

**GENDER AND  
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE  
Correlates of Companies'  
Responsiveness to Fathers in Sweden**

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*This study explores company support for men's participation in child care in Sweden, where the government promotes gender equality. The authors investigate the influence of two ideologies about gender, the doctrine of separate spheres and masculine hegemony, on the responsiveness to fathers shown by Sweden's largest corporations. Father-friendly companies had adopted values associated with the private sphere and prioritized entrance of women into the public sphere. Companies with less masculine hegemony provided some informal but no formal support to fathers. Following social justice theory, future research could focus on how fathers come to perceive the lack of corporate responsiveness as unfair.*

**Keywords:** *gender; organizational culture; fatherhood; Sweden; gender equality*

Some companies in industrialized societies have become more family friendly, providing benefits (e.g., flextime) to help employees combine paid work and caring responsibilities. Nevertheless, in their review of the research literature, Glass and Estes (1997, 300) conclude, "Even the most optimistic observers of corporate climate admit that very few employers have moved beyond token acknowledgment of the family needs of employees." Bond (2002) reports that important benefits such as child care vouchers and paid parental leave were no more common in 2002 than in 1992.

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Where they exist, family-friendly policies can “threaten to re-create earlier forms of gender inequality” (Gerson and Jacobs 2001, 221) because policies target women and then penalize those who use them (Brannen and Lewis 2000). Few policies target men, because companies underestimate men’s feelings of work-family conflict and their desire to enjoy better integration between work and the rest of their lives (Wise and Bond 2003). Milliken, Dutton, and Beyer (1990, 100) maintain that “work-family issues evoke strongly held values about parenting, about gender roles and about the appropriate boundaries between work and family [that] make them different from the typical strategic issues with which managers deal.”

In this study, we explore the circumstances under which companies move beyond “token acknowledgment of the family needs of employees.” This new territory would be reached when fathers as well as mothers are assumed by managers and coworkers to share responsibility for the care and well-being of children. This assumption would be reflected in the culture of work organizations and taken into account in the activities that companies regularly undertake to strategically reach their goals. Companies that are responsive to fathers have policies and work practices that facilitate fathers’ active participation in early child care; they have accepted that norms associated with the family sphere are important enough to introduce into the work setting; they take for granted that fathers as well as mothers are capable of and interested in providing early child care. For the purposes of this study, we label this type of responsiveness “father friendliness.”

We hypothesize that companies’ general lack of responsiveness to men’s family responsibilities is connected to the gendered substructure of organizational culture. The cultures of most work organizations remain grounded in beliefs and values that reinforce the separation of work and family life (“the doctrine of separate spheres”) and reproduce men’s advantage and dominance in the labor market (“masculine hegemony”). Reinforcement of the ideologies of separate spheres and masculine hegemony in the labor market may help to produce gender differences in the ability to combine work and family roles (Morgan and Milliken 1992).

We present a framework for examining the relationship between organizational culture and companies’ responsiveness to fathers that emphasizes the role played by ideologies serving as the foundation for the “gendered substructure” of work organizations. We test this framework through an exploratory investigation of the conditions under which companies are more supportive of men’s involvement in child care. In most societies, public opinion and government policy reinforce a division of labor that calls for

women's being more responsible than men for the nurturing and physical well-being of young children. We study Sweden, a society that is an exception to this rule, where "equal parenthood" has been a public policy goal for 35 years, so that we might more closely examine the role corporate culture plays in companies' support for fathers. In a related study, we found that fathers reported themselves to take paid parental leave more often in companies that were considered by personnel officers to be modestly "father friendly" (Haas and Hwang 1995). In this article, we probe further to explore what factors are associated with companies' level of father friendliness. In particular, we investigate the extent to which the gendered substructure of organizational culture is related to companies' level of responsiveness to fathers and, consequently, the possibility of achieving one fundamental condition for gender equality—men's shared responsibility for child care.

## GENDER AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

It is widely recognized that every corporation has a distinctive "culture," and organizational culture has become a basic concern in the study of organizations (Hofstede 1998). According to organizational theorists Trice and Beyer (1993, 75), "the substance of an organization's culture resides in its ideologies, which are emotionalized, shared sets of beliefs, values, and norms that both impel people to action and justify their actions to themselves and others." These ideologies are often below organizational members' consciousness and may not be shared by all members; however, they still act to encourage some behaviors while constraining others.

Social scientists have noted that there is a gender "substructure" or "subtext" involved in the culture of work organizations (Acker 1998; Ferguson 1984; Mills 2002; Swanberg 2004). According to Britton (2000, 419), "gender is a foundational element of organizational structure and work life." The gendered substructure of work organizations significantly influences work activities and practices, decisions affecting efficiency and productivity, wage-setting and promotion criteria, and the extent to which employees' family lives are taken into consideration at the workplace. We distinguish two interrelated, overlapping, and mutually reinforcing ideologies concerning gender that appear to be strong features of the traditional culture of work organizations that might negatively correlate with companies' responsiveness to fathers.

## Separate Spheres

The first ideology is the doctrine of separate spheres, which assumes that the public sphere of work and the private sphere of the family are, and should remain, separate spheres of social life. Ely and Meyerson (2000, 18) state this is “the single most pervasive gendered theme in modern organizations.” The public sphere, with which men are associated, is more highly valued than the private sphere, with which women are associated (Fletcher 2005). According to Friedlander (1994, 61), the sharp boundary that is artificially drawn between the worlds of work and family creates “intentional or inadvertent pressures that make success at work and success at home an ‘either-or’ proposition.” The doctrine of separate spheres allows employers to claim that work organizations have little responsibility for human reproduction and family well-being. They therefore need not take steps to assist employees in managing caregiving activities, even when it is obvious that corporations rely on families for supplying future consumers and employees (Acker 1998).

The doctrine of separate spheres also contributes to the idea that knowledge, skills, and patterns of social interaction developed by caregivers in the family sphere are not relevant as qualifications for jobs in the public arena of employment (e.g., caring, orientation toward the collective interest) (Fletcher 1998). Family-related skills and patterns of social interaction are also ordinarily considered inappropriate as models for the way work is organized in companies (e.g., basing work relationships on cooperation).

The doctrine of separate spheres assumes that woman’s place is in the home and man’s place is in the labor market. Legislation in most industrialized countries prohibits companies from discriminating against women in recruiting, training, and promotion; however, companies can vary considerably in the extent to which they actively promote equal employment opportunity for women. Employment discrimination against women often rests on the assumption that women cannot be committed to paid work because of their past, present, or future roles as mothers (Benschop and Doorewaard 1998).

The doctrine of separate spheres also helps to limit men’s opportunities to participate in family life, since it is assumed that men should be fully committed employees in the labor market. Although men enjoy greater employment opportunities than women, Hojgaard (1997, 258) maintains that in the labor market, “fatherhood has a marginal status, is rendered invisible.”

In reality, public and private spheres are “indivisibly connecting and activities in one arena have significant implications for those taking place

in the other” (Dominelli 1991, 8). If work and family were conceptualized as a single system, organizations would find ways to “integrate the seemingly divergent values of emotionality and instrumentality” (Friedlander 1994, 62). Individuals would be seen as whole persons living complex lives; work-family conflicts could be openly acknowledged and addressed by work organizations.

### **Masculine Hegemony**

The second ideology that forms the basis for the gendered substructure of organizational culture is masculine hegemony, acceptance that men have, and should continue to have, a monopoly of power at the workplace. Men’s presumed suitability for power leads to men’s rising to the top of organizational hierarchies, even in occupations traditionally dominated by women (Padavic and Reskin 2002). It also helps to explain why aspiring women encounter the “glass ceiling” even when their styles of management are similar to men’s (Maier 2000). Men’s power reproduces itself not because women lack qualifications for management positions but because the power positions occupied by men operate as an exclusive and closed men’s club (Ferguson 1984; Itzin and Newman 1995). According to Maier (1992, 31), “male managerial behavior is unconsciously accepted as the norm which all managers aspiring to the top must assimilate into.” While men in top management positions secure for themselves good salaries and benefits, they are also expected to work long hours and be constantly on call; they cannot be expected to give serious attention to their caregiving responsibilities (Maier 1992).

Within work organizations, masculine hegemony has helped to institutionalize norms culturally associated with men and masculinity (Billing 2000). The culture and practice of work organizations are based on traditional masculine norms such as aggressiveness, tough-mindedness, ruthless competitiveness, impersonality, compulsive orientation to task accomplishment, ambition, focus on short-term self-interest, and the overwhelming importance of individual achievement and material success (Burud and Tumolo 2004; Newman 1995). These norms affect all aspects of work—recruitment, promotion processes, reward determination, work organization, and coordination. According to Itzin and Newman (1995, 5), “male-typical patterns of behaviour, values and styles are established as the ‘norm’ against which women are defined as ‘other.’” Within male-dominated companies, women-dominated occupations remain less prestigious and rewarded than occupations based on traditional norms of masculinity.

The tendency for men to hold jobs with more advancement opportunities and better pay results in individual couples’ deciding “rationally” that

women, rather than men, should subordinate paid employment to the demands of family life. According to microeconomic theory, it is more “efficient” for the family if women rather than men reduce their employment involvement to do family work, since women face labor market discrimination (Menaghan and Parcel 1991). Masculine hegemony thus reinforces the doctrine of separate spheres and helps to socially construct opportunities for women to become more adept parents.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND FATHERHOOD IN SWEDEN**

Organizational change in terms of family friendliness has been hypothesized to more likely occur where the government encourages changes in policies and practices (Lyness and Kropf 2005). If this is true, then Sweden provides an ideal setting to investigate factors related to organizational change. Swedish social policy has been based on the idea that men and women should have the same responsibilities for earning family income and for raising children. Since 1992, every corporation must file an “action plan for equality” with the equality ombudsman, which outlines specific measures to be undertaken to recruit, retain, and promote women and to facilitate men’s participation in child care (Haas and Hwang 2000). All employed fathers are awarded two additional nontransferable months of paid parental leave (averaging 80 percent of salary up to an income ceiling) and have the right to share an additional nine months of paid parental leave with mothers, for each child. All parents are entitled to paid time off to care for sick children. The Swedish government’s requirement that employers allow all parents to take time off from work for child care purposes dramatically challenges the two ideologies described above—that organizations can assume that work and family are separate spheres and that men, because of their higher labor market status, are indispensable at the workplace.

In general, Sweden has made impressive strides toward the goal of gender equality. Almost all women are in the paid labor force, and women’s pay levels in comparison to men’s are higher than elsewhere (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi 2005). Ninety percent of fathers take parental leave and regularly have solo responsibility for preschool-aged children; more than half report making adjustments to work to spend more time with children (reducing work hours, turning down promotions, refusing overtime, and changing to a less stressful job) (Haas, Chronholm, and Hwang 2006; Haas and Hwang 2000).

Despite this success, Sweden is far from achieving gender equality. Sweden's labor market remains one of the most gender segregated in the world, with women and men occupying jobs traditionally associated with their sex, and women are seldom in power positions (Haas 2003). Fathers take only about 20 percent of parental leave days and about one-third (36 percent) of days for care of sick children (Haas, Chronholm, and Hwang 2006). In about two-thirds of households, women are still more responsible than men for child care, and women are much more likely to work part-time and make adjustments to their work in response to family demands (Haas and Hwang 2000). A 2000-2001 time diary study found that fathers spent 58 percent of the time mothers reported spending with children younger than age two (Duvander 2003).

Progress toward gender equality has been slowest in private corporations, whose values differ significantly from those of public work organizations. Men dominate private corporations in Sweden—63 percent of private-sector employees are men, and 90 percent of top positions are occupied by men (Haas 2003). While evidence suggests that men's caregiving role has become more visible in the culture of the private workplace, they still face problems when it comes to being able to adjust work to family demands (Kugelberg 2000). Fathers who work in the private sector are much less likely than fathers in the public sector to take parental leave, which their employers perceive as disrupting "the orderly flow of work, causing difficulties for managers, supervisors and co-workers" (Acker 1998, 199).

Our study was inspired by our interest in understanding the extent to which private Swedish companies facilitate or subvert social policy advocating men's active involvement in child care. Given the tenacity of gender inequality, we expected that some companies would lag behind others in terms of being responsive to fathers, while others would have changed practices and policies to be more in line with state policy makers' goal of equal parenthood. We hypothesized that company progress would be related to the extent to which the gendered substructure of private work organizations remains traditional, focused on the assumptions and values associated with the doctrine of separate spheres and masculine hegemony.

## HYPOTHESES

We developed four hypotheses regarding correlates of companies' support for fathers' participation in child care that were designed to examine the

two ideologies that support the gendered substructure of work organizations (doctrine of separate spheres and masculine hegemony). These ideologies are interrelated and reinforcing, so it was difficult to develop distinctive hypotheses for each separate ideology. However, the first two hypotheses (1a and 1b) explore the persistence of the doctrine of separate spheres, while the next pair (2a and 2b) explores the extent of masculine hegemony.

To explore companies' perspectives on the doctrine of separate spheres, we examined whether company values aligned with traits that are traditionally associated with the private (family) sphere, which we call "an ethic of caring." This includes concern for others, sense of social responsibility, and preference for collaborative over competitive interaction. Companies with higher scores on this measure are crossing the boundary of separate spheres to incorporate values from the private sphere into the public. Feminist scholars have developed the concept of the ethic of care (concern for meeting the physical and emotional requirements of others) to draw attention to the importance of caregiving as a public as well as private responsibility, to be done informally or formally, for pay or not (Daly 2001). While exploration of the ethic of care is usually discussed in terms of individuals' moral dilemmas, family decision making about role-taking, or nation-states' provision of welfare policies (Glenn 2000), Leira and Saraceno (2002) and Glass (2000) maintain that it can also be examined in the labor market. Hence, our first hypothesis is

*Hypothesis 1a:* Companies will be more father friendly when companies exhibit an ethic of caring, representing values traditionally associated with the private (domestic) sphere, versus the public sphere; this ethic includes a concern for employee welfare, sense of social responsibility, and focus on collaborative models of work.

Another way we looked at companies' subscription to the doctrine of separate spheres was to examine interest in integrating women, formerly associated with the private sphere, into the public sphere of employment. If an organization undervalues women's work, for example, because women are seen as having a primary commitment to the domestic sphere or because of stereotypical attitudes about women's capabilities, this is a sign that the values of the organization are still based on the belief that family and work are separate spheres. When a company denies equal employment opportunity to women, it reinforces women's traditional responsibility for child care and their confinement to the private sphere. Negative attitudes toward women workers might also lead men to assume that they should distance themselves from women and their traditional concerns for family life (Mills 1989).



Russell, James, and Watson (1988) maintain that gender equality cannot be reached unless companies acknowledge the interplay between women's employment opportunities and men's opportunities to be involved in early child care; this acknowledgment would help to dissolve boundaries between the private and public spheres. Hence, our second hypothesis is

*Hypothesis 1b:* Companies will be more father friendly when they value the goal of integrating women, formerly in the private, domestic sphere, fully into the public sphere of employment, as evidenced by their prioritizing the goals of improving women's equal pay and promotion opportunities.

The following two hypotheses explore the influence of masculine hegemony on companies' responsiveness to fathers. Masculine hegemony can be measured partly by how dominant men are in the workforce and whether they hold all top management positions. We expected that companies more dominated by men would be less accustomed to and less supportive of employees' family responsibilities.

Some researchers have found that work-family issues receive more attention in U.S. companies where women are a higher proportion of the workforce (Seyler, Monroe, and Garand 1995), while other researchers have found that women's representation does not matter (Pitt-Catsouphes et al. 2004). Previous studies have found that women's share of management positions increased companies' likelihood of being family friendly (Galinsky and Bond 1998; Pitt-Catsouphes et al. 2004). Lyness and Kropf (2005, 55) suggest that including women in important corporate roles may help to "temper otherwise male-gendered organizational cultures." Hence, we offer the following:

*Hypothesis 2a:* Companies' level of father friendliness will be greater when companies are less dominated by men, that is, when women are a higher proportion of the workforce and when they are present in management.

Men's dominance in companies also relates to values. Companies with operating principles that reflect values arising out of masculine hegemony would seem likely to be less supportive of men in fathering activities than companies that have rejected adherence to strong masculine norms, seeing them as counterproductive as the foundation for economic activities that involve people with multiple life priorities. Therefore, we propose the following:

*Hypothesis 2b:* Companies will be more father friendly when the organizational culture is less characterized by traditional masculine values, emphasizing short-term profit and competition.

Most research on the determinants of companies' level of responsiveness to employees' caregiving roles focuses on institutional factors. Our study controlled for three such factors—company size, sector, and business climate—to see if variables related to the gender substructure of organizations would remain as important independent correlates of father friendliness in the Swedish context.

It has been theorized that larger companies can better afford to provide benefits, are more visible and thus under pressure to seek societal approval by responding to employees' changing needs, and have larger human resource staffs to develop programs and keep up with changing employee needs. Some studies have found that larger companies are more family friendly (Galinsky and Bond 1998; Pitt-Catsouphes et al. 2004), while others have not (Bardoel 2003; Deitch and Huffman 2001). MacDermid, Litchfield, and Pitt-Catsouphes (1999) note that smaller firms' less complicated and formal structure and reputation for innovativeness might make it easier for employers to establish family-friendly policies and practices, particularly around the issue of work hour adjustment.

American studies have found that service-oriented companies are more likely than other types of companies to offer family benefits (Galinsky and Bond 1998; Morgan and Milliken 1992). Women's domination of service-sector jobs has been mentioned as a reason why service companies are more family oriented.

Economic rationality theory would predict that hard economic times would prevent companies from establishing policies and programs to promote father friendliness, particularly if such programs were not seen as directly tied to company productivity (Wax 2004). A study of U.S. companies showed that "business climate" (including downsizing and concerns about financial performance) helped to predict companies' responsiveness toward families (Galinsky and Bond 1998). Hence our last hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3:* Variables measuring gender ideologies in work organizations will contribute significantly to explaining companies' levels of father friendliness, controlling for institutional factors often cited as potential correlates of companies' likelihood of adopting work-family benefits, including (1) company size, (2) sector of the economy, and (3) business climate.

## STUDY METHOD

### Sample

We conducted a mail survey of Sweden's 250 largest joint stock companies (based on annual sales) employing at least 100 people. The nine-page Swedish-language survey was directed to the personnel director by name, and 200 companies (80 percent of the initial sample) returned completed questionnaires after mail and phone reminders. One-fourth (23 percent) of the companies were service related, one-fourth (23 percent) were retail oriented, and more than half (54 percent) were manufacturing concerns. Altogether, the companies surveyed employed 391,105 workers, with a range of 103 to 25,000 (mean = 1,953, median = 800).

The vast majority of respondents (89 percent) indicated that their titles were director of personnel; the remainder were chief executive officers and personnel officers' assistants. Sixty percent indicated they were in top management. Organizational expert Arne Kalleberg (1994) recommends that researchers collect data on organizations from someone who is well informed and has a good overview of the entire organization, such as top managers and heads of personnel. Personnel directors have been used as respondents in other studies of organizations' work-family benefits conducted in Australia and the United States (Bardoel 2003; Cantor et al. 2001; Galinsky and Bond 1998).

A limitation of this study is our reliance on only one person to report on some aspects of company culture that can be unstated, in dispute, informal, or in flux. Personnel directors might feel obligated to present their company in an overly positive light, which in Sweden would mean reporting that their company strongly promoted gender equality in general and shared parenting in particular. However, as our findings below show, few personnel directors actually gave their companies high marks for gender equality, and there is considerable variation in companies' levels of father friendliness and support for equal employment opportunity for women. We thus feel confident that personnel directors are providing us with reasonably valid responses. Research involving more representatives of each company, especially at different levels (managers as well as employees), would be ideal to more fully understand the impact of corporate culture on fathers.

These corporations are part of a capitalist economy where profit seeking is the goal. To that extent, our findings might be applicable in other societies with strong capitalist economies. However, companies in Sweden also exist in a cultural context that promotes the goal of gender equality, including

fathers' participation in child care, more strongly than anywhere else. This is why this sample offers us an intriguing opportunity to explore the circumstances under which profit-seeking companies in an egalitarian cultural climate are more responsive to fathers.

### **Measuring Father Friendliness**

A broad index of corporate responsiveness toward fathers was developed for the survey, which we label the father-friendliness index (FFI). The FFI consists of 16 items, measuring four dimensions (subindices) of father friendliness: formal policy, formal programs, informal support, and informal flexibility. This index was a pioneering effort designed to count the ways a company can be father friendly. Companies received 0 to 10 points for how friendly they were on each of the 16 measures, and the scores for all measures were added together (maximum possible score 160). Parental leave and a reduced work week received the most attention in the development of our measures because they require fathers to be away from work the most, which runs contrary to traditional expectations of men as indispensable employees and committed breadwinners. All companies were father friendly to some extent (lowest score was 25). For each of the 16 measures, at least one company earned the highest possible points. The average father friendliness score was modest (49.48 out of 160); only 3 percent of companies had scores 50 percent or more of what was possible (80 and greater).

Items examining formal policy asked respondents to indicate (in order of frequency mentioned by respondents) (1) how important it was (very/some-what/not so important) for the company to help all workers combine work and family roles (mean = 3.75 out of 10), (2) if the personnel officer had received training in helping men combine work and family (mean = 2.85), (3) if the company kept records to show how many fathers took family leave (considering this was scored as a middle value; mean = 2.20), and (4) if the company had made a formal decision to help men combine work and family (if being considered, a middle value was awarded; mean = 0.70). The average company score for formal policy was 9.50 (out of 40).

Items measuring formal programs recorded (1) the extent to which all white-collar and blue-collar employees had access to formal flextime (mean = 1.20), (2) if a special person or group was in charge of encouraging men to take family leave benefits (if being considered, it was scored as a middle value; mean = 0.40), (3) if an incentive program had been established to encourage fathers to use family leave (if being considered, this was scored as a middle value; mean = 0.35), and (4) if the company offered any other

programs directed toward working fathers (e.g., seminars, special incentives to take leave; mean = 0.35). The average score for this dimension was only 2.30 (out of 40). Because of extreme skewness in this variable (greater than 2), when formal programs scores were analyzed separately, we used a binary dummy variable (0 = no programs/1 = at least one program).

Research by Burden and Googins (1986, 6) suggests that it is important to look beyond provision of formal work-family benefits and company policy to the "more intangible set of messages that are transmitted through the corporate culture." Accordingly, we examined informal practice with two additional subindices. The first was informal support, which asked about (1) how positive or negative the typical reaction of managers was to white-collar and blue-collar fathers wanting to take parental leave (mean = 5.53), (2) the typical reaction of men who are coworkers when a blue-collar and a white-collar father wanted to take parental leave (mean = 5.39), (3) to what extent problems would come up if more fathers wanted to take parental leave (mean = 4.28), and (4) whether any men who were upper managers had taken parental leave and/or used their legal right to reduce work hours (mean = 2.00). The average score for informal support was 17.20 (out of 40).

The last subindex of father friendliness was informal flexibility, measured by asking (1) how easy or hard it was for men who were blue-collar and white-collar employees to stay home to care for sick children (mean = 6.03), (2) how easy or hard it was for white-collar employees who were men to avoid long trips out of town (mean = 5.05), (3) how hard or easy it was for blue-collar and white-collar men employees to refuse to work overtime (mean = 4.99), and (4) how easy or hard it was for blue-collar and white-collar men employees to adjust work times to their children's times at school or day care (mean = 4.41). Companies scored the highest on this subindex, with a mean of 20.48 (out of 40).

Since it seemed likely that the gendered substructure of organizational culture could affect different dimensions of father friendliness, each subindex was analyzed separately. Means and standard deviations for father friendliness indices and independent variables are given in Table 1.

## Measures of the Independent Variables

*Ethic of caring.* To devise our measures of a caring ethic and masculine values in organizational culture, we built on the work of O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991). They distinguished five types of company values: stability, innovativeness, team orientation, respect for others, and outcome

**TABLE 1: Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations Concerning All Study Variables**

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Father-friendliness index	49.48	15.91															
2. Formal policy subindex	9.50	8.98	.77*														
3. Formal program subindex <sup>a</sup>	1.24 <sup>b</sup>	0.43	.47*	.22*													
4. Informal support subindex	17.20	5.18	.56*	.16*	.13*												
5. Informal flexibility subindex	20.48	5.49	.58*	.16*	.15*	.27*											
6. Ethic of caring scale	3.46	0.47	.37*	.33*	.18*	.13*	.22*										
7. Importance of improving women's pay	1.47	0.58	.34*	.32*	.22*	.12*	.20*	.22*									
8. Importance of improving women's promotion	1.62	0.68	.35*	.33*	.17*	.16*	.11	.27*	.42*								
9. Percentage employees men	67.00	19.83	.06	.08	.02	-.17*	.06	-.07	-.08	-.20*							
10. Presence of women managers	0.32	0.47	.09	-.04	.05	.15*	.10	.13*	-.06	.07	-.18*						
11. Masculine values scale	3.31	0.55	-.06	.00	.07	-.07	-.17*	-.08	-.05	.00	.04	-.04					
12. Size (log)	2.93	0.53	.05	.13*	.03	-.03	-.02	-.13*	.04	.15*	.03	-.04	-.02				
13. In service sector	1.23	0.42	.14*	.10	.02	.02	.03	.01	.05	.10	-.24*	.21*	-.02	-.17*			
14. Downsized	1.80	0.40	-.01	.06	-.04	.03	.02	-.06	.04	-.08	.20*	-.07	-.17*	-.17*	-.11		
15. Productivity important	1.79	0.44	.09	.11	.03	.08	-.03	.00	-.01	.03	.14*	.09	-.15*	.10	-.04	-.30*	
16. Cost saving important	1.72	0.53	-.06	-.05	-.07	.07	.03	-.08	.04	.11	-.08	.00	-.07	.13*	.00	-.18*	-.21*

a. Because of extreme skewness in this variable, it was recoded into a binary dummy variable, no program (= 0) or at least one program (= 1).

b. The mean for this variable originally was 2.30. This mean was used to calculate companies' overall friendliness scores.

\*Signifies a statistically significant zero-order correlation for a one-tailed test at the .05 level.

orientation (including short-term vs. long-term thinking, concern for profit, and competitiveness). To measure these dimensions, 18 items were developed for this study. Company representatives were asked how much their company emphasized each value, in comparison to other companies (a lot more, more, the same, less, or a lot less). Swedish organizational psychologists advised us that company officials would be less cooperative if asked directly about company values. Their advice proved to be wise: Only 1 official refused to compare his company's values to other companies', while 20 refused to answer a later section asking them to circle the three values most characteristic of their companies. We used the latter absolute ratings as a validity check for our comparison measurement technique and found answers to be quite similar. For example, the value that respondents indicated was most characteristic of their company was competitiveness. This value also received the highest rating in the comparative section.

Scores on company values were factor analyzed, using principal components analysis and varimax rotation techniques. Two clear scales (components) emerged, the ethic of caring scale and the masculine values scale, each with high reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficients = .77 and .72, respectively). The ethic of caring scale included items related to company process (vs. outcome): encourages collaboration within the company, encourages employee discussion of company policy, takes employees' viewpoints seriously, shows respect for individual rights, helps employees to advance, offers good pay and benefits, takes social responsibility, and exhibits a long-term orientation. Companies' rating for each variable (on a scale of 1 to 5) was added to all other items in the scale; the total score was divided by the number of scale items. The average score was 3.46 (out of 5), suggesting that Swedish companies lean a little to being more caring. (The masculine values scale is described below.)

*Importance of improving women's pay and promotion.* To measure companies' commitment to equal employment opportunities for women, we asked personnel officers how important it was just now for their company to improve women's pay and to get more women into upper management (not so important, somewhat important, or very important). They reported only lukewarm support for the goal of gender equality in their companies. Only 4 percent said it was very important to raise women's pay, while 11 percent said the company felt it was very important to get more women into management.

*Men's dominance.* Men's dominance of the company was measured first by the percentage of employees who were men (mean = 67 percent).

We also measured women's presence in top management by asking how many women and how many men were in top management. More than two-thirds of companies (68 percent) had no women in top management; the highest percentage of women who were managers was 8, and the average percentage was only 4.3. Because of skewness, we created a two-category variable, presence of women in top management (no/yes).

*Masculine values scale.* Five of the remaining organizational culture measures loaded on a second dimension, measuring outcome. This scale included the following: has high demands for achievement, is competitive, puts the organization first over people, puts profit before everything, and is aggressive. The items in the masculine value scale coincide with traditional stereotypes of masculinity. To some extent, the scale represents "the male model of work" (Lewis 2001) or a "high performance orientation" (Badjo and Dickson 2001). Companies' ratings for each variable (on a scale of 1 for low to 5 for high) were added to all other scale items, and then the total was divided by the number of items.

Companies' average masculine values scale score was 3.31 (out of 5), somewhat greater than the midpoint, suggesting that Swedish companies are characterized by masculine values, but not strongly so. The ethic of caring score and the masculine values score were not significantly correlated, supporting our idea that they tap different dimensions of gendered organizational culture.

*Institutional factors.* We measured company size by reported number of employees. To reduce skewness, we used the log of size in data analyses. A variable was created that put service companies into one category and all other companies in another. The business climate of the company was measured by three variables—whether the company laid off employees in the past year, how important improving productivity was just now, and how important cutting costs was just now (not very important, somewhat important, or very important). Most companies in the study reported having a challenging business climate, coinciding with a downturn in the Swedish economy that began in the early 1990s. The majority (80 percent) reported layoffs and reported that enhancing productivity was very important; 76 percent said that cutting costs was very important.

## **Analysis Techniques**

We used linear multiple regression analyses to explore which independent variables had statistically significant independent relationships with



the FFI and its four component dimensions (subindices). Variables were entered into the equation in two steps. Variables associated with a gendered organizational culture were entered in the first step; then variables associated with the organization's size, sector, and business climate were entered in the second step, to see if they added any explanatory power. Because we recoded one subindex with skewness problems into a two-category variable (formal programs), we conducted a separate multivariate analysis for this variable using binary logistic regression; the results were identical in terms of significant associations.

A check for multicollinearity was made to make sure the independent variables were not so intercorrelated that statistical tests would be unable to distinguish the influence of one variable from another with which it was highly correlated. We examined the variance inflation factors and tolerance values calculated in SPSS to flag multicollinearity, and no evidence of multicollinearity was found.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Hypothesis 1—The Doctrine of Separate Spheres

According to multiple regression results, hypothesis 1a received moderate support. Companies' ethic of caring scale scores were positively associated with the FFI and two of the four subindices (formal policy and informal flexibility), controlling for the effects of other independent variables (see step 1 results in Table 2.)

Modest support for hypothesis 1b was found. Controlling for the effects of other independent variables, companies showing more interest in women's pay reported significantly higher scores on the FFI and the formal policy subindex. Such companies also reported higher scores on the informal flexibility subindex, which examined how hard it was for fathers to stay home for sick children, avoid travel and overtime, and adjust work hours to children's needs. The measure of interest in women's promotion was significantly related to the FFI and the formal policy subindex only. These findings suggest that companies concerned about women's equal employment opportunity are more likely to be father friendly, in particular to have higher formal policy scores and to a lesser extent higher informal flexibility scores.

In general, our results suggest that companies' responsiveness to fathers is linked to companies' rejection of the doctrine of separate spheres for private and public life, although not all hypothesized relationships were found to be statistically significant.

**TABLE 2: Linkages between Corporate Culture Variables and Father-Friendliness Measures—Multiple Regression Results (Standardized Beta Coefficients, N = 200)**

Dependent Variables	Father-Friendliness Index		Formal Policy Subindex		Formal Program Subindex		Informal Support Subindex		Informal Flexibility Subindex	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Organizational culture variables										
Hypothesis 1: Separate spheres										
Ethic of caring scale	.26*	.28*	.24*	.25*	.11	.12	.08	.10	.17*	.18*
Importance of improving women's pay	.21*	.19*	.19*	.16*	.17*	.16*	.07	.05	.16*	.16*
Importance of improving women's promotion	.20*	.21*	.22*	.22*	.08	.08	.08	.10	.01	.02
Hypothesis 2: Masculine hegemony										
Percentage employees men	.06	.08	.12	.12	.04	.06	-.13*	-.10	.09	.09
Presence of women managers	.07	.04	-.06	-.08	.02	.01	.12	.08	.10	.11
Masculine values scale	-.07	-.08	-.02	-.03	-.07	-.08	-.02	-.02	-.18*	-.19*
Hypothesis 3: Institutional variables										
Size (log)		-.01		.08		.01		-.11		-.07
In service sector		.13*		.13*		.02		.09		.02
Downsized		.02		.06		.05		-.08		-.07
Productivity important		.11		.10		.04		.10		-.04
Cost saving important		-.13*		-.14*		-.09		-.12		.04
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.23	.25	.20	.22	.05	.03	.04	.07	.09	.08
F change	10.74*	1.94	9.27*	2.23	2.67*	.44	2.46*	2.00	4.33*	.43

\*One-tailed tests were statistically significant ( $p \leq .05$ ).

## **Hypothesis 2—Masculine Hegemony**

Hypotheses 2a and 2b measuring the association of masculine hegemony with father friendliness received less support than the first set of hypotheses. Regarding hypothesis 2a, the proportion of the labor force that was men had a significant independent association only with the informal support subindex of father friendliness, which measured managers' and coworkers' reaction to men who took parental leave or worked part-time. The presence of women in top management was not significantly correlated with any father-friendliness measures. It seems likely that the small number of women managers in this sample had not yet achieved sufficient levels to have an impact on company culture.

Slight support was also found for hypothesis 2b. The masculine values scale score was related only to the informal flexibility subindex, which examined how hard it was for fathers to stay home for sick children, avoid travel and overtime, and adjust hours to children's needs.

The hypothesis that the ideology of masculine hegemony stands in the way of companies' being more responsive to fathers was unexpectedly not well supported by the data. However, results suggest that some informal aspects of father friendliness are likely to be affected by the lessening of masculine hegemony. When women make up more of the workforce, fathers appear to experience higher levels of informal support for parental leave and reduced hours, and when a company's value system is less masculine, it offers fathers more informal flexibility in integrating work and parenting roles.

## **Hypothesis 3—Institutional Factors**

The last hypothesis predicted that variables associated with the gender substructure of organizations would remain as significant independent predictors of father friendliness, controlling for factors associated with levels of family-friendly benefits and programs in previous studies. Table 2 displays these associations controlling for all other variables (see step 2).

Company size was not independently associated with any father-friendliness variables. Our sample included only companies with 100 or more employees, so perhaps the effects of (small) company size on father friendliness could not be properly estimated.

Being in the service branch was associated with companies' having a higher FFI score and a higher formal policy subindex score, controlling for other study variables. Previous research has suggested that service companies are more family friendly because they hire greater numbers of

women. In our study, service companies did employ significantly more women ( $r = .24, p \geq .05$ ). However, as discussed above, the portion of a company's labor force that was women was not significantly associated with higher scores on the FFI or the policy subindex, so another explanation must be sought (see Implications section).

The findings concerning business climate were mixed. Downsizing and the importance of productivity were not independently related to any measure of father friendliness, but indicating that cost saving was important was significantly and independently associated with lower scores on the FFI and the formal policy subindex.

In support of hypothesis 3, variables related to the gendered substructure of organizations generally remained as significant predictors of father friendliness, independent of the influence of company characteristics. The only exception concerned the relationship between the subscale of father friendliness labeled informal support (which measured managers' and coworkers' reaction to men who took parental leave or worked part-time) and the percentage of employees who were men, which lost significance when a larger number of variables entered the equation.

In our study, variables associated with the gendered substructure of organizations explained a moderate amount—23 percent—of the variance in FFI scores and 20 percent in the subindex for formal policy (see bottom of Table 2). The variables measuring the doctrine of separate spheres and masculine hegemony were less successful in explaining the presence of formal company programming for fathers, the extent of informal support shown by managers and coworkers for men who took parental leave or worked part-time, and the amount of informal flexibility shown toward fathers who wanted to stay home for sick children, avoid travel and overtime, and adjust hours to children's needs. The variance explained in these three dependent variables was in the low 4 to 9 percent range. Adding institutional variables in the second step did not significantly increase the amount of variance explained in variables associated with father friendliness. Additional factors seem to be important for explaining variation in specific dimensions of father friendliness that are not policy related. We discuss the possibilities below.

## IMPLICATIONS

There is growing consensus that men as well as women in postindustrialized societies face significant challenges in trying to combine paid employment with caregiving responsibilities. Dramatic changes in work

life are needed if women are to be treated equally in the labor market, if men's rights to be active fathers are to be respected, and if children are to have the right to be cared for by both parents.

Sweden offers an example of a society dedicated to the ideal of gender equality, where companies are increasingly pressured to help fathers as well as mothers combine paid employment and caring for children. We surveyed personnel officers in a representative sample of 200 of the largest private corporations in Sweden, finding that companies have only barely begun to re-orient work practices and policies to meet the government's challenge of encouraging shared parenting. We developed a multi-item index of corporative responsiveness toward fathers (the Father Friendliness Index, or FFI) and found that company representatives reported relatively little progress in the areas of formal policy and formal programs directed toward helping fathers participate in early child care. Somewhat more progress was reported when we examined informal support, which measured managers' and coworkers' reaction to men who took parental leave or worked part-time, and when we looked at informal flexibility, which examined how hard it was for fathers to stay home for sick children, avoid travel and overtime, and adjust hours to children's needs. Our findings suggest that it is important to consider multiple dimensions of father friendliness, including formal and informal aspects, since company responsiveness to fathers varies by dimension considered.

Most research on the correlates of corporate responsiveness toward working parents has focused on company characteristics such as company size. We focused instead on whether corporate responsiveness toward fathers was related to the gendered substructure of organizational culture. More specifically, we looked at variables designed to measure the extent to which companies accepted the doctrine of separate spheres and the extent to which companies were characterized by masculine hegemony.

The doctrine of separate spheres calls for work and family to be separate and unequal areas of activity for men and women, respectively. To measure if Swedish companies were developing cultures based on integrating the formerly separate spheres of family and work, we developed an ethic of caring scale, measuring company values often associated with the private sphere, such as encouraging collaboration and taking social responsibility. We also examined the extent to which companies prioritized improving the status of women in the public sphere through their support for improving women's pay and promotion opportunities. As hypothesized, we found that companies were more father friendly when they had higher ethic of caring scores and valued the entrance of women into the public sphere of employment.

Of the specific variables examined as measures of the doctrine of separate spheres, we found that company interest in improving women's pay was associated with more aspects of father friendliness than any other. This finding draws attention to the importance of understanding linkages between improving women's status in the labor market and facilitating men's opportunities to be active fathers. Only 4 percent of the companies in our sample reported that raising women's pay was a very important company priority. As long as the vast majority of companies undervalue women's work, women's traditional confinement in the private sphere of the family will be reinforced and companies will be less responsive to the needs of fathers.

Company acceptance of masculine hegemony was measured by examining the status of men and women in the company and the extent to which company values corresponded with traditional masculine values such as competitiveness and "puts profits before everything." Masculine hegemony appears to be less an obstacle to father friendliness in Swedish work organizations than belief in the doctrine of separate spheres, since fewer significant associations were found. When variables measuring masculine hegemony were associated with father friendliness, which was infrequent, only informal aspects of responsiveness to fathers were involved. In contrast, doctrine of separate spheres variables were significantly related to both formal and informal dimensions of father friendliness. Companies with proportionately more women in their workforces reported significantly higher levels of informal support (i.e., managers and coworkers reacted positively to men who took parental leave or worked part-time), while companies with less traditionally masculine values offered more informal flexibility to fathers (i.e., made it easier for fathers to stay home for sick children, avoid travel and overtime, and adjust hours to children's needs). These findings suggest that male-dominated companies can develop formal father-friendly policies and programs, but the informal culture seems likely to mitigate against their use.

Generally, variables associated with the gendered substructure of work organizations remained as significant predictors of father-friendliness measures when we controlled for company characteristics such as company size, sector, and business climate. This suggests that these variables are important to take into account in future studies of companies' responsiveness to families.

We found no significant association between father friendliness and company size. However, service companies were found to be significantly more father friendly and in particular were more likely to have father-friendly formal policies. Service companies had larger women work forces, but

women's presence in companies had little empirical association with father friendliness. (Only managers' and coworkers' informal support for men's taking parental leave and working part-time was significantly correlated with the percentage of employees who were men.) Another reason why service companies might be more father friendly has been suggested by organizational analysts Burud and Tumolo (2004). They maintain that companies based on services (or knowledge technology) find it easier to base work on gender-neutral principles, in contrast to manufacturing companies, which traditionally have depended on synchronized work schedules, hierarchy, manager-driven work design, and the ideal that employees keep their personal lives out of work. Companies offering services or knowledge technology are discovering their profits are maximized by customized work policies and practices and employee-driven work design. In such companies, employee commitment is measured by work outcomes rather than work hours, and "work and personal life can be integrated for the mutual benefit of both" (Burud and Tumolo 2004, 53).

While downsizing and the importance of productivity had no significant association with father friendliness among the companies studied, when cost saving was important, companies were less likely to be father friendly in general and in particular to lack formal policies supportive of active fathers. Rational choice theory predicts that companies will be more family friendly when there are clear financial benefits (Appelbaum et al. 2005). This is often called "making the business case" for work-family integration. In the future, it would be worthwhile to investigate the circumstances under which Swedish companies become convinced that father-friendly policies and practices help the bottom line.

While variables measuring the gendered substructure of organization were moderately successful in explaining variation in the FFI and in the subindex of formal policy, these variables were less successful in explaining the existence of formal father-friendly programs, the extent of managers' and coworkers' informal support for taking parental leave and reduced work hours, and the level of informal flexibility permitted fathers who wanted to stay home for sick children, avoid travel and overtime, and adjust hours to children's needs.

Clearly, more investigation is needed to uncover additional factors associated with companies' responsiveness toward fathers.

One theory that might guide future research on companies' responsiveness to fathers is institutional theory, which emphasizes how companies react to external social environments in the development of policies and practices (Guthrie and Roth 1999). Research by Gornick and Meyers (2003) suggests that government policies are the most important drivers of change

in companies' responsiveness to working parents. Swedish companies are already under pressure to respond to policy makers' calls for gender equality; what could be investigated further are the conditions under which some companies respond more to this pressure. Appelbaum and her colleagues (2005) suggest that companies might be more responsive to their social environments when human resource professionals are strong advocates for a particular policy or when they draw attention to how other companies in their industry have adopted innovative practices. To be strong advocates for fathers, human resource professionals will need to see value in the presumption of shared parenting by women and men.

Lewis and Haas (2005) agree that government policies can drive change within companies. They suggest that government policies can do this by affecting men's "sense of entitlement" to supportive work policies and practices. Sense of entitlement is an important concept from social justice theory. According to this theory, sense of entitlement is related to perceptions of social justice, which "are socially constructed, usually by processes of social comparison, within specific contexts" (Lewis and Haas 2005, 352). Traditionally, the prevailing social contract regarding gender has prescribed that fathers should feel a limited sense of entitlement to be able to work in ways that allow them to combine employment and shared responsibility for children. This limited sense of entitlement can create low expectations for employer-provided father-friendly policies and practices that would help men be involved in early child care.

Research on fathers working in private companies in Sweden has revealed that more fathers were interested in taking parental leave and sharing child care than had in fact been able to do so (Haas, Allard, and Hwang 2002). There apparently is a clash between the goals of policy makers and employers when it comes to facilitating fathers' reconciliation of work and family.

Over time, the Swedish government seems likely to contribute to men's perceptions of equity and injustice and to their sense of entitlement to support for combining work and family responsibilities. Policy makers have increased and are considering increasing again the number of months of parental leave that are reserved for fathers. The government has for some time encouraged fathers to share early child care; educational campaigns have recently intensified, directed toward prospective parents about the importance of sharing parental leave. Future research from a social justice perspective could focus on why there is an implementation gap between government policy and the policies and practices of Swedish work organizations. It could also explore what social circumstances lead men to perceive social injustice and what determines whether men mobilize their



power and resources to bring about change so that companies are more responsive to fathers.

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