“Who will stay home today?”

What do we know…
What do we need to know about parental sharing of leave to care for sick children?

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Annual Meeting of the Network for Leave Policies and Related Research, 2016, Madrid
Outline

• Why study fathers’ use of leave to care for sick children?

• What do we know about fathers’ right to leave to care for sick children?
  ◦ Findings from a 2015 Swedish study

• What future research is called for?
Why study fathers’ use of leave to care for sick children?

- Unlike parental leave:
  - Doesn’t typically interfere with breastfeeding
  - Fathers home alone → builds skills
  - Requires intensive nurturing → builds skills
  - Cannot be planned ahead

- Like parental leave:
  - Challenges gendered assumptions about work and caregiving
  - Might promote shared division of labor
  - Promotes strong father-child relations
  - Could reduce discrimination against mothers
What do we know about fathers’ leave to care for sick children?

- EU directive entitles fathers to time off
- 12 EU countries offer fathers at least 10 days with pay per year (+4 non-EU), 4 EU states offer leave without pay
- Taken more than parental leave
  (e.g., Swedish fathers take 38% of sick leave days, 25% of parental leave days)
- No upward trend (Finland and Sweden)
- Taken less when partner’s income is low, when he works in private sector
2014 Swedish Study of White-Collar Fathers in Private Sector (N=1,344)

- Telephone survey, 56% response rate
- Conducted by Novus of Unionen members (largest union)
- 34% were managers
- 74% took turns being home with partner
- Overall finding:
  **Worklife was “boundary-less” – when fathers were home with sick children, many continued working and experienced stress**
Two ways fathers were at home:

VABBNING = benefit
- 84% fathers
- 47% could not detach themselves from work
- 43% worked at home to reduce workload
- 38% felt stressed about work when home
- 27% bad conscience because not at work

VOBBNING = no benefit
- 40% fathers (always/often)
- reasons:
  - time pressure
  - co-worker loyalty
  - specialization
- 35% said they were not “there” for their children
- 31% would like to not “vobba”
Conclusion?

Policy is good but…

• White-collar fathers pressured to prioritize work even when home, by work culture norms, work intensification, technology
• How can policies promote fathers disconnecting from work to do childcare?
• What research on fathers’ use of leave to care for sick children is needed?