Fathers on Leave Alone in Spain
Discourses about the leave experience
Types of Spanish Leave to Be Used by Fathers (Structural Characteristics) / 1

**Paternity Leave**: only for men, 2 weeks full paid, although some (rare) collective agreements increase it in one or two additional weeks (for instance, the municipality of Madrid acknowledges 4 weeks). Can be taken at birth of the child (the perceived “natural” use of the leave) or after maternity leave. Fully paid by the Social Security.

**Maternity Leave**: 6 weeks compulsory for women after birth + 10 weeks that can be transferred to the partner by the mother (some collective agreements recognize a longer leave). Fully paid by the Social Security.

**Breasfeeding Break**: Two ½ hours a day till the 9\textsuperscript{th} month (12\textsuperscript{th} in the public sector). If established by collective agreement, it can be summed up to 2 additional weeks (4 in the public sector) of maternity (since 2012 also to paternity) leave. Fully paid by the employer.

Escobedo, Meil and Lapuerta, in Moos and O’Brien 2013
Full–Time Parental Leave (Ex): each parent can take leave until three years after childbirth, with no limit in the number of periods of leave. Unpaid (though some regions preview a lump sum in some circumstances).

Part–Time Parental Leave (RJ): each parent can reduce the working day by between an 1/8th and 1/2 of its normal duration to care for a child until the twelfth year. Unpaid.

Escobedo, Meil and Lapuerta, in Moos and O’Brien 2013
AIMS

1) To know how fathers use parental leaves in Spain (phenomenology)

2) To understand the discourses of fathers who have been on leave alone about:
   1) Reasons to take the leave alone
   2) Experiences of taking a leave shared and alone
   3) Childbonds
HYPOTHESES

1) Father’s quota foster fathers use of leaves (Kotsadam and Fiseraas, 2011, Regue and Soll, 2010)

2) Reasons to take a leave alone are mainly instrumental, especially helping mother’s job/career (Romero Balsas, 2013)

3) Experiences being alone with the child are felt more challenging and deep than those experiences sharing a leave with the mother

4) Discourses about child bonds are intense once they have childcared alone
Methodology

1) Quantitative analysis: Descriptive analysis of two datasets:
   • Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security
   • Survey *The Social Use of Parental Leave in Spain 2012*

2) Qualitative analysis:
   • 10 In-dept interviews to fathers who have been on leave for at least 4 weeks when their partners were working
   • Method: Snowball sampling
   • Fieldwork carried out from September 2013 to March 2014
Profile of Analyzed Interviewees
10 fathers on Leave Alone

Working sector: Public sector (6), Private sector (4)
Professions: Civil Guard (2), Electro–mechanical (1), Lab technician (1), Administrative (1), Primary Teacher (1), Janitor (1), Consultant (2), Nurse (1)

Combinations of Leaves used to be ALONE with the Child:
Full–time parental leave: 3 (non–paid)
Part–time parental leave: 2 (non–paid)
Maternity leave plus Breastfeeding break: 5 (paid)

Combinations of SHARED leaves:
Paternity leave: 6 (paid)
Paternity leave plus full–time parental leave: 1 (paid/non–paid)
Paternity leave plus marriage leave: 1 (paid)
None: 1

Number of children: One child (4); Two children (6)
Age of Interviewees: Average: 39,3 years old (min: 32, max:50)
Age of youngest child: Average: 2,5 years old (min: 1; max: 7)
Level of education: Primary studies (0); Secondary Studies (5), University studies (5)
Educational homogamy (5), Woman more studies (4), Women less studies (1);
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Maternity leave</th>
<th>Paternity leave</th>
<th>Parental leave (to care children)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>353.585</td>
<td>5.575</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>334.786</td>
<td>5.726</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>326.752</td>
<td>5.805</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>318.607</td>
<td>5.798</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>293704</td>
<td>5028</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>283.923</td>
<td>4.919</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.911.357</td>
<td>32.851</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security
Phenomenology of FULL–time parental leave

Only 0.5% men against 10.4% women took such a leave, and mostly only once in life (79% women and 86% men) as is the case in part–time leave.

As in part–time leave, full–time leave is taken mainly for the first child (56% among those with 2 or more children).

And similarly it is taken also mostly after maternity leave (64% among women) and for a maximum of one year (85% of women did it so), being the most common to take it for 6 months or less (46%). Among men it is even shorter: half of them take it for 1 month and 83% for a maximum of 1 year.

After leave, all men returned to a full–time job, but only 55% of women, who a third returned to a part–time job or part–time leave (35%), while only 7% gave up paid work altogether or were fired (3%).

Source: Survey The Social Use of Parental Leave in Spain 2012
Expressive discourse

J.C. 49 years, consultant, private sector Leave Alone: 7 weeks:
It is a personal matter. I feel like being a closer father and being there from the first moments in order to create bonds with my daughter. And…well, it is also a political option, I’m a member of pro-feminist groups, of pro-feminist males, and it seemed to me that political activism had to be brought to personal practice.

Instrumental discourse

M, 43 years, consultant, private sector, Leave Alone: 12 weeks:
Well, one of the main reasons was…make sure of her (partner) labor position, which it wasn’t permanent. And of course, if she would’ve used the whole leave, her contract would have ended before. This is because se renews her contract every academic course and she would have been still on maternity leave so she could have not started the contract.
Independent caregivers

D., 44 years, administrative, public sector, Leave Alone: 10 weeks
I was in a complete anxious and nervous state and I was calling every time I could to my wife to put her nervous too: “where are you coming?, are you going to have lunch or not?, you don’t have time, do you?, are you coming back late?, etc. And I was doing nothing and paying attention of…I mean, I wasn’t able to relax, I had really been very nervous.

Dependent caregivers

C., 35 years, primary teacher, public sector, Leave Alone: 3 months
When I was with her (her wife) it was tougher. However, nowadays, since I am alone it is yes or yes, I mean if the baby cries I have to relax him. So it is a double satisfaction to get things done for him because I have done it without anyone help. And then, as a personal esteem I’m better off now.

Insecurity
Exhaustion
Routine
Passive in decision-making (also active)
**Take a Leave Alone**  
**Reasons Vs Advantages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
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<tr>
<td>Create child bonds/Childcare</td>
<td></td>
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**D.**, 44 years, *administrative, public sector*, Leave Alone: 10 weeks

The mother has it integrated, she has an immortal bond, hasn’t her? (…) we can’t have these bonds with our children from the beginning but we are generating these bonds in a daily routine. And **taking a leave was key for my because now I have bonds with my daughter almost…almost…well….not like the mother but well much more that the bonds that my father has with me.**

**M.**, 43 years, *consultant, private sector*, 2 children Leave Alone: 12 weeks:

the process that you have had with them (children) since they were little children you have them now. (…) I don’t know, **it is a pattern that we have established from the beginning.**
Preliminary Results

• Spanish regulation do not promote fathers to use a leave alone

• Using a leave alone is extremely rare and only for fathers who want to establish a strategy of caring alone

• When there are incentives (bonus) in traditional and highly male environments fathers use a leave alone. So it seems that when bonuses are set the ideological barriers are no very high

  (i.e.: 4 weeks of breastfeeding break for civil servant men instead of 2 weeks for employee mothers)

• Discourses with elements of child bonds appears mostly in the advantages while work and family balance elements are in almost all reasons to take a leave alone. Thus, it seems that motivations are less fathers’ role related than the outcomes.
The preliminary analysis suggests that there are two main strategies or reasons to take the leave alone. One is instrumental, either because the partner is self-employed or earns more money, or because they are involved in an international adoption, which requires to be at least one month in the home country of the child before returning to Spain. Economic or procedural reasons are the main logic to explain why they decided to take the leave, given the preference for non paid childcare at least during some time. The second group of reasons is fundamentally expressive and ideologically driven by a new model of caring fatherhood, intertwined with egalitarian gender role models. However, in nearly all the cases, grandparents are not easily available to take care of the children, so additional considerations on available resources for balancing working and family lives play a role. Duration of the leave is in most cases rather short, not involving more than the four weeks threshold, what implies that fathers on leave alone are not against paid childcare. Time use during leave is centered on caring the new born child, with some interruptions coming from demands from the working sphere and not changing fundamentally previous division of housework among the partners. The reaction of the social network in which they are embedded was in most, but not all cases, positive and supportive, while none of them report important negative reactions from side of the employer. These results suggest that only men who know in advance that they will not suffer discrimination after returning to the workplace take such a leave.