ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND COMPANIES’ RESPONSIVENESS TO FATHERS IN SWEDEN

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Presentation for the 4th Annual Leave Policies and Research Network Seminar, Budapest, October 2007

Research funded by the Swedish Humanities and Social Science Research Council, Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research, Wettergren Foundation, and Ford Foundation.
Why study Sweden?

• Long-standing commitment to gender equality and child well-being
• Pioneer in offering parental leave to fathers, first in 1974
• Offers universal, nontransferable flexible leave to all parents
• Heavily advertises leave to fathers
Parental leave in Sweden could

- Promote parents’ continuous connection to the labor market and shared parenting
- Challenge assumptions that women are better at childcare and men are indispensable at work
- Compensate parents fairly for caregiving as socially valued work
- Challenge traditional boundaries between work and family spheres
Parental leave 1993

• Parents had 12 transferable months to share
• ~62% of fathers took leave
• Fathers took 10% of all days taken
Parental leave 2006

- Each parent had 2 nontransferable months + 9 months to share
- 90% of fathers took leave
- Fathers took 20% of all days taken
Gender perspective

• **Not:** Why do *individual men* choose to participate so little?

• **Instead:** What assumptions and norms in the gendered institutions of family and work discourage men *as a group* from sharing leave equitably?
Progress report

• Are Swedish companies becoming more responsive to fathers’ taking parental leave?
• Are fathers working in private Swedish corporations more likely to take parental leave than before?
• What types of companies are more responsive to fathers and have more fathers taking leave?
Study methods

- Mail surveys of personnel officers in largest (most profitable) companies in Sweden
- 1993 - 200 companies
  - 80% response rate
  - 90% were 61%+ men
- 2006 - 244 companies
  - 71% response rate
  - 93% were 61%+ men
Are companies becoming responsive to fathers?

Measures:

• Formal policies and programs
• Support from supervisors and co-workers
• Managerial support (2006)
• Job priority norms (2006)
• Shared parenting ideology (2006)
### Formal policies and programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of companies with:</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy decision to support fathers</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program for white-collar fathers</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program for blue-collar fathers</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recordkeeping of leavetaking</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated person in charge</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor training</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role models in top management</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support from supervisors and co-workers

Typical reaction is positive: 1993 2006

• Blue-collar supervisors 10% 30%
• White-collar supervisors 10% 37%
• Blue-collar co-workers 18% 39%
• While-collar co-workers 26% 45%
Managerial support 2006

Percentage agreeing that managers:

• Are negative toward men’s childcare needs 6%
• Allow men to prioritize family if conflict 77%
• Facilitate job change to prioritize family 67%
• Keep men informed while on leave 58%
• Encourage supervisor support of fathers 21%
Job priority norms

Percentage agreeing the company stands for the following:

- Most productive workers prioritize job 13%
- Men should place job before family 14%
- Leavetakers aren’t focused on the job 18%
- Overtime is required to advance 48%
Shared parenting ideology

Company position on the following statement:

Mothers and fathers should spend as much time on childcare -

- Agree completely 22%
- Agree 46%
- Disagree 24%
- Disagree completely 8%
What types of companies are more responsive to fathers?

2006 multivariate analyses examined:

“Institutional factors”-
• Company size, sector, economic concerns

“Gendered substructure”-
• Men’s share of workforce (M=68%), men’s share of management (M=82%)
• Company’s adoption of caring values, adherence to masculine values
Independent correlates of company responsiveness

Significantly related (in declining order of importance):

- Companies’ adoption of caring values (5)
- Women’s share of management positions (4)
- Being in the service sector (3)
- Women’s share of workforce (2)
- Company’s concerns about negative economic consequences of more men taking leave (2)
- Company’s adherence to masculine values (1)
- Company’s concerns about cost-saving (1)

Not related: company size, concerns about productivity
Are fathers more likely to take parental leave?

Percentage of fathers who take leave in the company:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>2006*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-40%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41%+</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Asked % who took “daddy months”
Company responsiveness and leavetaking

Companies’ parental leave rate significantly and independently correlated with:

- formal policies and programs
- managerial support
- support from supervisors and co-workers
- job priority norms
- shared parenting ideology
What is the trend in leavetaking?

Percentage of companies indicating that fathers taking leave is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increasing</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreasing</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Company responsiveness and leavetaking trends

Companies’ parental leave trend significantly and independently correlated with:

• formal policies and programs
• managerial support
• support from supervisors and co-workers
• shared parenting ideology

*Not related:* job priority norms
Evidence of “win-win” scenario?

• 77% reported: It makes good business sense to help employees manage work and family responsibilities.
• 18% reported: Taking parental leave contributes positively to men’s work qualifications.
• 4% reported: More fathers taking leave likely to have positive economic consequences for the company.
Conclusion - the good news

• Swedish case suggests that social policies can move corporations toward a more family-supportive and gender-equitable workplace culture.

• Companies are more responsive to fathers in 2006 than in 1993, including more formal policies and programs and more support from supervisors and co-workers.

• Fathers in private companies appear more likely to take parental leave in 2006 than in 1993.
Conclusion - the bad news

- Less than half of companies have formal policies and programs.
- Less than half report support from supervisors and co-workers.
- Few have someone in charge or procedures to train and encourage supervisors.
- Majority do not agree with ideal of shared parenting.
- Few see taking parental leave as positive.
Future outlook

• “Implementation gap” will persevere - More fathers want to take leave entitlement but companies are not enthusiastic about this.

• Companies will slowly become more responsive to fathers because of the growing service sector.

• Increased equal employment opportunity for women could enhance companies’ responsiveness to fathers; women’s power is increasing but women’s participation in the private sector is not.

• Resistance to active fatherhood is rooted in the gendered substructure of workplaces.
Selected relevant publications:


