

Abstract

The United States lags behind other industrialized countries in its lack of inclusive and standardized parental leave policy after the birth or adoption of a child. There is an immense body of literature to predict a father's parental leave usage and its outcomes in other Western countries while there is very little research on the topic involving American fathers. This research will look at parental leave usage among a disadvantaged cohort of fathers, who have not been studied in the limited American literature on fathers' parental leave. Data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study is used to analyze predictors of fathers taking parental leave as well as how parental leave usage predicts a father's engagement with his child a year after the child is born. Our findings show that fathers who take parental leave are more engaged with their children than fathers who do not take parental leave. These findings suggest that the implementation of government-mandated paid parental leave would help to foster stronger father-child relationships in disadvantaged families.