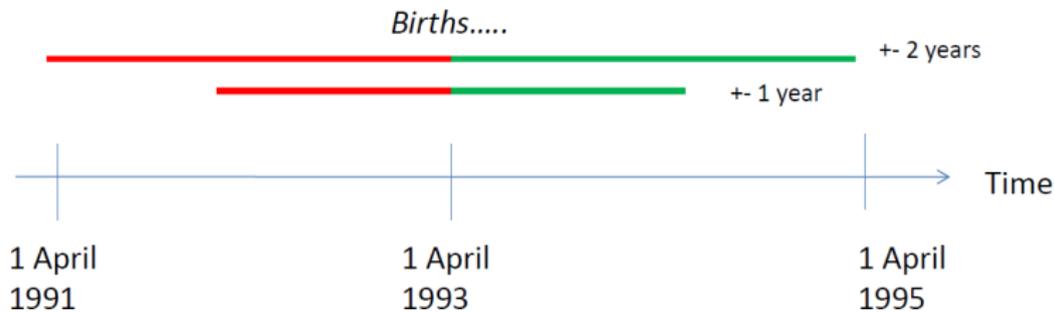
Treatment and control groups

- ▶ The main control group is those living with a partner who had their last child between April 1, 1991 and March 30, 1993.
- ▶ The main treatment group is those living with a partner who had their last child between April 1, 1993 and March 30, 1995.

Trade-off

- ▶ Having as similar groups as possible (reduced time window) vs having as many individuals as possible (extended time window).
- ▶ In fact, the two groups do not differ on any observable characteristic except for age.
- ▶ We try different time windows and run placebo regressions.

Treatment & control



Outcomes....



Dependent variables from LOGG

- ▶ Conflicts over household division of labor.
- ▶ Equal sharing of washing clothes, preparing food, and cleaning.
- ▶ Attitudes toward gender equality and childcare spending.

Main results

- ▶ An average individual who was exposed to the reform has a 12.6% lower level of reported conflicts than an average non-exposed individual.
- ▶ We also find effects on division of household work: e.g. the probability that a couple divides the task of washing clothes equally is 50% higher in the treated group than in the control group.

Checks

- ▶ The results are not driven by age.
- ▶ No effects in placebo regressions when we pretend that the daddy quota was introduced 5 years earlier (1988) or 5 years later (1998).
- ▶ Reform exposure is not correlated with having more conflicts in general or with having more conflicts over, e.g., money or sex.

Conclusion

- ▶ We find robust support for the notion that the reform made treated individuals report much fewer conflicts over household work compared to non-treated individuals.
- ▶ We find that this difference is not merely driven by a time trend or by the age differences between the groups.
- ▶ We also find that there are large and robust effects on sharing of household work. In sum, we are confident that we have identified a durable effect of the daddy quota on the division of household labor.

What about the kids?

- ▶ Causal effects of parental leave on children's household work in adolescence (2013)

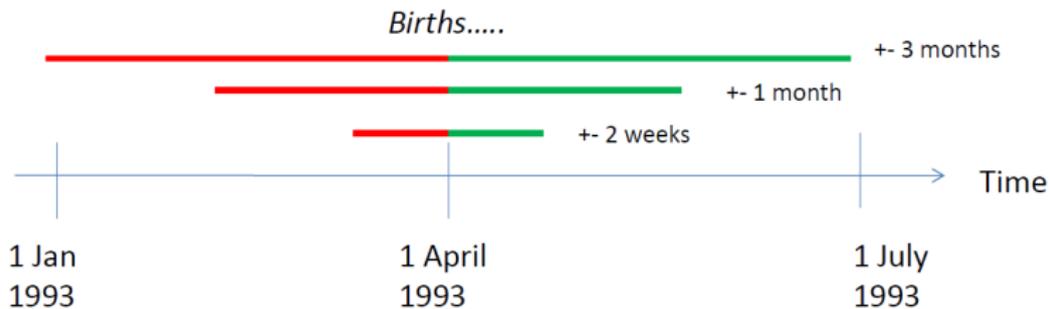
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- ▶ Aim: To identify the causal effect of parental leave on the children's household work in adolescence.

The main experiment

- 1 December 1992 - New policy announced:
 - 4 weeks of parental leave now reserved for the father (**daddy month**).
 - Applies for births on & after 1 April 1993.
 - Fast policy process: Mothers giving birth around the threshold *could not have known* about the reform at the time of conception.
 - Rules out selection into motherhood: Behavior based on **old** rules of the game; outcomes based on **old or new** rules, depending on the timing of birth.

Treatment & control



Outcomes....



Main results

- ▶ The daddy quota lead to more gender equal sharing of household work done by children 17 years after the reform.
- ▶ Hence, the effects of the reform are potentially very long-lasting.