
“Parental policy and the organizational mediation”

Bernard Fusulier
Unit of Anthropology and Sociology
University of Louvain
Belgium
bernard.fusulier@uclouvain.be

-
- The work/family issue and the organizational mediation
 - Cross-national level : Parental leave in European companies – Dublin Foundation's report
 - National level: three different organizational attitudes from first-hand data collection in 67 medium and large private organizations and companies in Wallonia
 - Organizational level: an analysis of organizational managers representations, of their symbolic Space of legitimacy for taking up parental related leave

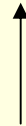
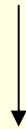
The work-family issue

- A key political concern in many advanced industrial or post-industrial countries connected with significant changes in terms of a family and work's mutation and a fast-changing economic climate : e.g. the increase in employment rates of mothers, the growth of one-parent families, the decline of the male breadwinner model, the spread of irregular working hours, the intensification of work, ageing population, and so on
- But also connected to a deep cultural transformation in Western societies: individualization and valorisation of self-fulfilment ethos versus sense of duty. The delegitimation of the « alternative/exclusive » model (to have a working life OR a family life). For a « cumulative » model (to have a working life AND a family life)

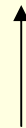
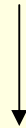
Institutional Supports

- Important differences continue to exist between countries : for instance, between childcare policies, leave policies (maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, adoption leave, palliative care leave, prophylactic removal), time-credit scheme...
- Numerous variables, in a macro, meso and micro-level, have an impact on the choice of mothers and fathers to take up a leave or not to.
- This contribution is focused on the workplaces, the organizational mediation between institutional framework and individual attitudes.

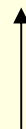
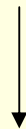
Structural and Cultural Changes in Contemporary Societies



Institutional Level → Policies



Social Space of Mediation: ORGANIZATION (also profession, family...)



Individual attitudes



Cross-national study

Parental leave in European
companies (Dublin
Foundation)

The survey

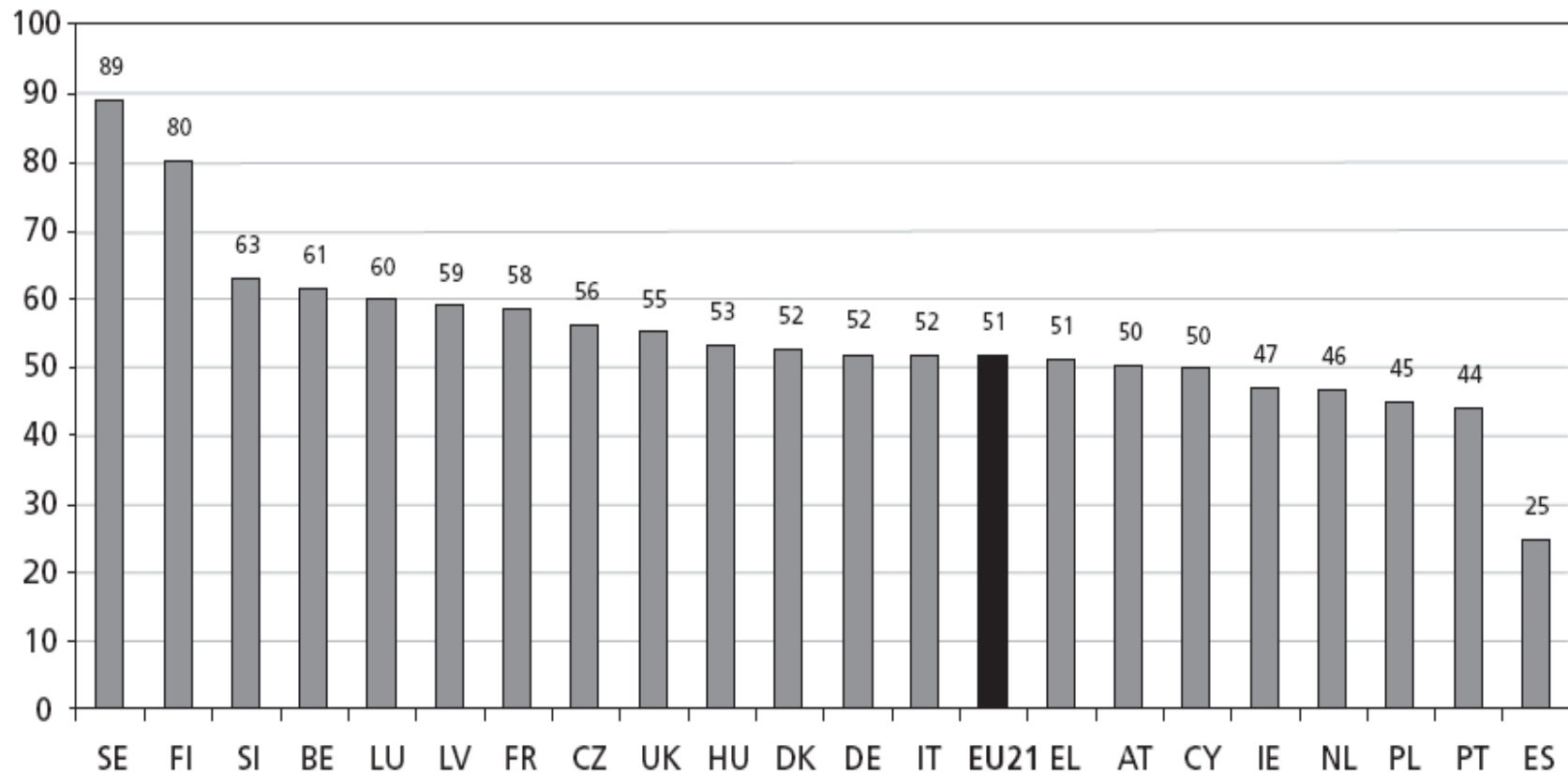
- In 2004, the Foundation launched its first Establishment Survey on Working Time in 21 European countries: the 15 'old' Member States of the European Union and six of the new Member States – the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Slovenia.
- The survey was a questionnaire-based, representative sample survey in more than 21,000 establishments, which aimed to analyse working time arrangements and work–life balance issues at the workplace by interviewing personnel managers and, where available, formal employee representatives.
- In particular, it focused on flexible working hours, overtime, part-time work, work at unusual hours, such as shift or night work and weekend work, childcare leave or other forms of longterm leave, and phased or early retirement.

General factors playing a key role

- Although the right to parental leave has been established in all European Union Member States, important differences remain in statutory provisions for parental leave.
- Overall, most of the employees who take parental leave are women; the take-up rate by women, however, varies significantly across the countries studied. Take-up rates by fathers are low in most of the countries, although notably higher in the Netherlands and Sweden than elsewhere in the EU.
- A variety of factors shape the take-up patterns of parental leave by employees in companies, in particular:
 - the financial and legal conditions of the statutory parental leave system;
 - the prevailing gender division of labour in society;
 - access to measures aimed at reconciling work and family life, such as the provision of public childcare services and opportunities for reduced working hours;
 - the labour market conditions with regard to wage levels, job insecurity and unemployment : the question of the countervailing power.

Type of establishments and take-up of parental leave

Figure 1 Establishments with employees on parental leave in past three years, by country (%)



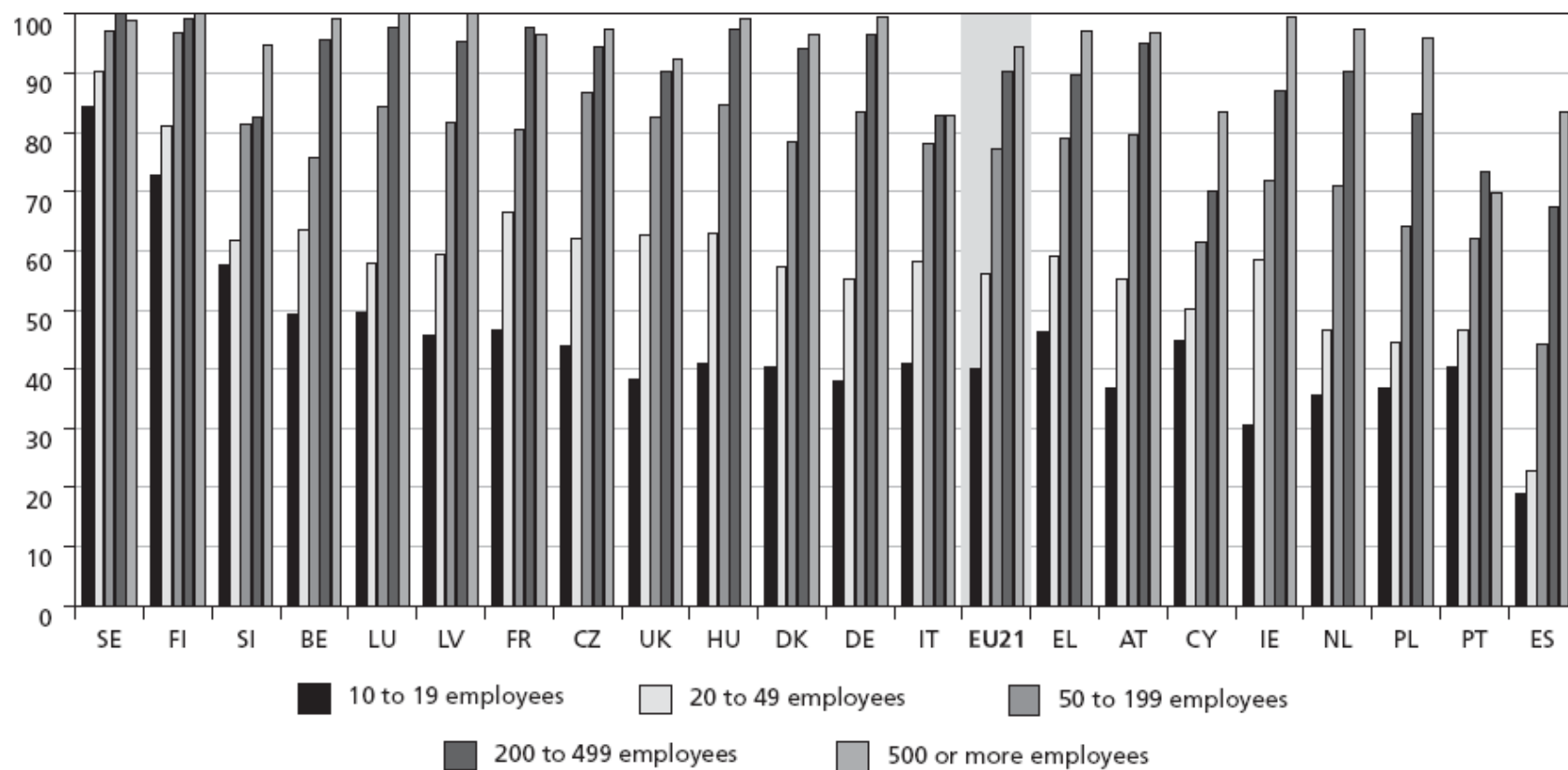
Comments

- It is important to note that the survey questionnaire only established whether at least one employee had taken parental leave, by asking 'Have any of your employees taken parental leave in the last three years?' The questionnaire did not collect any information about the proportion of employees who took leave.
- Three exceptions: SE, FI (89% and 80%) and ES (25%)
- Two surprises: DN (52%) in the Nordic regime and SI (63%) but full earnings replacement provided for employees on parental leave
- Huge country effects related to statutory provisions, public childcare provisions, labour market conditions...
- But if we control the influence of various characteristics simultaneously in comparison with SE, similar establishments in every country have a lower probability of one or more employees taking parental leave (FI small difference and ES, PT largest variation).

Influence of establishment size,
public/private, industry/service

Influence of Size

Figure 2 Establishments with employees on parental leave in past three years, by size of establishment (%)

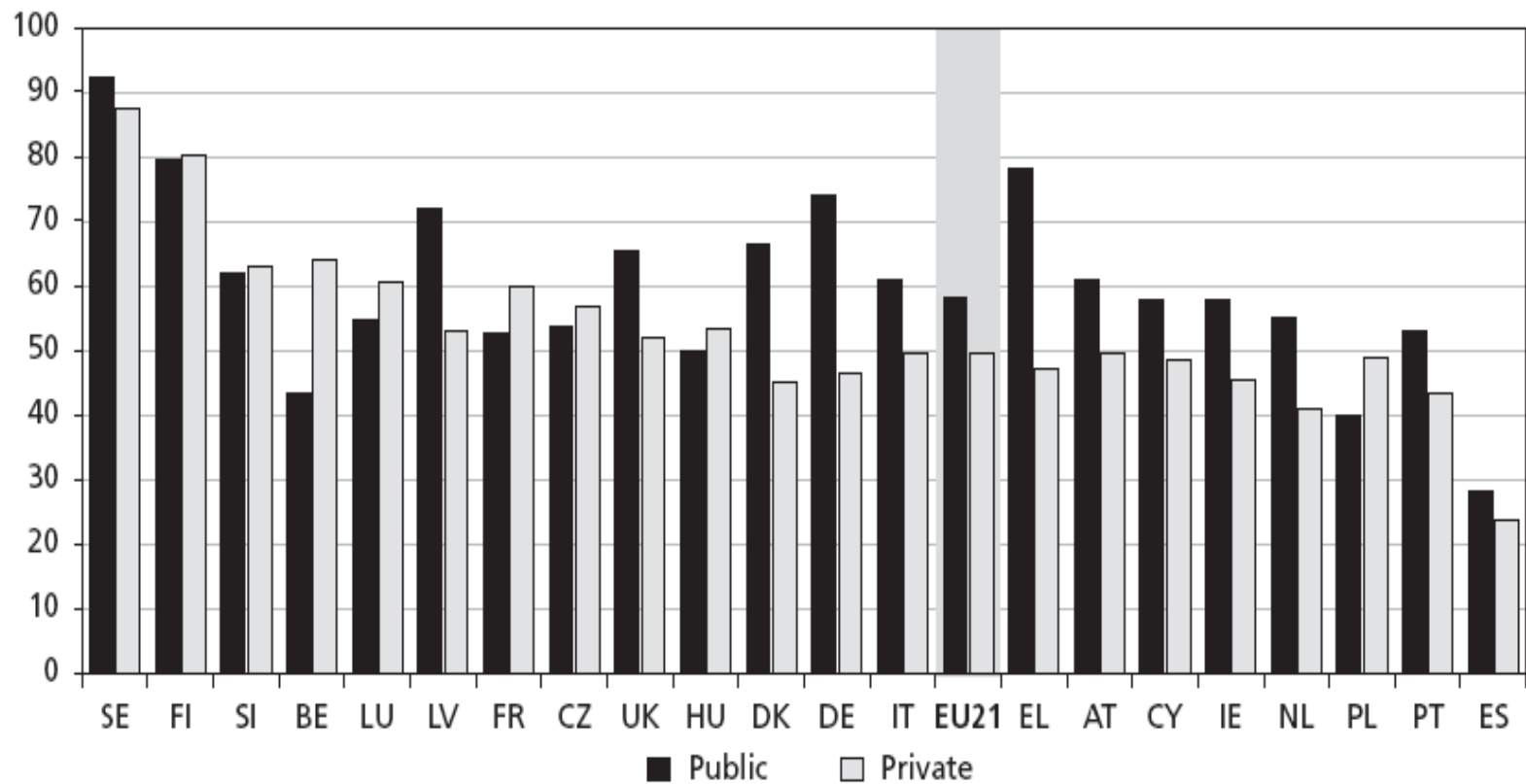


Comments

- A very significant characteristic for predicting if an establishment has experience of parental leave is 'establishment size'
- Nevertheless, establishment size is more significant in some countries than in others: little influence in SE and FI; modest in SI, BE, LU; very strong in ES

Public vs Private sector

Figure 3 Establishments with employees on parental leave in past three years, by public and private sector (%)

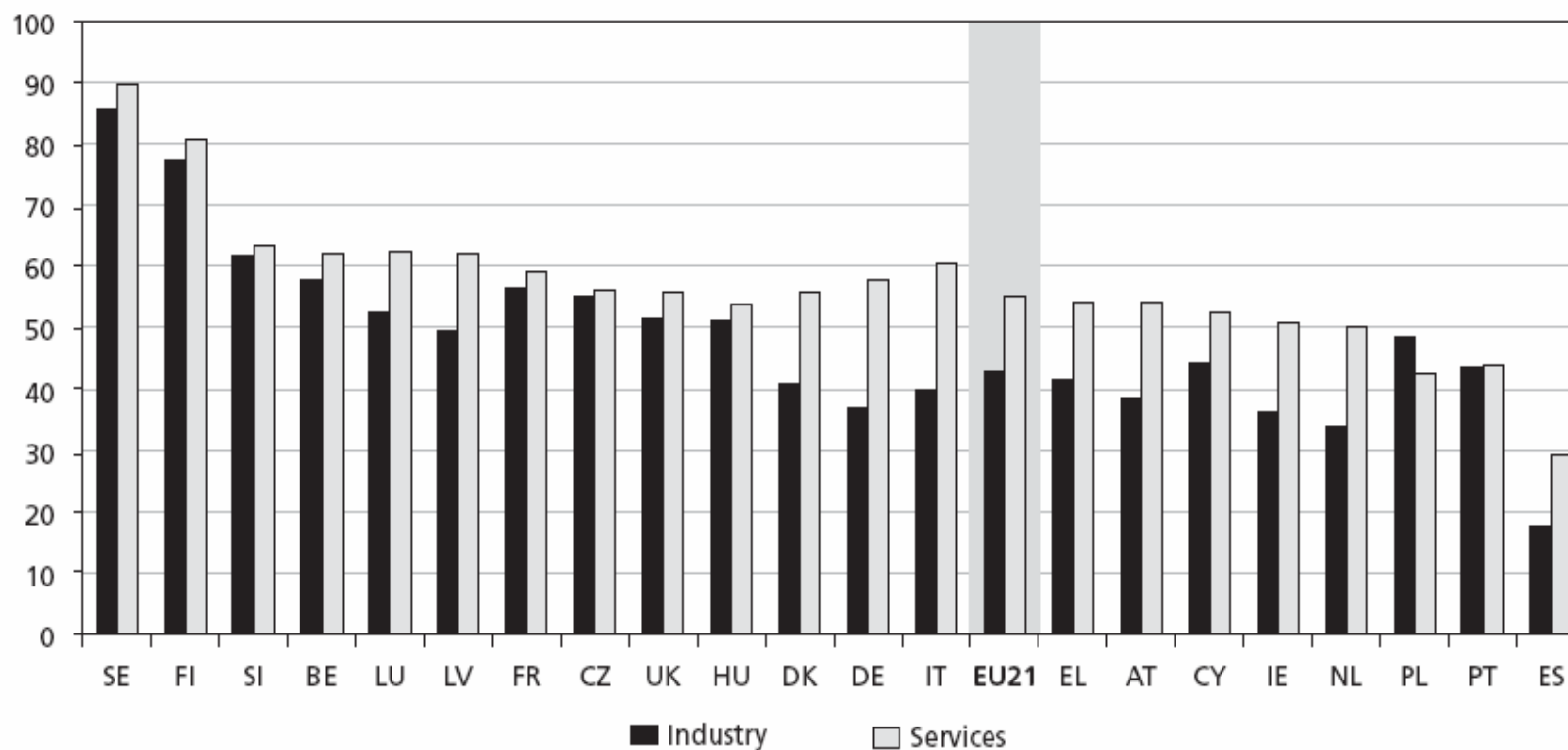


Comments

- In general, public sector establishments are more likely to have some experience of parental leave
- But can be partially explained by different leave entitlements across the sectors. For instance, the Belgian legislation does not extend all leave entitlements to the public sector and in Greece the leave entitlement is much more generous in the public sector
- Also the higher proportion of women in the public sector workforce than in the private.

Industry vs Service

Figure 4 Establishments with employees on parental leave in past three years, by sector of activity (%)



Comments

- When the effect of country, establishment size and composition of the workforce by sex is controlled, the sectors which are the most likely to experience parental leave are 'public administration' (NACE L), 'finance intermediation' (NACE J), 'business services' (NACE K) and 'retail' (NACE G).
- In contrast, the low incidence of parental leave observed for 'hotels and restaurants' (NACE H), 'construction' (NACE F) and 'transport, storage and communication' (NACE I) persist even when factors such as the proportion of women in the workforce or establishment size are taken into account.
- These sector differences which cannot be attributed to factors such as the size or demographic composition of the workforce suggest that a number of conditions may be leading to the reduced take-up of parental leave. These conditions might include a lack of support for employees to make use of parental leave reflected in weak collective agreements or by an organisational culture where a negative attitude towards parental leave prevails.



Three organizational attitudes

A survey in Wallonia (Belgium)

The survey

- In 2005, a questionnaire was set up for the survey. It concerns leave policies, the extra-legal measures and the opinions on these ones by repliers, as well as descriptors of the organisations.
- A diagnosis / photograph within 2004 and answer : are there inter-organizational differences ?
- Data-base: 67 questionnaires of medium or large organisations.

Photograph of the use of measures in 2004

- In the whole of our sample (N = 67), 667 men and 415 women had a child born in 2004.
- Maternity leave : 3 women didn't take the legal 15 weeks (49 organizations concerned)
- Paternity leave : N = 608, and of which 553, the 10 legal days (61 organizations). 59 fathers didn't take a paternity leave, but 34 in the same company (transport).
- Parental leave: 217 women and 44 men (46 organizations)

Table 1. Number of women and men having used thematic leave and number of organisations concerned.

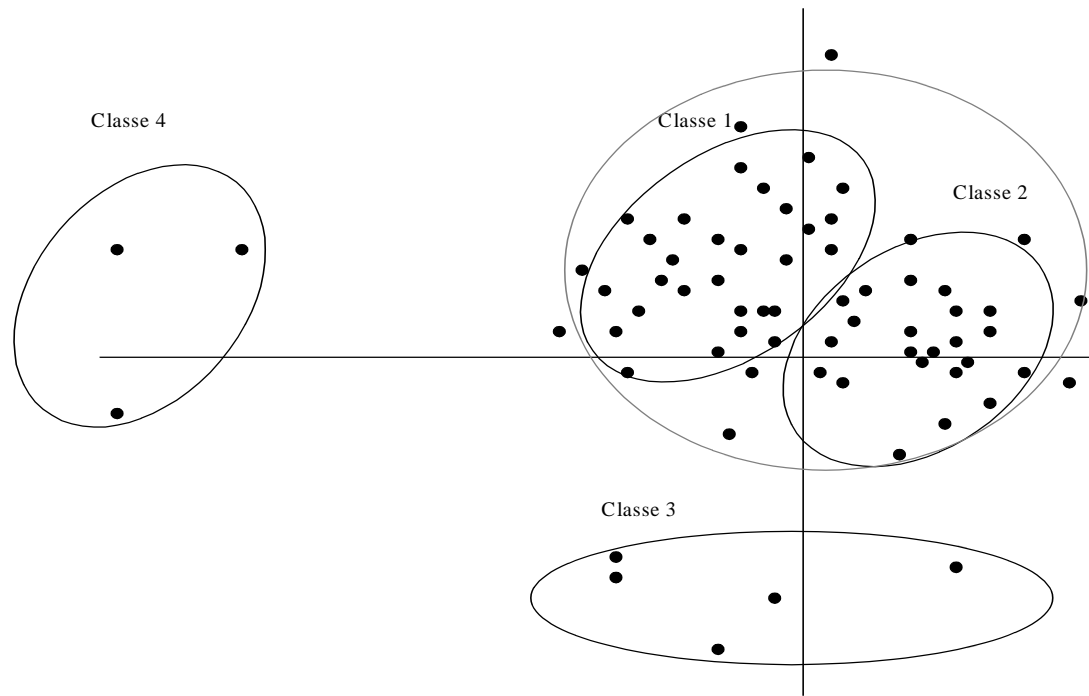
	N women	N men	N organizations
Maternity leave	412 (3 didn't take the legal 15 weeks)		49
Paternity leave		608 (of which 553, the 10 legal days)	61
Parental leave	217	44	46
Adoption leave	3	5	8
Leave for caring	43	12	25
Prophylactic removal	232		14

Table 2. Extra-legal measures and number of organisations concerned

Extra-legal measures favouring work and family life articulation		N
Working time policies	« Flexitime »	28
	Teleworking	4
	Job-sharing	7
	Capitalisation of working hours per month	30
	Capitalisation of working hours per year	17
Child care	Pre-school-age child minding	2
	After school child minding	2
	Child minding during school holidays	2
	Specific activities for children during holidays	2
Mobility	Mobility plan	10
Information and Training	Systematic information of workers on the measures	32
	Training on professional and family life articulation themes	3
Present for birth of child	Baby present	44
Additional compensations	For maternity leave	13
	For breastfeeding leave	4
	For parental leave	4
Welcome and support	Welcoming and support for parents with difficulties	22

Organization's attitude profiles

- Our analysis groups four variables concerning the use of each leave by members of the company potentially concerned by the leave:
 - a) the number of men having taken their paternity leave in 2004 on the number of men having had a child in 2004,
 - b) the number of workers having taken a parental leave,
 - c) a leave for palliative care or
 - d) a time credit, on the total workers.
- We added a variable concerning the amount of extra-legal measures set up in the company.
- The maternity leave variable was not included in our model because of the non variance of the variable in our sample.



Three organizational attitudes

« Simply legalist »

- A first organizational attitude, the largest part of our sample (N = 59), is characterised by a great use of paternity leave, but a slighter use of weakly institutionalised measures such as palliative care leave or time-credit. In this majority group, the average is low for extra-legal measures.
- We called this group "simply legalist".
- In fact, beyond structural and contextual elements of the working world, these organizations respond quite uniformly to the socio-institutional pressures (beyond the purely legislative aspect, in this case it is the more or less strong social legitimacy of one or another right).
- Thus, women who have had a child in 2004 took their maternity leave, fathers took their paternity leave and workers (more often women under 40) could take parental leave. But few other leaves and extra-legal-measures.
- We tried to split the group, but the results were not convincing.

“Reluctant”

- A second organizational attitude: Reluctant (N = 5). The organisations are below average, for example in the offer of extra-legal supports and take up of paternity leave. These organisations group some men having chosen not to take their paternity leave, which would confirm the hypothesis of an organisational effect.
- The word "reluctant" may not be the best, but it gives the idea that some working environments may not be prone to using strongly institutionalised legal leaves.
- It is possible that this category is under-represented in our sample, since we can suppose that the organisations that answered most our questionnaire may also be those who already have certain sensitivity towards the issue.

“Proactive”

- A third organizational attitude (N = 3) is different from the others because they are particularly in favour of measures that we could call weakly institutionalised: N extra-legal supports, but also time-credit and palliative care leave.
- This is why we call them proactive.
- It is in these organisations that repliers usually give a positive opinion on the effects of pro-family measures, specifically linked to the satisfaction of the workers. But we don't know who the hen or the egg is the first!

General observations

- All organisations are concerned by the issue.
- Few extra-legal measures especially if they have a direct financial cost (for example a child care centre, complementary benefits) or an organisational cost (for example teleworking or job-sharing).
- The majority of organisations could be called "simply legalist", but two other organisational attitudes. Similarity with other typologies: for instance
 - Haas and Hwang : Passive opposition, conditional support, active support
 - Mckee et al: Wait-and-see, median, innovative
- In the international literature, there are three major theoretical approaches in order to explain different organizational attitudes

Explanations in International Literature

- Approach putting the emphasis on cost/benefit calculation and managerial rationale : business case, high-commitment policy (Osterman), win-win approach (Friedman at al.)...
- Institutionalism and, a combination with the first approach, organizational adaptation theory : institutional pressures, isomorphism, social legitimacy, active adaptation with diverse organizational responds: compromise, avoid, defy, manipulate... (DiMaggio/ Powell; Goodstein ; Ingram & Simons...)
- Organizational Culture: the importance of values, basic assumptions, ethic, organizational identity, subculture (cf. Lewis; Haas ; Thompson; Tremblay...)

**The Social and Symbolic Space of
Legitimacy for Taking Up Parental
Leave in a Large Belgian Company.**

**The Perceptions of Organizational Managers
in a “simply legalist” organization**

The organizational culture

- The organizational culture have a influence on the take up of legal family related leaves (Lewis, 1996; Hass et al., 2002...)
- In general, “working fathers” have a less recognition than “working mothers” (Hoggard, 1997; Tremblay, 2005...)
- Managers play an important role (Thompson et al., 1999; Kinnunen & Mauno, 2005...), notably in contributing to the production of a more or less level/degree of legitimacy (symbolic space) for the take up of family related leaves in the social space of the company

Two hypothesis

- Managers attribute a degree of legitimacy to the take up of parental related leaves to their own group which is different to the other groups (factory workers and office workers): status issue
- Managers attribute a degree of legitimacy to the take up of parental related leaves which is different if you are a man or a woman: gender issue

The survey

- A questionnaire was set up for the survey in the Business Company in 2006 to 137 managers (all population of managers: N = 192)
- So we focused only on the point of view of managers
- 4 types of questions: degree of legitimacy in function of status and gender; the company attitude (more or less family-friendly) ; their own work/family issue; individual descriptors

In this introduction

- We study the first type of questions:
“Accordance to you, is it totally legitimate/just legitimate/illegitimate/totally illegitimate that a factory worker (M/F)/an office worker (M/F)/ a manager (M/F) takes up maternity/paternity/parental leave?”
- We will study the answers of the all group of managers (M & F); and in a second time the answers of female managers in order to check if women have a more positive attitude to the take up of leave

The sample

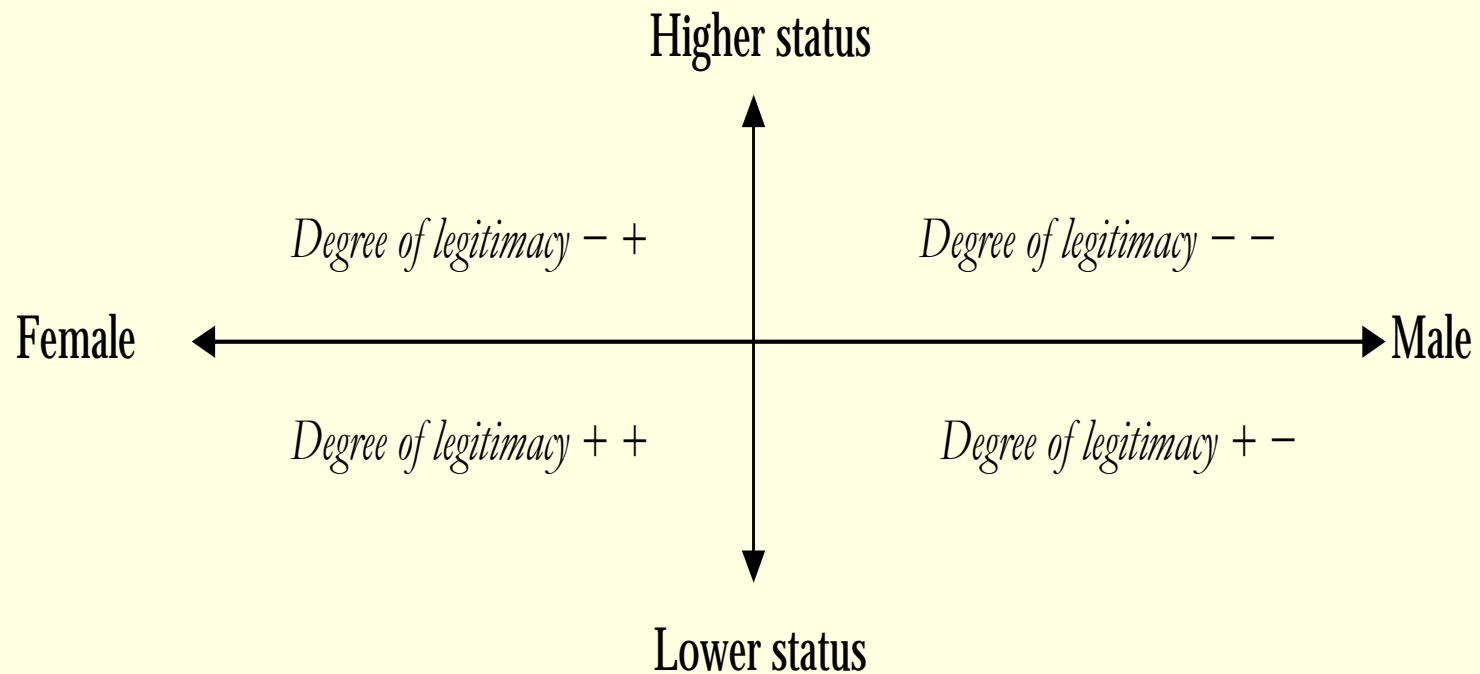
- 137 managers (71% of managers population) including 19 women (83% of female managers population)
- 91% live in couple, 75% have children, 81% are satisfied with their work/life balance and 76% think that the Company has to facilitate this balance
- This Company was studied before and, in Wallonia (Belgium), it's not a reluctant company nor, in the opposite, a pro-active company, just a legalist company as the majority in this region

Degree of legitimacy to take up parental leave (full-time)

	<i>Women</i>			<i>Men</i>		
	Factory worker	Office worker	Manager	Factory worker	Office worker	Manager
Totally illegitimate	2 1,5%	2 1,5%	5 3,6%	3 2,2%	3 2,2%	11 8%
Illegitimate	3 2,2%	3 2,2%	21 15,3%	18 13,1%	19 13,9%	33 24%
Legitimate	70 51,1%	73 53,3%	63 46%	78 56,9%	79 57,7%	63 46%
Totally legitimate	61 44,5%	58 42,3%	47 34,3%	37 27%	35 25,5%	29 21,2%
Total	136 99,3%	136 99,3%	136 99,3%	136 99,3%	136 99,3%	136 99,3%

- **Sex differentiation:** 4% consider it unacceptable (in general) for a woman –factory worker to take up parental leave. They are 15% having this opinion for a man –factory worker.
- **Status differentiation:** 4% consider it unacceptable for a woman –factory worker to take up parental leave. They are 19% having this opinion for woman –manager.

Managerial symbolic space of legitimacy



Women managers – their point of view

- The limits in analyzing “women point of view” :
=> 19 women is a small sample (but Population = 23)
- Globally we observe the same structure of legitimacy (influenced by statutory position and gender)
- The real difference : No women adopted the opinion “*totally illegitimate*”
- **Question:** Could a greater proportion of women in the company modify the social space of legitimacy?...

General observations

- **Managers' opinions** are clearly structured / influenced by **gender and status**
 - => More legitimacy for women than for men
 - => The « higher status » you have, the **less legitimacy** you have to take up parental leaves.
 - => Being a **man** and a **manager** constitute a **lack of legitimacy** and recognition for the use of family related leaves
- Women in this company have in general the same opinion BUT they **never attest an extreme unfavorable** opinion to the use of family related leaves (“totally illegitimate”)
- **Despite the differences between the degree of legitimacy, the take up of family related leaves is widely socially acceptable in this company.**

Thank You

