Gendered Employer Policies in the United States
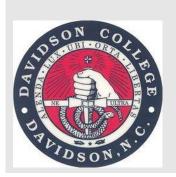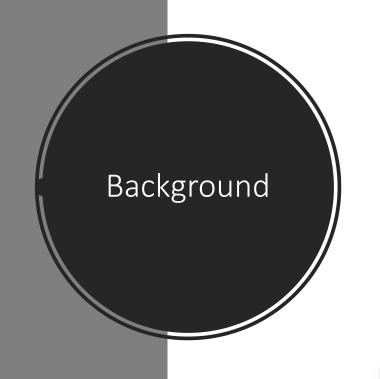
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Background

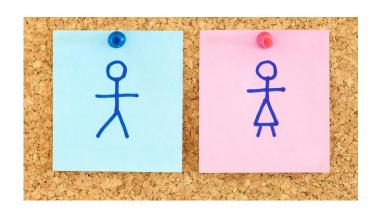The US does not offer paid parental leave

Only 16% of workers in private industry have access to paid family leave

Median leave taken by those who took time off for the birth or adoption of a child:

Mothers = 11 weeks   Fathers = 1 week

Gendering of parental leave policies

- Work organizations are not gender neutral (Haas & Hwang, 2019)
- Workplace policies are based on gendered assumptions (Thébaud & Halcomb, 2019)
- Women and men's work trajectories diverge when they become parents (Gornick & Meyers, 2008)
- Mothers penalized at work (hiring, pay gap, promotions) but expected to take leave
- Fathers as invisible at work (Burnett et al., 2013)
- Therefore, parental leave aimed at mothers

What kinds of parental leave policies do top US companies offer? Are these policies aimed solely or mainly at mothers or do they treat mothers and fathers more equally?

What effects do gendered policies have on the length of leave offered to mothers and fathers?
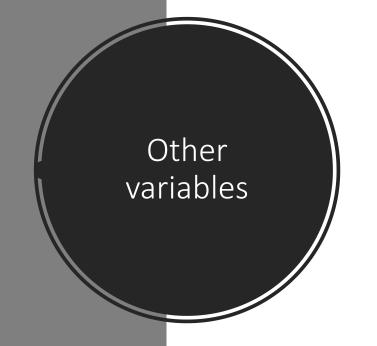
Research questions

Data

Fortune 500 companies (2018)

Information about parental leave policies from companies, company websites, news articles, organizations (NPWF, PL+US)

Sample size = 353

Gendered parental leave classification

1. **Gender equal** – only parental leave to all employees or equal periods of leave to mothers and fathers

2. **Gender modified** – equal parental leave of 6+ weeks plus an additional 6-8 weeks of leave for birth mothers

3. **Gender unequal** – maternity leave is 2+ times the amount of leave for fathers (or other parents)

4. **Gender neutral gendering** – primary and secondary caregiver leave

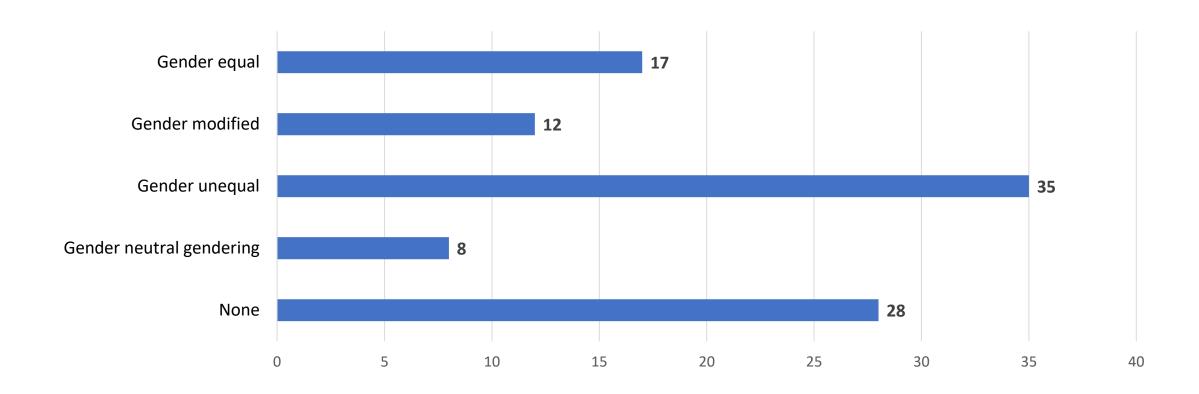5. **None** – no paid parental leave

Other variables

Number of employees

Company headquarters in a state that provides paid family leave (CA, NJ, NY, RI)

Industry sector: technology (reference), communication, consumer, energy, health care, industrial, financial, materials
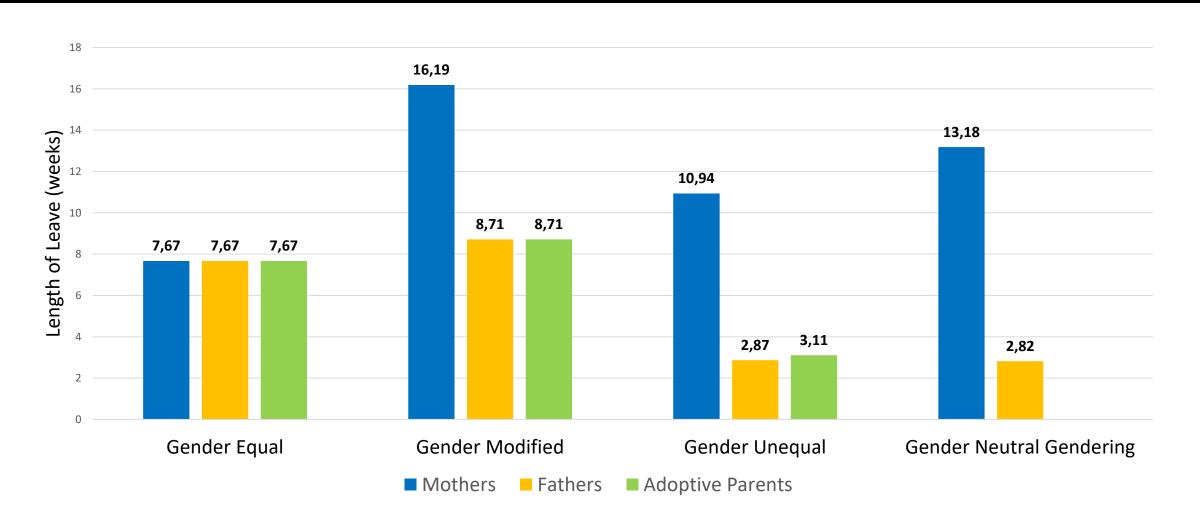
Policy classification (percentage)
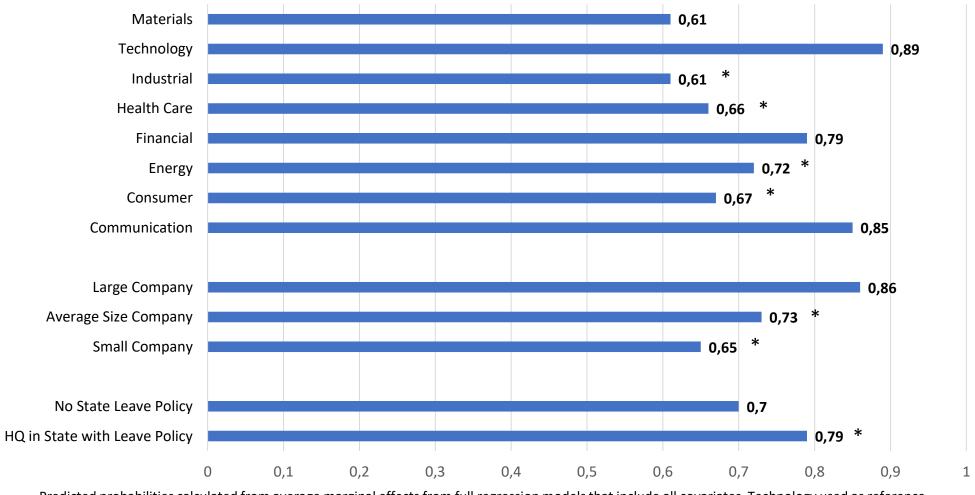
Type of parent(s) specified in leave policies

Parent(s) specified	Percent
Mothers only	11.1%
Fathers only	0.0%
Parents only	26.1%
Mothers and fathers	6.2%
Mothers and parents	50.4%
Fathers and parents	0.0%
Mothers, fathers, and parents	6.2%
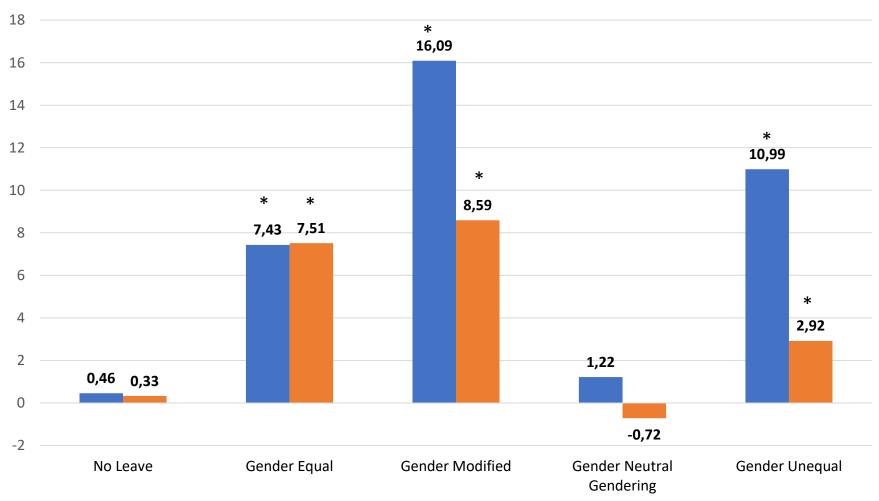
Predicted Probabilities of Having Paid Leave Policy

Category	Value	
Materials	0,61	
Technology	0,89	
Industrial	0,61	*
Health Care	0,66	*
Financial	0,79	
Energy	0,72	*
Consumer	0,67	*
Communication	0,85	
Large Company	0,86	
Average Size Company	0,73	*
Small Company	0,65	*
No State Leave Policy	0,7	
HQ in State with Leave Policy	0,79	*

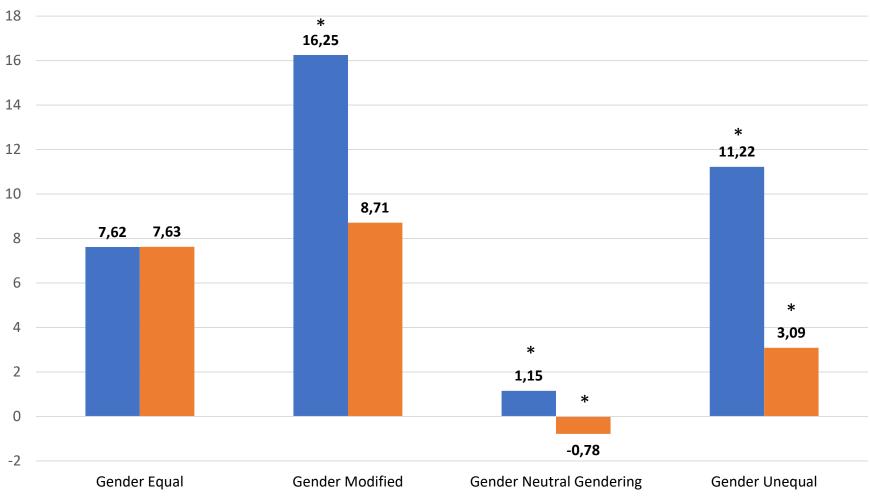Predicted probabilities calculated from average marginal effects from full regression models that include all covariates. Technology used as reference category for industry.

Predicted Length of Leave Offered (weeks)

Predicted values calculated from average marginal effects from full regression models with all covariates included. *Indicates significant difference ($p < .05$) from companies that do not have a paid leave policy.

Predicted Length of Leave Offered (weeks)

Predicted values calculated from average marginal effects from full regression models with all covariates included. *Indicates significant difference ($p < .05$) from companies classified as having a gender equal policy.

Conclusions

- What kinds of parental leave policies do top US companies offer?
  - 72% of Fortune 500 companies offer paid parental leave
  - Gender unequal policies are the most common policies offered
  - Fathers are not a priority

- What effects do gendered policies have on the length of leave offered to mothers and fathers?
  - Mothers get more leave under gender modified and gender unequal policies
  - Fathers get more leave under gender modified and gender equal policies
  - Mothers and fathers lose out under gender neutral gendering policies

Limitations and future research

- Limitations
  - Fortune 500 companies as select group
  - Missing data on 29% of companies – our study likely overestimates paid parental leave

- Future research
  - Gender distribution in companies and/or female CEO

Thank you!

Logistic regression model predicting having a paid parental leave policy

Variable	OR	SE
Number of Employees (thousands)	1.01*	0.00
HQ in State with Leave	1.70*	0.36
Industry (Technology as Reference)		
Communication	0.67	0.65
Consumer	0.23**	0.12
Energy	0.29*	0.16
Health Care	0.43*	0.22
Industrial	0.23***	0.14
Financial	0.17†	0.06
Materials	0.17*	0.14

N = 353. Models account for clustering by US state.
$^{†}p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

OLS regression models predicting length of leave (in weeks)

Variable	All Companies				Companies with Leave Policies			
	Mothers		Fathers		Mothers		Fathers	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	b	SE
Policy Classification								
Gender Equal	6.96***	1.06	7.18***	1.21	-	-	-	-
Gender Modified	15.63***	0.53	8.27***	0.46	8.63***	1.25	1.07	1.34
Gender Neutral Gendering	0.76	0.74	-1.05†	0.62	-6.47***	1.61	-8.42***	1.84
Gender Unequal	10.52***	0.48	2.59***	0.23	3.60***	0.82	-4.55***	1.18
Number of Employees (thousands)	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00
HQ in State with Leave	1.44	0.90	1.27*	1.13	1.87	2.23	1.64*	0.74
Industry (Technology as Reference)								
Communication	-4.58**	1.65	-2.81**	1.02	-5.12**	1.86	-3.16**	1.13
Consumer	-4.15**	1.42	-2.55**	0.90	-4.48**	1.54	-2.74**	0.95
Energy	-4.51**	1.54	-2.69*	1.13	-5.09**	1.81	-3.04*	1.38
Health Care	-4.18*	1.76	-2.34†	1.28	-4.71*	2.13	-2.59	1.56
Industrial	-4.68**	1.30	-2.69**	0.84	-5.34***	1.37	-2.99**	0.92
Financial	-3.28*	1.49	-2.02†	1.12	-3.45*	1.69	-2.13	1.28
Materials	-4.84**	1.63	-2.95*	1.15	-5.97**	2.03	-3.70*	1.47
R^2	.64		.48		.43		.37	
N	353				254			