



# **Fathers on call – A study on the sharing of care work among parents in Sweden. A mixed methods approach**

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# Fathers on call – A study on the sharing of care work among parents in Sweden.

## A mixed methods approach

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*Abstract:*

By combining quantitative analyses of survey data with qualitative analyses of interviews with first-time parents, this study gives new insights into parents' division of parental leave in Sweden and the links between fathers' leave length and the division of child care when both are back at work again. Quantitative results show that mothers' and fathers' parental leave lengths vary substantially with the reasons for division of leave and that fathers' parental leave length is related to the long-term division of child care as well as to mothers' satisfaction with it. Qualitative results suggest that although gender equality and equal parenting is central to the first-time, middle-class parents that were interviewed, more traditional norms and ideals about the mother as the primary caretaker may stand in the way of an equal sharing of the leave during the child's first year. The study also suggests several mechanisms through which fathers' parental leave may causally influence later division of childcare, including a development of a closer relationship between the father and the child and a greater understanding between the parents.

*Keywords:* Parenting, gender, child care, parental leave, division of work

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## 1. Introduction

The transition to parenthood is a life changing event for those who experience it for many reasons. Suddenly, there is a new-born child that urgently calls for attention and the parents' regular activities and priorities might have to be put on hold for this new creature to thrive. In this paper, we focus on heterosexual couples and although both the woman and the man in the couple no doubt are affected by the arrival of a child, earlier research and common knowledge tells us that the transition to parenthood is more life changing for mothers than for fathers. Traditionally, men have taken on a greater provider role as they become fathers and some seem to work more paid hours than they did before they had children, partly due to the need to provide for the new family member(s). Women, on the other hand, take leave from paid employment to care for the newborn child and they also often work part-time once the child starts day care. This unequal division of care for children has started to change as fathers' parental leave taking in Sweden has increased. Still, men's parental leave uptake varies a lot, among other things by the couple's level of education. Higher educated couples are the most likely to share the parental leave equally (Social Insurance Report, 2013:8). Hence, although gender equality in the home has increased over time – if we think about fathers' parental leave uptake as indicating gender equality – progress has been fairly slow and not evenly distributed in the population. This led the Swedish Social Democratic Party to suggest an increase in the number of parental leave months reserved for each parent (what are sometimes referred to as 'daddy and mommy months') from two to three months in their statement of government policy in fall 2014.<sup>1</sup> Although some no doubt salute such initiatives, others have been critical, claiming that it should be up to the parents to decide if and how to share the leave. In order to respond to such claims, it is important to gain an understanding of (i) factors that according to parents are the most vital for their decisions regarding how to share the parental leave, (ii) how these reasons link to the length of the leave, and (iii) the extent to which fathers' parental leave length is related to their (later) relationship with the child and to their time spent with the child.

In this paper, a mixed methods approach is applied to study the reasons that heterosexual couples provide for why they divided the leave as they did. We also study how happy the parents are with the division of leave and to what extent their satisfaction with the leave is related to how long a leave they took. In order to get an understanding of potential long-term

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<sup>1</sup> If these months are not used by the parent for whom they were reserved, they are forfeited.

consequences of fathers' leave taking, we study the parents' division of care for the child and the extent to which the mother is satisfied with the division of care, when both parents have started working again. Quantitative models are estimated based on data from the Swedish Young Adult Panel Study (YAPS). From the analyses, we get a hint of the extent to which shared leave taking is linked to smaller gender differences in (later) parenting and more similar fatherhood and motherhood practices. In semi-structured qualitative interviews with 40 first-time parents (20 couples), we qualify the quantitative results by analyzing *how* leave taking may be linked to fatherhood and motherhood practices later on in a group of middle-class parents. We analyze mechanisms and processes that led up to a particular division of parental leave and to perceived consequences of this leave in terms of sharing of care and responsibility, the child's relationship with the parents, the parents' satisfaction with their division of work etc. The parents interviewed are on average more highly educated than the average Swedish couple and they have more egalitarian gender attitudes. These couples can be seen as the forerunners of change in a country that is considered to be one of the most gender-equal in the world. If the gender-egalitarian family can ever be realized, these couples are best positioned to do it.

## **2. Theoretical background**

The importance of parenthood for women's and men's work life and career interruptions has been and still is very different for three main reasons.

The first has to do with biology and the fact that the woman is the one who carries the baby, gives birth and (if possible) breastfeeds it. Breastfeeding is normative and considered healthy, maternity care providers and midwives strongly proscribe it and most women in Sweden try to breastfeed for the child's first six months.

The second reason is economic in character and has to do with within-couple income differences and women's on average lower earnings. As the mother often is the one who earns the least in the family, the couple benefits financially from letting her take the main part of the parental leave and work part-time when the child is small.

The third reason for the gender difference in consequences of becoming parents has to do with gendered expectations for mothers and fathers where mothers have been expected to be the main (and sometimes considered the best) carers of the child during its early years. The fathers' main mission has traditionally been to ensure that the family is provided for, but in recent decades a more involved fatherhood ideal has emerged. The image of the "new

fatherhood” is to a great extent characterized by ideas of the engaged father, which includes a “child-oriented masculinity” (cf. Bekkengen 2002; Plantin 2001; Johansson and Klinth 2010; Roman and Peterson 2011). Today, fathers are expected to be emotionally and practically involved in child rearing to a far greater extent than previous generations have been (cf. Bekkengen 2002; Johansson and Klinth 2010). The “new fatherhood” implies engagement in the practical, everyday care of children to a similar extent as mothers though this engagement does not have to come with a larger focus on gender equality in other respects, for example, in the sharing of housework or breadwinning responsibilities (cf. Bekkengen 2002).

Even though norms on the ‘good father’ have changed quite a bit, mothering norms seem to have changed less. Today, many mothers work as many hours as men do in paid work but even when they do, mothers are still, and to a far greater extent than fathers, expected to be guided primarily by the ethics of the child’s best (Hays 1996; Ribbens McCarthy et al. 2000). Recent changes in motherhood ideals have not been analysed to the same extent as fathering and the new fatherhood ideals. One exception, focusing on the Swedish context, is Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson (2001) who identified parallel, and contradictory, discourses about motherhood in their qualitative study from the 1990s. The discourses used described the idealized good, fulfilled mother who does everything for the child at the same time as she is engaged in a work career. This legitimized women’s paid work, but at the same time led to a wish not to appear too work-oriented, something that resulted in feelings of guilt and bad conscience. Possibly related to this, Evertsson and Breen (2008; see also Evertsson 2013) found that the importance of work changed more for women, during the period when they became parents, than it did for men. The importance women place on work seems to increase again as children grow older and the temporary reduction most likely mirrors a response to the new demands raised on women as they become mothers and need to adjust to the child’s needs (when caring responsibilities are not shared equally between the parents). Research by Salmela-Aro et al. (2001) indicates that women benefit from mentally adjusting to the changing demands raised on them when they become mothers. In the study by Salmela-Aro et al., mothers who prioritized family-oriented goals had a higher wellbeing than those who claimed to prioritize self-oriented goals. Not everyone is able to make such adjustments and research indicates that experiences of work-family conflict are slightly more common among women than men (Kotowska, Matysiak and Styrac 2010; Stier, Lewin-Epstein and Braun 2012). It is also more common that mothers multitask while doing housework and child care and this seems to contribute to mothers more often feeling burdened and stressed than fathers

do (Offer and Schneider 2011). Feelings of time pressure and work-family conflict influence mothers' wellbeing and most likely also their health (Boye 2010; Bratberg and Naz, 2014; Leineweber et al. 2013). There are significant differences in the uptake of sickness benefits between mothers and fathers, but not between childless women and men (Angelov et al. 2011). Important reasons for the difference in days of sick leave between mothers and fathers seem to be women's (over time) increasing paid work hours and their remaining high responsibility for the home and children (Angelov et al. 2011; Bratberg and Naz, 2014, cf. Boye and Evertsson 2014). Hence, if fathers' share of long-term care of the child increases, this should have important implications for mothers' wellbeing and possibly also fathers'.

### **2.1. Earlier research on (assumed) causes and consequences of fathers' involvement in care**

Studies indicate that women's and men's parental leave taking is often perceived differently. As an example, working conditions that render it difficult to take parental leave or to plan it freely are seen as a hindrance to men's leave but only as an inconvenience for women's (Bekkengen 2002). Workers who do not fit the profile of an unencumbered worker, free from out-of-work obligations, tend to be disadvantaged in the workplace (Acker 1990; Glass 1999; Glauber 2008). The perception of woman as primarily bound to domestic duties may lead to statistical discrimination of women and it also means that men who take parental leave not only break norms related to the unencumbered worker but also to some extent traditional masculinity norms. Reaffirming gendered practices, it is more common that parents state that the father's – rather than the mother's – work situation determined the division of leave (Socialförsäkringsboken 2003; see also Bygren and Duvander 2006). The most frequent answer to why parents decided to divide the leave as they did is the family economy according to the National Social Insurance Agency's survey *Time and Money 2003* (Socialförsäkringsboken 2003).<sup>2</sup> In the debate, women's desire to stay home for the main part of the leave has often been referred to as something that keeps men from taking longer leaves. Interestingly enough, it is much less common for fathers than mothers to claim that the mothers' wish to stay home for the majority of the leave determined how leave was divided (27 percent of the mothers and 14 percent of the fathers claimed that this was the most important reason for how leave was divided) (Socialförsäkringsboken 2003). In sum, cultural and gendered assumptions about parenting as well as expected wage and income penalties

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<sup>2</sup> About one fourth of the parents claimed that the family economy determined how the parents divided the leave.

influence couples' short-term mothering and fathering practices and how paid and unpaid work is divided.

Turning to more long-term consequences of women's and men's parental leave taking for the family, research shows that parental leave length is related to the couples' probability of having another child (Duvander and Andersson 2006; Duvander, Lappegård and Andersson 2010; Olah 2003), as well as to fathers' remained contact with a child after a divorce (Duvander and Jans 2009; Westphal, Poortman and van der Lippe, 2014). It is often assumed that fathers' increased time with the child as an infant furthers his relationship with the child in the short as well as the long run. Worth noting though is that these (potentially closer) relationships may come about due to more child-oriented fathers self-selecting into long parental leaves, or due to more causal processes. Although it is often difficult to disentangle the mechanisms, it is reasonable to assume that the observed correlation is partly due to selectivity and partly due to causality, where fathers who have taken a significant share of the parental leave also feel more comfortable in their relationship with the child/children and in their fathering practices.

Earlier research also suggests that there are gender differences in parents' activities with children as well as their wellbeing. Fathers more often take on the role of mentor (by helping out with homework) or playmate, roles that mothers also perform in addition to their greater engagement than fathers in more basic care activities (such as cooking, cleaning, etc.) (Statistics Sweden 2003; Musick, Meier and Flood 2014; cf. Zaiceva and Zimmermann 2011). Doing housework is associated with poorer subjective wellbeing than is playing with children (Musick, Meier and Flood 2014). Mothers are also more likely than fathers to do solo-parenting, which, together with gender differences in the kind of child care performed, seems to contribute to mothers' more frequent experience of stress and fatigue when engaged in activities with children (Ibid.). Most research demonstrates that fathers who have taken parental leave do more of the housework than fathers who have taken less or no parental leave (Almqvist and Duvander 2014; Boye 2008; Haas and Hwang 2008; Kotsadam and Finseraas 2011). A study by Johansson and Duvander (2013), indicates that the use of temporary parental leave to care for a sick child also became slightly more evenly distributed between mothers and fathers after the first 'daddy month' was introduced in Sweden in 1995 (see,



however, Ekberg, Eriksson and Friebel, 2013, who did not find any effect of either the first or second month on temporary leave uptake).<sup>3</sup>

In evaluating the implementation of the daddy quota in Quebec, Patnaik's (2014) study shows that the change in policy was followed by an increase in men's housework and a corresponding decrease in women's housework. Somewhat surprisingly, Patnaik's results suggest that the division of child care actually became more gendered after the policy reform. Consequently, it seems that mothers' reduction in housework freed time that they used to increase their time spent on child care. Focusing on Sweden, Almqvist and Duvander (2014) find that couples in which the father took long leave (here, more than two months) are more likely to share the child care as well as the housework more equally than are couples in which the father took shorter or no leave. This is in line with Boye (2008) who finds that fathers who took leave of at least one month increased their housework more than fathers who took shorter or no leave, when the fathers' time spent on housework before and after the birth of the child is compared. In addition, in the same study women's increase in housework hours (after the birth of a child compared to before) is much smaller in couples where fathers took at least a month of leave than in couples where men took shorter leave. The latter study is based on data from the early 1990s and 2000 (the Swedish Level of Living Survey).

## **2.2. Research questions**

In this study, we add to earlier research by providing a more updated and thorough analysis of what parents describe as:

- (i) the reasons for why they have decided to divide the parental leave as they did,
- (ii) to what extent the provided reason for the leave is related to the mothers' and the fathers' length of the leave, and
- (iii) what consequences the division of leave have had for the sharing of child care when both are back at work again.

By adding information from qualitative interviews with 20 couples to quantitative analyses of the YAPS (see *Data used in the study* for details), we try to get a better understanding of the mechanisms that contribute to the potential greater involvement in child care among fathers

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<sup>3</sup> The basic assumption here is that the share of the temporary leave to care for a sick child can be an indicator of the extent to which household work is being shared equally in the home (cf. Eriksson and Neramo 2010).

who took fairly long parental leave. These analyses will also explore the extent to which the parental leave has influenced the father's relationship with his child, as indicated by the fathers' and mothers' reports on child care and father-child relationships. Our mixed methods approach is complementary (cf. Small 2011). When quantitative analyses of large-scale data give us a profound understanding of general patterns and relationships, qualitative analyses of the interview data provide a depth of interpretation and suggestions for possible mechanisms underlying the quantitative findings. Before we turn to a description of the data, we briefly describe the Swedish parental leave insurance.

### **2.3. The Swedish parental leave insurance**

The analyses estimated in the empirical part of this study are based on respondents who had their first child in the year 2000 or later. Parents who had their first child in 2000 or 2001 were able to use 450 days of parental leave for each child, of which 30 was reserved for each parent. In 2002, an additional 30 days was reserved for each parent and in total, parents now had the right to 480 days of leave for each child. All but 90 of these days are paid at close to 80 percent of earlier income up to a ceiling. The remaining 90 days are paid at a much lower flat rate (of 180 SEK per day for children born in July 1, 2006 or later, and 60 SEK for children born before this date). In the period from 2000 to 2009, men's share of parental leave (or rather the share of the days for which they use the parental leave insurance) has increased from 12.4 percent to 22.3 percent. In 2013, fathers' share of all parental leave days was close to 25 percent. Fathers' share of the parental leave days when the child is under two years of age is slightly lower and about 19 percent in 2009 (Duvander and Viklund 2014). In the period studied, the parental leave insurance could be used until the child turned eight years of age.<sup>4</sup>

## **3. Data used in the study**

The data used in the quantitative part of the study come from the Swedish Young Adult Panel Study (YAPS). This study was initiated in 1999, when a questionnaire was mailed to a nationally representative sample of 3,408 individuals born in 1968, 1972 and 1976 (with a response rate of 67 percent) (Principal Investigator was Eva Bernhardt, Stockholm

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<sup>4</sup> For those with children born in January 2014 and on, parents have to use 80 percent of the parental leave days before the child turns four years of age. The remaining days can be used until the child turns 12 years of age (National Social Insurance agency, Faktablad *Föräldrapenning*, 2014).

University). In 2003, a follow-up was conducted and a new cohort of respondents who were born in 1980 was added. In 2009, the 3,547 respondents who replied to the survey in 1999 and/or 2003 received a second follow-up questionnaire. In total 1,986 (56 percent) of those who received this second follow-up returned a completed questionnaire. Analyses of the drop outs show that highly educated respondents are more likely to have remained in the survey than were others (Wanders 2012). The current analysis uses data from the third (2009) wave of the YAPS and the sample is restricted to those who had their first child in the year 2000 or later. We include survey information from the main respondents' spouses in 2009.<sup>5</sup> Apart from survey information, register-based information on respondents' and spouses' educational level is used.<sup>6</sup> A description of the variables used in the multivariate analyses is found in the Appendix.

We also analyse qualitative, semi-structured interviews with 40 Swedish first-time parents (20 married or cohabiting couples who were interviewed when the child was approximately 1.5 years of age). Both partners in each couple were employed, most of them in middle-class occupations. Most interviewees were rather well-educated and well-established in the labour market. The interviews are rich in information on the motives behind the couples' division of market work, parental leave etc., as well as their experiences with these divisions and with the transition to parenthood. We apply a thematic analysis in which we categorize theoretically derived themes and themes that emerge from the data and analyse their relationships. The analysis is done on an individual- and a couple-level basis. We explore the importance of social norms regarding how long women should stay at home with their babies as well as norms related to new and 'old' fathering practices. We also explore how men, in particular, talk about their relationship to the child and the degree to which this relationship benefits from shared parenting and/or fathers' leave taking behaviour. We furthermore explore gender differences in how economic resources, work situation and career opportunities are valued in relation to parental leave. This will inform us about possible mechanisms linking the social context and motherhood and fatherhood norms to the gendered division of work and care for the child. A description of the interviewed couples in terms of age, broad occupation, income etc. before the birth of the child is found in the Appendix (Table A2). Worth noting is that whereas the qualitative interviews focus on first-time parents, the quantitative data also include those with two or more children as the number of cases would be too small, were we

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<sup>5</sup> In 2009, 69 percent of the respondents had a partner who returned the questionnaire.

<sup>6</sup> For more information on the YAPS, see [www.suda.su.se/yaps/index\\_en.html](http://www.suda.su.se/yaps/index_en.html).

to exclude them. We do not consider this to be a big problem as we assume that the mechanisms for dividing the parental leave more or less equally are similar independent of the number of children in the household.

#### **4. Results and findings: Parental leave length, reasons for the division of leave and satisfaction with how the leave was divided**

Based on survey information from cohorts born in 1968, 1972, 1976 and 1980 and their spouses/partners, we started out by estimating how long women and men have taken leave to care for their most recent child. Although we have information on reasons for the leave, perceived experiences of the leave etc. from both the main respondent and the partner, we only have information on the partner's parental leave length from the main respondent. Given that we know that information provided about oneself often is more valid than that of others, we compared estimations of women's and men's average parental leave length based on information provided by the respondent her/himself or the partner. The analyses show that fathers are much worse at estimating the mother's parental leave length than are mothers at estimating the father's parental leave length. For men, the difference in parental leave length is less than one week when we compare women's reports about their partner's leave taking and men's reports about their own leave taking (13.5 weeks compared to 14.2 weeks). The corresponding difference when we compare women's reports about their own leave taking and men's reports about their partner's leave taking is 10 weeks. According to men, the women on average have taken 44 weeks of leave (or 43.7) whereas the information retrieved from women suggests that they have been home for on average 54 weeks (or 53.7).<sup>7</sup> This indicates that both are underestimating the other parent's parental leave and whereas fathers' leave length (according to the fathers) is about 5 percent longer than what the mothers' report, mothers' parental leave length (according to the mothers) is about 25 percent longer than what the fathers' report. As a consequence, we do not to use the information from the men when it comes to estimating women's parental leave length but reduce these analyses to women's own reports. For men, we use the information on parental leave length they provide as main respondents as well as the information provided by their partners (when the man is the partner

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<sup>7</sup> There could of course be actual differences in parental leave length between the two groups of women (i.e. those where the woman is the main respondent and those where the man is the main respondent) but it is highly unlikely that any such difference would be as big as 10 weeks.

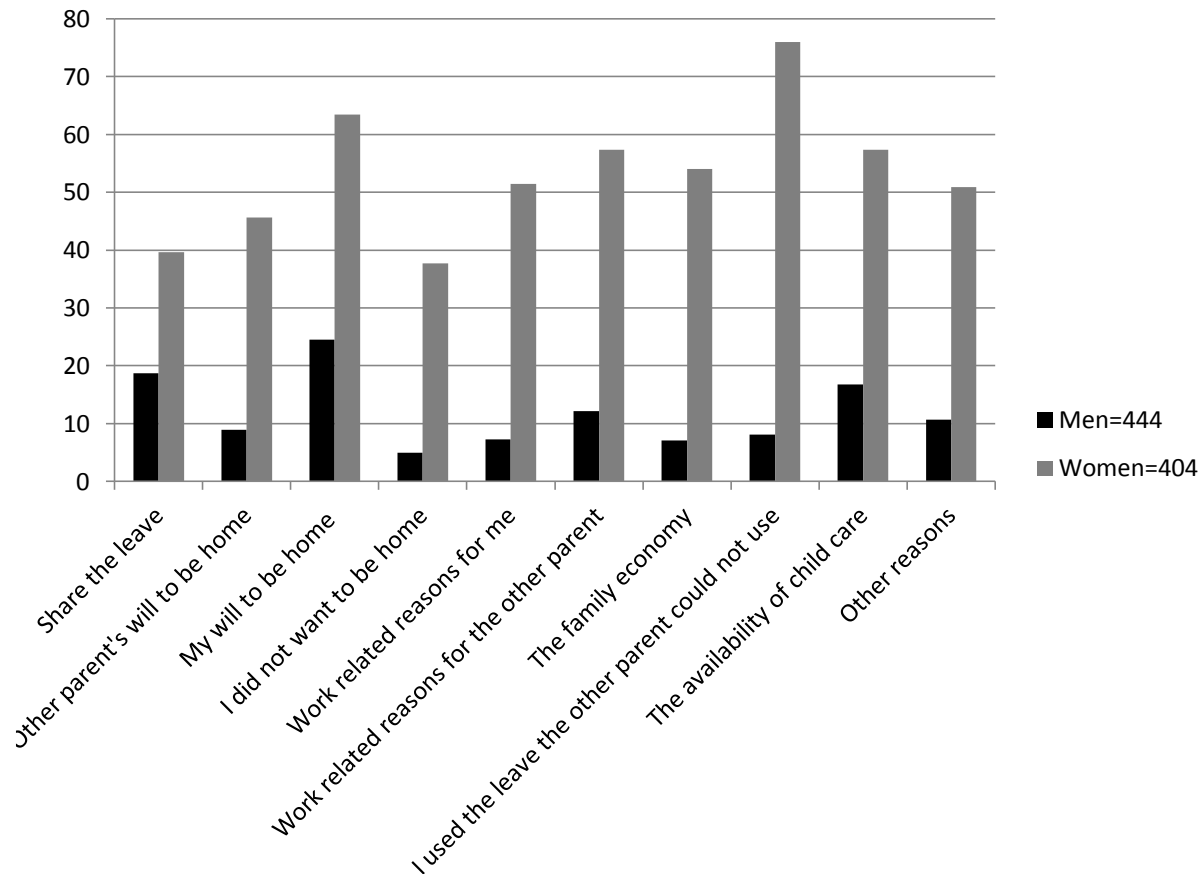
respondent and the woman is the main respondent) in order not to reduce the number of cases in the analyses too much.<sup>8</sup>

In the following, we map the link between the different reasons for the leave and the length of the leave for women and men. Figure 1 is based on calculations of estimates presented in Table A4 in the Appendix. For a description of the OLS regression (used to estimate the model), see the Appendix and Hutcherson (2011). The couples who divide the leaves most equally are those in which the respondents claim that the main reason for the leave was that they wanted to share the leave with the other parent and couples in which the man's will to stay home determined how leave was divided (as we do not analyse couples here, the latter is seen by comparing the women's bar for 'other parent's will to be home' with the men's bar for 'my will to be home' in Figure 1). In these couples, men on average were on leave between 19 and 25 weeks and women were on leave for 40 to 46 weeks. Leaves are most unequally divided in couples where the mother wanted to stay home for a long period, where the father did not want to stay at home, where work-related reasons for the father determined the division of leave and in couples where the family economy was the most important reason for the division of leave. In these couples, fathers took between five and nine weeks of leave in total and mothers on average took 54 to 63 weeks of leave. When parents claim that they took the leave the other parent could not use, fathers seem to refer to the two reserved months when they talk about this leave whereas mothers seem to refer to all leave but the two reserved months. Women on average took 76 weeks of leave when they claim that they took the leave the other parent could not use. Another interesting finding is also how work-related reasons seem to have very different implications for women's and men's leave length. When men claim that work-related reasons determined their leave, they on average took seven weeks of leave, whereas women on average took 51 weeks, a leave only three weeks shorter than the average leave of 54 weeks (see above). This verifies the conclusions from earlier research (e.g. Socialförsäkringsboken 2003), indicating that the father's work conditions are more important for his leave length than the mother's work conditions is for her leave length.

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<sup>8</sup> In order to check if this was a wise decision, we have estimated the below models for Figure 1 based only on men as the main respondent and although relationships weaken and turn insignificant in some cases (probably due to the reduction of the number of cases included), these analyses do not change any of the main conclusions (see Table A3 in the Appendix). The adjusted  $R^2$  is also improved in the model based on the women main respondents only whereas the opposite is true for men; when we include the men who answered the partner questionnaire in the model (for which we have information about their parental leave length from the woman), the adjusted  $R^2$  increased from 0.235 to .259.

Figure 1. Average parental leave length in weeks for women and men by main reason for the leave (recalculated from the logarithmic value of leave length in weeks, Table A4 in the Appendix).



Next, we study how happy women and men are with the division of the leave. Focusing on the main respondents only, Table 1 shows that it is fairly common that fathers say that they regret that they did not stay home longer (and that the other parent did not stay home shorter). More exactly, 28 percent of the fathers would have liked to stay home longer, seen in retrospect, whereas 14 percent of the women say that they regret that they did not stay home shorter – and the other parent longer – seen in retrospect. Still, the vast majority of the couples claim that they are happy with the way in which they divided the leave (this goes for 70 percent of the fathers and 84 percent of the mothers). When we compare the average parental leave length for men who say that they should have stayed home longer with the length for men who are happy with the division of leave, men in the dissatisfied group on average stayed home for 10 weeks compared to men in the satisfied group who on average were on parental leave for 16 weeks.<sup>9</sup> When it comes to women, those who say that they should have stayed home shorter and the partner longer, on average stayed home for 63 weeks compared to the

<sup>9</sup> Note that this is not controlling for the reasons for the leave and the averages therefore are not comparable to those in Figure 1.

satisfied group who on average stayed home for 56 weeks.<sup>10</sup> In separate analyses, we studied parents' accounts of what they felt were the greatest benefits from taking leave. In almost all cases, mothers as well as fathers reported that they felt they got a closer relationship with the child after parental leave. This answer came up as one of the benefits of the leave, independent of the length of the leave. Hence, it seems to be a normative or socially desirable answer to the extent that even men who took comparatively short leave claimed that the leave improved their relationship with the child.

*Table 1. Satisfaction with the division of leave, men and women.*

	Men	Women
I should have stayed home longer and the other parent shorter	28%	2%
I should have stayed home shorter and the other parent longer	1%	14%
Yes, I'm happy with the division of leave	70%	84%
Total N	328	509

#### **4.1. Parental leave length and the division of child care**

In the next step, we turn to the parents' division of care for the child. We explore if it is common that fathers who stay home longer with the child on parental leave also do a greater share of the child care when both are back at work again. We focus on who most often stays at home when the child is sick, who puts the child to sleep, who buys clothes for the child and who stays in contact with pre-schools and schools.

Based on estimations of OLS regression models of the degree to which the child care is equally divided between the spouses (see the description of methods and variables in the Appendix and Evertsson, 2014), we find that the father's parental leave length is significantly and positively related to his share of the child care (Appendix, Table A5). Results also indicate that the longer the mother has been home on parental leave, the less gender equal is the division of child care. The latter link is, however, much weaker than the link between fathers' parental leave length and the division of child care (and only significant at the 10 percent level). Without going into too much detail of the statistical model and estimates,

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<sup>10</sup> Worth noting is that even 56 weeks may seem like a fairly long parental leave and although some outliers may pull up the estimate, the results vary little if we focus on the median, rather than the average of the parental leave.

results indicate that fathers do more of the child care the higher the woman's income and the longer her paid work hours. The woman's work hours are the most important here, partly because high-income women (and men) often work long hours. Assuming that the reason for the leave may be related to the division of child care, we included indicators of the reasons in various exploratory models. In the end, it seems that the most important reason is the woman's will to be home. When the woman wanted to be home for a long period, the division of child care tends to be more traditional (also) later on as mothers in these couples often do a greater share of the child care. Taking into account that differences in the woman's and the man's education, income, work hours, as well as the number of children they have, may influence the division of child care, the analyses show that – net of this – the father's parental leave length is important for how child care is divided when neither the mother nor the father is on parental leave anymore. In other words, the longer the father has been on parental leave, the more likely it is that the child care is equally divided or that the father does more of the child care than the mother does. One reason for this finding may be that more child-oriented fathers take long leaves as well as perform more of the child care. It could also partly be due to more causal mechanisms where the father feels closer to the child and more inclined to be with the child and do child care, the longer he has been on parental leave and the more he has learned from this experience.

In exploratory analyses, we studied the fathers' as well as the mothers' satisfaction with the child care at the time of the interview. We expected to find differences in their satisfaction with the child care that are related to the length of the parental leave (given that child care on average is more equally divided when fathers have taken longer rather than shorter leave). Focusing on fathers, there seems to be very little variation in the extent to which they are happy/unhappy with the division of child care and it is not related to their or their partners' parental leave length. However, for mothers, the probability that they are happy with the division of child care is greater the longer the father has been on parental leave (the Appendix, Table A6). Interestingly enough, women are also happier with the division of child care, the longer their paid work hours are. When mothers work long hours, fathers do more of the child care (cf. Table A5 in the Appendix). It seems that being relieved of some of the child care and the presumed double burden that has been common among working mothers, mothers who work full-time are more satisfied with the division of child care than are mothers who work part-time. Also here, selection may play a role if unhappy mothers self-select out of full-time work (still if they do, working part-time does not seem to make them happier). The father's



paid work hours are not related to the woman's satisfaction with the division of child care presumably because fathers' work hours vary fairly little.<sup>11</sup>

Related to this, one can assume that fathers who have taken comparatively long parental leave and who do more of the child care (than other men) may be more likely to change or adjust their work hours or working conditions to reflect their greater involvement in child care and the child. We therefore studied how fathers respond to a question on whether they have adjusted their work situation since they became parents. Results suggests that men are less likely to say that nothing has changed (and that they work pretty much as before), the longer their parental leave length has been (controlling for the number of children in the household and the educational level of the mother and father) (not shown). This is to some extent in line with results found for Canada where fathers who were exposed to changing policies (and increasing paternity leave rights) were more likely to reduce their paid work hours than were other fathers (Patnaik, 2014).

In sum, the results from the quantitative analyses indicate that fathers who took long leave may either be more family oriented to start with or they become increasingly more family and child care oriented the longer they stay home on parental leave. As the below analyses show, part of this seems to be spurred by small children's preferences for the parent(s) to which they for the moment feel the closest. In the following, we present qualitative analyses of interviews with couples who recently became parents in order to get a better understanding of some of the mechanisms at work here.

#### **4.2. Couples who feel that equal sharing is important make it happen**

In the quantitative analyses above, couples whose primary intention was to share the leave were among those who also were able to divide the leave the most equally. Some of the interviewed first-time parents explicitly related their possibilities to follow their ideals to the institutional context and particularly the parental leave system and the availability of public

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<sup>11</sup> In Table A6, we estimate an OLS model in addition to the logistic regression models (where the indicator in the latter is a dummy for high satisfaction with the division of child care). As the dependent variable is highly skewed –women on average score 4.5 on a scale from 1 to 5 when it comes to satisfaction with the division of child care – this model should only be seen as a robustness check. By and large, the results in the OLS model confirm the results from the logistic regression model. Worth noting is that any reference categories now are set to 0 (instead of 1 as for the logistic regression model) and the coefficients are not interpreted in the same way in the OLS model as in the logistic regression model (for details, see the description of the methods in the Appendix).

childcare (when the parental leave period is exhausted). From the interviews, we get a better understanding of factors that may motivate couples to share. For some of the interviewed couples, sharing parental leave more or less equally was the obvious thing to do. This was their starting point and if there were no severe obstacles in terms of, for example, economic or work-related difficulties, this was what they aimed for. Linda used the term “natural” to describe an equal division of the leave: “it...is natural to share. Not only the fun parts, but also the hard parts.” [det... är naturligt att man delar på det. Inte bara det som är roligt, utan även det som är jobbigt.] This illustrates that fairness was one reason to share. For Sara and Simon, the main reason to share was simply that both parents wanted to be at home with the child. When they discussed parental leave, Sara said, they did not have to decide to share equally, they only decided how long the child should be at home in total and when they should make the switch between them. Simon explained that he and Sara wanted to share the experiences of the first year with the baby, and that it also seemed fair to share:

Yes... I mean... I would say that it was some kind of idea that we should have an equal share of the first period really. Because you... experience a great deal when you are at home with him [the child] during the day like that. You follow the development constantly in a different way than perhaps if you see him on evenings and weekends. So it was like... And then it was... No, but it seemed natural also to share it, like fair during the day too. (Simon)

[Ja... alltså det... Jag skulle nog ändå vilja säga att det var nån slags tanke om att man ska ha lika stor del i den första tiden egentligen. För att det är ju... ganska mycket man får vara med om när man är hemma med honom om dagarna så där. Man följer ju utvecklingen hela tiden på ett lite annorlunda sätt kanske än om man ser honom på kvällar och helger. Så det var liksom. Och sen var det väl... Nej men det kändes naturligt också att dela på det, liksom rättvist på dagarna också så där. (Simon)]

In addition, Simon said that they decided early on to share, but that a provocative comment from a midwife about parents’ tendencies to talk about gender equality without realizing it in practice made them even more determined. A wish to practice gender equality was hence an additional reason for them to share. The timing of the leave in terms of who stays at home first was, however, not questioned by this and other couples. To Simon, it is “natural” that the mother stays at home first. This meant that Sara started and stayed at home full-time for 10 months, after which Simon stayed at home full-time for an additional 10 months.

Others elaborated more on their reasons to share, one reason being the father’s right to spend time with his child and another being to further a close relationship between the father and child. One couple who discussed this was Lena and Carlos. They had been at home together full-time with the child for several months, first for two months after the child was born, and

then again for three months before Carlos went on full-time parental leave. Carlos was on full-time parental leave by himself for five months and then on part-time leave for an additional two months.<sup>12</sup> Lena and Carlos had discussed parenthood and their wishes regarding parental leave a long time before they expected their child. When Lena became pregnant, they both knew that they wanted to share parental leave and be home a great deal together and they had saved money and vacation time to make this possible. To Carlos, it was important to be home by himself when the child was still less than one year old. He wanted the closeness connected with caring for a child that cannot yet walk and was convinced that if you build that psychological and physical closeness when the child is small, the child's teenage years will become much easier. Consequently, Carlos expressed a conviction that fathers' parental leave taking and time spent with the child when it is very small fosters a long-term and closer relationship between the father and child. According to Carlos, fathers who did not spend time with their small children might have difficulties expressing close feelings towards the child later on, which contributes to a distance between father and child:

Carlos: Yes. A closeness, exactly. So that maybe in the future if you are having a hard time, you can hug each other. / ... / So I'm a very independent person but when I've had a hard time I have got a hug from dad.

Interviewer: Mm. And that has meant something?

Carlos: Yes. While I see friends who never get a hug. / ... / It's like... 'There's Daddy'. But they are good dads! It has nothing ... But it's some kind of...

Interviewer: Some kind of distance in some way anyway?

Carlos: Yes.

[Carlos: Ja. En närhet, precis. Så att det är väl nog kanske i framtiden om det är jobbigt så kan man kramas. /.../ Alltså jag är en väldigt självständig person men när jag har haft det jobbigt så har jag fått en kram av pappa.

Intervjuaren: Mm. Och det har betytt nånting?

Carlos: Ja. Medan jag ser kompisar som aldrig får nån kram. /.../ Det är såhär... 'Där är pappa', alltså. Fast det är bra pappor! Det har ingenting... Men det är nån sorts...

Intervjuaren: Nån slags avstånd på nåt sätt ändå?

Carlos: Ja.]

Carlos believed that if men can show – perhaps in particular their sons – that it is OK to be a hugging, comforting father, then the children will be more able to show feelings themselves

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<sup>12</sup> Lena was on full-time leave by herself during four months after the two first shared months. Their original plan was that Carlos would be on leave full-time during seven months, but then they got a place in daycare earlier than planned that they did not want to lose. The child therefore went to daycare a few hours a week during the last two months of Carlos leave, and he worked during these hours.

as adults. Not having to be self-sufficient and strong all the time will make it easier for them to deal with difficulties and to consult their father (and others in their close network) in stressful periods, according to Carlos.

#### **4.3. Traditional gender norms increase the difference in women's and men's parental leave length**

Traditional views on fatherhood and motherhood appear to be one reason why some couples choose to let the mother be on parental leave longer than the father, even while stressing the importance of the father's engagement. More specifically, these couples expressed the view that the mother should stay at home full-time during the first year. This may be one mechanism behind the quantitative finding that the mother's wishes regarding her parental leave length are associated with a shorter leave length among fathers, whereas no association is found between the father's wishes (regarding his parental leave length) and the length of the mother's leave. To Elin, for example, it was important that both she and her partner Dan stayed at home with the child and that they "divided it rather equally" ["att vi skulle dela upp det ganska jämnt"]. This meant that Elin stayed at home for 11 months and Dan for six months.<sup>13</sup> They based this decision partly on tradition:

But then I think that we were like, no, but the mother is at home about a year, that's how it usually is... I think. No I don't know really... (Elin)

[Men sen tror jag nog att vi var väl så här, nej men mamman är hemma ett år ungefär, det brukar vara så... tror jag. Nej jag vet inte egentligen... (Elin)]

Elin seems to be referring to what she has interpreted as a norm in her statement when she says that it is usually the case that the mother is home for a year. Norms can work as a way to justify a more traditional division of leave and according to Dan, the length of his leave was restricted by Elin's wish to stay at home during the first year. After a year, he said, she felt that she could hand over the responsibility to him. Consequently, Elin seems to see herself as the primary and most important caretaker of the child (cf. debates and theories on intense mothering, e.g. Hays 1996). Furthermore, the couple wanted to save parental leave days for later (to be used when the day care centre was closed and to prolong holidays), and this also influenced how long Dan could be on full-time leave with the small child. Elin would have

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<sup>13</sup> This is according to Elin. According to Dan, Elin was at home for a year and he was at home for 5 months. The one month difference between their stated leave lengths may be caused by different interpretations of the summer months between their leaves, when they stayed at home together.

been prepared to stay at home a bit shorter if it had not been for the timing of her leave – she went on leave in September and found it unnecessary to go back to work before the next summer holiday. Less than nine months had, however, been out of the question as she would not consider going back to work while she still breastfed the child. In this couple, the mother was described as the obvious first-hand caretaker of the small baby, and the couple did not feel that this had to be explained or justified to any great extent.

Emma and Magnus greatly stressed the importance of sharing the care for the child and of the father's presence. According to Emma, one reason was that they had seen how children connect with their fathers if the fathers have been active in the everyday care. Less active fathers do not have the same close relationship with their children in her experience. It had, however, been quite obvious to both that Emma should be at home full-time during the first year. Despite their great emphasis on equal parenthood, and their discussions of their equal sharing of the care, only Emma had been on full-time leave. She had always wanted to stay at home during the first year, and she was quite determined that this was what she wanted. To Magnus, it was obvious that Emma had to be at home during the first year because of the breastfeeding. Magnus was at home a lot too during the first year because he studied part-time and worked part-time. However, he was probably not as engaged as Emma in the child care, as after this first year Emma felt that it would be good for Magnus to go on parental leave so that he could be more engaged in the everyday care of the child. During the second year, both worked 50 percent of full-time which facilitated a shared responsibility for the child. The couple were a bit vague as to the reason for this part-time arrangement. Besides putting forward the importance of shared parenting, and Emma's right to be as engaged in working life as Magnus after her year of leave, they also said that the part-time arrangement was the result of a lucky chance rather than deliberate. Emma had looked for part-time employment and Magnus for full-time, but he had only gotten part-time. They were both very happy with this, but whereas Emma was hoping for a similar arrangement when they had their second baby, which was due in the summer, Magnus planned to increase his working hours after a short period of parental leave in the summer. This is an example of a "neo-traditionalist" couple where the father's importance to the child is greatly stressed and his time with the child is facilitated, at the same time as the couple expresses traditional views on parenthood and the importance of the mother for small babies. Emma's and Magnus' discussions and reasoning also indicate that even though they chose a fairly traditional division of leave, they expressed an awareness of the importance of shared parenting and they justified their

decisions by highlighting the degree to which they actually shared the parental leave after the child had turned one year of age. Consequently, they adjusted their description of their choices and decisions so that it fitted with the new, caring fatherhood ideal that is put forward in much of the public debate.

In sum, the interviews presented here indicate that the mother's wish to stay at home during the first year is one possible reason for fathers' shorter leave lengths. In the couples interviewed, the father rarely opposed to this division but rather agreed with the mother that she should be at home during the child's first year. This indicates that motherhood norms still are strong. The couples have the child's best interest in focus and if the mother (or both the mother and the father) thinks that it is important that the child spends its first year with the mother, the importance of the father-child relationship may have to come second.

#### **4.4. Work-related and economic factors**

The quantitative analyses above showed that couples where the division of leave was determined by the father's job characteristics or the family economy were among the couples who divided the leave most unequally. Working with an employer that were positive to, or even encouraged, parental leave was put forward as something that made sharing the parental leave easier. For example, both Linda and her partner Emil referred to their situation at work and the positive attitudes of their employers as factors that facilitated their equal division of leave. Anders pointed out that it would be taboo for his governmental sector employer to say anything negative about parental leave because parental leave is officially encouraged by the state. For Markus, the fact that his employer offered extra income replacement during six months of leave was one reason that he was at home for half a year whereas his partner Isabella had stayed at home for 14 months. Markus' income exceeded the income ceiling in the insurance scheme. He explained:

At [company name] we get up to 180 days with extra income replacement, so... So you want to utilize those days. And if you use more than that, then there is a... well, economic change. Then I would get a lot less money. But 180 days is still quite a lot, so... (Markus)

[Som på [company name] så får vi upp till 180 dagar som man får kompensation, så det... Så dom dagarna vill man ju utnyttja då. Och går man över det, då blir det en... ja, ekonomisk förändring. Då skulle jag få väldigt mycket mindre pengar. Men 180 dagar är ändå ganska mycket, så att... (Markus)]

Company policies may work together with gender norms to produce different behaviour among women and men. As Markus' story exemplifies, a company policy to offer extra income replacement may have encouraged men, who are not expected to stay at home for a long period, to take a specific amount of leave and discouraged them from taking more leave. Markus thought that six months was a lot and that taking even more was not worth the economic costs. In Sweden, women in companies with similar policies would not be likely to go back to work after a six-month period with extra reimbursement from the employer because of norms regarding breastfeeding and mothers' responsibilities for small children.

The interviews also showed how economic arguments together with gender equal norms could motivate couples to break with motherhood norms. Anders and Ylva had had their second child at the time of the interview. They had been at home full-time for about nine months each with the first child. According to Anders, this seemed the most reasonable division. In addition, Ylva wanted to get back to work and Anders also wanted her to go back rather soon because she had the possibility of a faster wage growth than he did, if she proved her commitment to work. During their full-time leaves with their first child, both Anders and Ylva had felt that they did not enjoy being away from work for such a long period. Ylva in particular described the boredom of being on full-time leave for a long period and the longing for intellectual challenges during her leave with the first child. Therefore, after Ylva had been on a three months full-time leave with the second child, Ylva and Anders would both start working 50 percent of full-time and be on part-time parental leave. Although Ylva felt strongly that she did not want to be on full-time parental leave for a long time, she assured several times that being at home had also been enjoyable. Her repeated assurances may be interpreted as expressions of a need to conform to ideals of the affectionate mother at least to some degree. She was, however, prepared to break what she experienced to be a strong breastfeeding norm. Below, she compares the couple's attitudes to norms and traditions before and after they had themselves experienced parenthood and parental leave:

Ylva: I don't know, you were totally convinced that first... You are to breastfeed the child and you are to breastfeed it at least half a year and everything, and the mother should always be at home in the beginning and all that... Now we have reconsidered a bit as I will go back to work already now after three months, but as I said, Anders... We didn't really know what it was like. We thought... Because everybody... You share... The mother is at home first and then the father, by tradition, and so we did the same thing by and large and there was nothing more to it. And that worked rather well. Again, we will do it differently this time...

Interviewer: And then the breastfeeding is nothing that...

Ylva: No, she will eat infant formula and I will try to breastfeed her as best I can. She has been breastfed now at least a few months, three months, and then we will have to... There is nothing more to it, I guess I'll use a breast pump (laughs) and then she will breastfeed a bit in the morning and the evening and that will... That will have to do.

[Ylva: Jag vet inte, man var ju helt övertygad att först... Det ska ammas och det ska ammas i minst ett halvår och allt vad det är för nånting och mamman ska alltid vara hemma i början och allting sånt där... Nu har vi ju omvärderat det där lite grann eftersom jag går tillbaks och jobbar redan nu då efter tre månader men som sagt, Anders... Vi visste ju inte riktigt hur det var. Vi trodde... Alltså eftersom alla... Man delar... Mamman är hemma först och sen är pappan hemma, av tradition, så gjorde vi väl också så då ungefär och så var det inte mer än så. Och det funkade ju ganska bra. Som sagt nu gör vi annorlunda den här gången och så...

Interviewer: Och då är inte amningen liksom nåt...

Ylva: Nej utan hon får äta lite ersättning och så får jag försöka amma så gott jag kan. Hon har fått amma nu några månader i alla fall, tre månader, och så får vi... Så är det inte mer än så, så jag får väl pumpa (skratt) så får hon amma lite på morgon och kväll så får det... Det får räcka.]

The quote illustrates how the insecurity felt by first-time parents may make them follow established norms and traditions, and how experiences of parenthood may give the security needed to break with these norms if they have a second child.

Parents reasoned around the importance of their own economic situation as well as around the economic situation of couples in general, and the economic reason is often deemed important. Some couples put forward the income difference in the couple as one reason why they did not share the leave equally. Ellen and Petter were one of these couples. They had first planned to share the parental leave more equally than they eventually did. They wanted the same experiences and possibilities and Petter wanted to spend time with the child. They also had ideological reasons, albeit rather vague “Mostly by principle, that it should be... on the same terms” [“Mest av principskäl liksom, att det ska vara... på samma villkor.”] (Petter). According to Petter, changes in their economic situation, brought about by Ellen's unemployment and their buying their own home, meant that Ellen stayed at home for eight months and Petter, who earned more than Ellen, stayed at home for four months. Petter also got a new job during his parental leave and therefore did not stay at home as long as planned, even though he had wanted to be at home for an additional month or so. Petter had seen the same thing happen in couples around him:

And people in my age, sometimes they have not used any parental leave at all. They may plan to take a Monday, every other Monday /.../ At the same time, most people I know have loans, they... live in their own houses, condominiums, yes mostly condominiums, have mortgages, and.. hell in 9.9 cases out of 10 the man earns a higher income than the woman. The guy has more money. So I don't know whether it has a lot to do with economic factors, but I almost think so. /.../But I don't know, it is really ironical in a sense (laughs). It is



a shame that you do not... I know, I've met one who shared the leave 50-50. I can't remember, I think it was someone at work that... they are a bit similar... But... it's rare (laughs). (Petter)

[Och dom som är jämnåriga med mig, ibland har det varit så att dom har inte tagit ut nån pappaledighet. Det kanske handlar om att dom tänker ta ut en måndag, varannan måndag /.../ Samtidigt, dom flesta jag känner, har satt sig i så här skulder, dom... bor i hus, i bostadsrätt, ja framförallt bostadsrätt, har lån, och så är det... fan i 9,9 fall av tio så är det så att mannen drar in mer pengar än kvinnan. Killen har ju mer pengar. Så jag vet inte om det handlar mycket om ekonomiska faktorer, men jag tror nästan det. /.../ Men alltså, jag vet inte... det är verkligen ironiskt på nåt sätt (skratt). Det är så tråkigt att man inte... Jag känner, jag har träffat nån som har delat hälften-hälften. Jag kommer inte ihåg, jag tror de var nån på jobbet som... dom är båda lite grann lika... Men... sällsynt (skratt). (Petter)]

Another couple, Emma and Magnus, had different views on whether or not their economic situation had influenced their division of leave. According to Emma, their small income difference, which was to her advantage, did not influence their division of leave. It was obvious to her that Magnus could not have stayed at home the first year as he had not accumulated the minimum work days to receive the income-related benefit because of his studies. Still, it was never on the table anyway because she wanted to be at home during the first year and he wanted to finish his studies. According to Magnus, the economic situation had always been a factor to take into account in their plans, for example, for parental leave. These two couples, Ellen and Petter and Emma and Magnus, are examples of how the economic argument can be used differently depending on whether the man or the woman earns the most income in the couple. Although the man earned the highest income in the first couple and the woman earned the highest income in the second, both argued that the income difference was one reason why the father used fewer days of parental leave than the mother. This difference in the use of the economic argument depending on who earned the most was seen also in the interviews that were done with the couples before they had their first child (c.f. Alsarve and Boye 2012). This is another example of how practical circumstances may interact with gender norms and hence result in different outcomes depending on the attitudes held by a couple.

#### **4.5. How fathers' parental leave may influence the sharing of care**

The quantitative analyses showed that when both parents were back at work after the parental leave period, fathers performed a larger share of the child care the longer their parental leave had been. As already mentioned, part of the reason may be selection of child-oriented fathers into long parental leaves. The association may also be partly causal and the interviews with parents suggest several possible causal mechanisms. Two main experiences described by the

interviewees are that the father's parental leave influences his relationship with the child positively and that insights gained, by both mothers and fathers, about what it takes to care for a child and household facilitate an understanding of what has traditionally been considered the mother's work. It may also benefit the relationship and the understanding between the parents.

All interviewed fathers had taken some parental leave, be it a few months part-time or several months of full-time leave. Mothers and fathers experienced that the father-child relationship had benefitted from the father's leave more or less irrespective of the length of his leave (see also results from the quantitative analyses above). This may say something about the couples' reference point as the parents seem to compare themselves to couples where the father does not take any parental leave. It may also be socially desirable to claim that the father's parental leave had this positive consequence. The parents sometimes give examples and descriptions of how the father-child relationship has changed. A sign of the beneficial effect of the father's leave, put forward by both mothers and fathers, was that after the parental leave period, the child could turn to either parent when it needed care or comfort. Another sign described by for example Lena and Anders (who were not a couple) was that the child always favoured the parent that was currently spending most time with the child. Another interviewee who discussed the importance of the father's parental leave for the child was Ellen. She had been on parental leave for eight months before her partner Petter went on his four-month leave. She was glad that Petter took some parental leave because she could tell from the child's behaviour that it felt safe with both parents. The child also felt safe with other people and Ellen thought this was because it had not formed a strong relationship with only one person. Ellen explains:

I think that is because he [the child] will not only be safe with one person. But he... he has had to cope with dad too full time. And that... that... dad also has been like the favourite, during some periods. So... Yeah, that he... It's easy to believe that, that it's hard to be a parent, and that you can handle it just because you are a mother. To really just be able to drop everything and see that your partner can do it. (Ellen)

[Det tror jag är för att han inte bara blir trygg hos en person. Utan att han... han har fått klara sig med pappa också på heltid. Och att... att... pappa också har varit favoriten liksom, vissa stunder. Så det... Ja, att han... Det är lätt att tro att man, alltså att det är svårt att vara förälder liksom, som man klarar bara för att man är mamma. Att verkligen bara kunna släppa allt och att se att ens partner klarar det. (Ellen)]

As seen in the quote, leaving the child with the father was an important experience also for Ellen. During the first months of the child's life, during which the child was hard to comfort, she had surprised herself by being "over-protective" of the child, as she put it. After leaving

the child in the care of the father, she realized that the care of a small child was not something difficult that mothers can handle because of some intrinsic motherly characteristic, but something that her partner could handle as well as she could.

Fathers as well as mothers described how the parental leave period had made them realize the extent of the effort needed to take care of a small child and the household alone. According to Carlos, you lose yourself when you have the full responsibility for a small child. Ellen's partner Petter had expected the parental leave to be a bit like being on vacation, but discovered that it was nothing of the sort. You are not free when you are on parental leave, you are on call 24 hours a day, was his experience. A lot of his parental leave period was structured around routines and housework, "you sort of become a housewife" ["man blir liksom en hemmafru typ"] (Petter). He was glad to hand over the child to his partner when she came home from work:

When Ellen came home, I was really happy that she came home, because I was also very tired of that stuff like... when he [the child] was a year he was extremely active. And I had tried to clean up at home, and he goes around and pours out things as I pick things up you know (laughs). It was... it was pretty damn stressful (laughs). /.../ These things become much greater in your everyday life [when you have a child]. Particularly when you are on parental leave they take an extremely large part of your time and energy. And if you then also have sleep deprivation constantly, then... No, I don't know, I think I was very happy when she came home. I had made dinner, the best of days the dinner was ready and it was clean and then I was glad that she came home so I could go out and run or go out and do something. Or read a book or... (Petter)

[När Ellen kom hem så var jag väldigt glad att hon kom hem, för att jag var också väldigt trött på det där liksom att... när han [barnet] var ett år så var han extremt aktiv. Och jag hade försökt städa här hemma, och han går runt och häller ut saker i takt med att jag plockar upp liksom (skratt). Det var... det var jäkligt påfrestande så här (skratt). /.../ såna här saker blir mycket större i ens vardag [när man har barn]. Särskilt när man är föräldraledig så tar dom extremt stor del av ens tid och ork. Och om man dessutom har sömnbrist konstant, så... Nej, jag vet inte, jag var nog väldigt glad när hon kom hem. Jag hade fixat middag, dom bästa av dagar var middagen klar och det var rent och då var jag glad att hon kom hem så kunde jag gå ut och springa eller gå ut och göra nånting. Eller läsa en bok eller... (Petter)]

This experience of longing to do something else in the evenings apart from caring for the child was recurrent among mothers and fathers. Petter's most important experience was, however, that he got a much better relationship with the child than before because he spent a lot of time with it. Petter summed up his experience of being on parental leave by saying "...it was fun, and sometimes boring (laughs). It was valuable." ["...det var kul, och stundtals tråkigt (skratt). Värdefullt var det."] (Petter).

Sharing parental leave may further an understanding between the parents. As Ellen explains below, both parents got to know what it feels like to be the one who stays at home to care for the child all day, and also what it feels like to be the one who leaves the family to go to work:

I think I took it very well, just started working and got into that life again. The disappointing thing was that then it was the other way around, it was Petter who was pretty restless when I came home, and vice versa, I was tired. So something that was *incredibly* good with him taking paternity leave was that we understood each other. Because the arguments that we perhaps had when I was on maternity leave and he worked ... All of a sudden you had to live each other's lives. You switched places. That ... was good (laughs). (Ellen)

[Jag tror jag tog det väldigt bra, liksom, bara börja jobba och komma in i det livet igen. Det som var tråkigt var att då blev det ju tvärt om, det var Petter som var ganska hyper när man kom hem, och tvärtom jag som var trött. Så det som var *otroligt* bra med att han var pappaledig var att man förstod ju varandra. För dom tjafsens som kanske uppstod när jag var mammaledig och han jobbade... Helt plötsligt så fick man leva varandras liv. Man bytte ju plats. Det... var bra (skratt). (Ellen)]

This is another possible mechanism behind the association between fathers' parental leave and division of care after the parental leave period is over. When both parents have experienced full-time care and being a working parent, they may be better able to communicate problems and difficulties with each other and they may also approach the challenges of combining work and parenthood in a similar way.

## 5. Discussion

In this study, we apply a mixed methods approach to analyse how heterosexual couples motivate their division of parental leave and whether and how fathers' parental leave may be of importance for the long-term division of care between mothers and fathers. By quantitative analyses of survey data, we study the extent to which shared parental leave taking is linked to smaller gender differences in later fatherhood and motherhood practices. Analysing qualitative interviews with first-time parents, we qualify the quantitative results by studying how leave taking may be linked to fatherhood and motherhood practices in a group of middle-class parents. The study draws on theories and previous studies of the "new fatherhood" (cf. Bekkengen 2002; Plantin 2001; Johansson and Klinth 2010; Roman and Peterson 2011) and conflicting motherhood norms around intense mothering, mothers' work-orientation and gender equality (e.g., Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson 2001; Hays 1996; Ribbens McCarthy et al. 2000).

The quantitative analyses show that the men who use the most parental leave are men who state that they want to stay at home for a long period and who want to share the leave with their partner. It seems as if those desires are strong enough, obstacles are overcome. The qualitative interviews indicate that ideals of equal parenting, engaged fatherhood and gender equality can lead a couple to an equal division of the leave. These parents want the same experience of and knowledge about the child and the fathers want to practice a “new fatherhood” (cf. Bekkengen 2002; Johansson and Klinth 2010) by building a close relationship with the baby and by being an equally important parent as the mother. Importantly, largely lacking in the data are discussions of practical obstacles to following these wishes and ideals. Instead, these couples view family policies and institutions as something that facilitates their relatively gender-equal lives. When obstacles are mentioned, it is more often in the form of motherhood and fatherhood norms that the parents feel that they have to break with in order to follow their ideals. One exception is, however, economic circumstances. The family economy is put forward as something that either has prohibited an equal division of leave in the interviewed couple or that may be an obstacle in other couples.

In some couples who stress the importance of gender-equal ideals, other ideals and norms around motherhood and fatherhood counteract an equal sharing of the leave, not because they are hard to break, but because the parents do not want to break them. These couples, too, viewed their division of the leave as “rather equal” which highlights, first, the strength of the equality discourse in Sweden and, second, that the couples may compare themselves to couples who do not share the leave at all rather than to couples with an equal division of the leave.

Men whose partner supposedly wants to be at home longer were among those taking the shortest leave (see Figure 1). The qualitative interviews show how women’s wish to be home during the child’s first year is connected with motherhood norms and ideals around intense mothering that – in our interviews – are embraced by fathers and mothers alike. As all interviewed couples, these couples stress the importance of shared parenting and a close father-child relationship, but the first year of the child’s life is seen as a special period, an exception. Parents want to do what is best for the child and if the mother, or the couple, believes that the child needs its mother during the first year, the building of a close father-child relationship will have to wait.

Perhaps not surprisingly, our quantitative analyses showed that when economic circumstances is the main reason for the division of leave in a couple, this is associated with a short leave among fathers and with a long leave among mothers. Economic arguments are frequently discussed and viewed as valid among the interviewed first-time parents. As indicated also in previous Swedish studies (e.g., Alsarve and Boye 2012; Bekkengen 2002), our study suggests that income differences in a couple may have different implications depending on whether the man or the woman earns the higher income. Or put differently, the income difference may be used as a motive for the father taking a short leave irrespective of who earns the most, the woman or the man. Generally, our findings suggest that practical circumstances such as family income and factors related to the parent's market work may interact with norms and ideals and, as a result, produce different outcomes in different couples.

The father's parental leave length is a strong indicator of gender equality in the actual sharing of child care when both are back at work again and this is most likely one reason why women whose partner has taken a long parental leave are happier with the division of care than are other women. As previously discussed, the higher engagement in child care among fathers who have taken a relatively long parental leave may be caused by selection as well as by causation.<sup>14</sup> The qualitative interviews give some suggestions as to how a causal relationship between fathers' leave and their engagement in child care may come about. First, fathers and mothers describe how the father-child relationship has grown stronger during the father's leave and that after his leave, the child tends to turn to both parents (or equally often the mother and the father) when in need of comfort. We argued earlier that fathers who have been on parental leave may feel more comfortable and secure with the child but the interviews indicate that it actually may be the child who has the final say and that children often are more comfortable being with their father when they have taken longer leaves. Second, fathers and mothers describe how the experience of full-time and lone responsibility for the child has facilitated an understanding of what needs to be done in the home and around the child. This will most likely facilitate communication around issues related to child care and housework and it also seems to contribute to a more equal sharing of the child care in the long run. Having the same experiences of being both the one who stays at home full-time to care for the child and the one who leaves the family to go to work also furthers an understanding between the parents. Experiences like these may be one reason why almost a third of the fathers, in the

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<sup>14</sup> Child-oriented fathers may self-select into long parental leaves, or fathers' parental leave may influence their relationship with the child and their time spent caring for the child.

quantitative data, would have liked to stay at home longer, seen in retrospect. Summing up, our study indicates that both mothers and fathers have a lot to gain from shared parenting and from dividing the care work and paid work more gender equally when children are small. Our interviews indicate that children benefit as well. Having two parents to turn to when you are sad or hurt are important and according to our interviewees, fathers' parental leave taking furthers a closer father-child bond and facilitates children's developing a close relationship with both parents.

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## **Appendix**

### ***Quantitative methods used in the study***

In the multivariate analyses in this study, we use Ordinary least squares (or OLS) regression models as well as logistic regression models. OLS regression is a generalized linear model that may be used to model a dependent variable that is on (at least) an interval scale (as is parental leave length). In these models, the relationship between the continuous response variable and the explanatory variables are represented by a line of best fit as the dependent variable is predicted by the independent variable(s) (Hutcheson 2011). The intercept or the constant in the models indicate the (estimated) value of Y (the dependent variable) when X=0 (or rather when all the independent variables are equal to zero). The regression coefficient indicates the slope of the line and describes the average expected change in Y that is associated with a unit change in X, holding all other variables constant (Ibid.). When independent categorical and/or dummy variables are included in the model, the (excluded) reference category is 0 and the regression coefficient indicate the estimated average difference in Y when those in the reference category (e.g. having one child, see Table A5) are compared to others (e.g. having two children or having three or more children respectively).

Logistic regression is used to model the relationship between a dichotomous outcome variable and one or more independent variables (as in Table A6). For continuous independent variables, the odds ratios reveal the estimated change in the odds of the dependent variable with a one unit change in the independent variable, holding all other variables constant. For categorical or dummy variables, the odds ratios show how the ratio of the odds to be in one group is related to the odds of being in the reference category (which is set to 1), holding all other variables constant. Positive relationships are indicated by odds ratios over 1, negative relationships by odds ratios between 0 and 1, and 1.00 indicates a zero relationship or no difference (compared to the reference category).

### ***Dependent Variables***

#### ***Gender equality in the division of child care***

This indicator includes information on who most often puts the children to sleep, who is in contact with pre-schools or schools, who remains home when the children are sick and who buys the children's clothes. These indicators involve tasks that are somewhat time-consuming, can interfere with the parents' paid work and demand that parents engage in planning. Each of

the child care items vary from -2, indicating that the woman most often performs the chore, to 2, indicating that the man most often performs the chore. A value of 0 indicates that the woman and the man share the duties equally. When respondents stated that one of the chores is not relevant for them, the value for that item was coded as 0 (corresponding to a gender neutral division of the activity). The full index varies from -8 to 8 and in the multivariate analysis, we use a standardized version of this index with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

#### *Women's satisfaction with division of childcare*

From both the main and partner respondents, we have information on satisfaction with the division of child care (F31\_01\_IP, F31\_01\_Partner). Respondents rate their level of satisfaction from 1 ("Very dissatisfied") to 5 ("Very satisfied"). From these variables, we create a dummy variable for the event that the respondent rates "5" for her/his level of satisfaction. In the multivariate models, only factors affecting the mothers' level of satisfaction with child care is presented. In exploratory models, we estimated the fathers' odds of being satisfied with the division of child care but as we found very few significant relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable, these analyses were not included in the paper.

#### ***Independent Variables***

##### *Women's and men's parental leave time*

In the survey, the primary and secondary respondent provides his or her last year of taking parental leave [F21\_fodar\_IP] and the birth year of each child [F20a1\_ar\_IP, F20a2\_ar\_IP, F20a3\_ar\_IP, F20a4\_ar\_IP, F20a5\_ar\_IP]. From the main respondent, we have information on the total parental leave time taken for each child for the main respondent and the partner [F20f1\_man\_IP, F20f1\_vec\_IP, F20f2\_man\_IP, F20f2\_vec\_IP, F20f3\_man\_IP, F20f3\_vec\_IP, F20f4\_man\_IP, F20f4\_vec\_IP, F20f5\_man\_IP, F20f5\_vec\_IP]. Consequently, the main respondent gets to report on his/her own time in parental leave as well as on the partner's (estimated) time on leave. By matching year of last parental leave (from main as well as partner respondents) and the parental leave taken for that particular child (according to the main respondent) we have information on the parents' parental leave length in weeks. From this we create separate women and men variables for the log values of last parental leave length [lnwomenlpl, lnmenlpl].

### *Dummy variables for two children and three plus children*

From information on the total number of children living in the household [nrchild], determined by the number of children listed by the primary respondent, dummy variables are created. One dummy variable is created for the event that only one child lives in the household [onechild] (the reference category), while another dummy is created for cases where two children live in the household [twochild]. The dummy plus3child is for cases where three or more children are living in the household.

### *Dummy variables for men and women's higher education*

Information is retrieved from register data on education levels among primary respondents [Sun2000niva\_old] while information on secondary respondents' education level is provided by primary respondents [F57\_IP]. From this information, new variables are created for primary respondents and partners' education levels with uniform scaling [educPr, educPart]. We then create separate women and men dummy variables, indicating respondents who have at least a university degree.

### *Women's and men's work hours*

Primary and secondary respondents provide information on the number of hours they work per week [F44\_tim\_IP, F44\_tim\_Partner] as well as information on whether or not they currently have a job [F44\_IP, F44\_Partner]. From this information, we create new variables representing the number of hours worked per week for primary respondents and partners [WorkHrsIP, WorkHrsPartner]. Variables indicating hours worked per week are then created separately for men and for women [WorkHrsWom, WorkHrsMan].

### *Women's and Men's Income*

We also create variables for main and partner respondents' income levels [incomePr, incomePart], which they provide in the survey [F41\_IP, F41\_Partner]. An income level of below 100,000 kr is represented by the value 1; 100,000 to 150,000 kr by 2; 150,000 to 200,000 kr by 3; 200,000 to 250,000 kr by 4; 250,000 to 300,000 kr by 5; 300,000 to 400,000 kr by 6; 400,000 to 500,000 kr by 7; and over 500,000 kr by 8. Income variables are also created separately for men and for women [incomeWom, incomeMan].

Table A1. Descriptive statistics on the YAPS data sample (women and men with a first child born in the year 2000 or later).

		Women	Men
	<b>n (total obs.)</b>		
The log of the average length of last parental leave	363	3.9 (0.5)	2.5 (0.9)
Dummy variable for two children (twochild)	363	0.5 (0.5)	0.6 (.5)
0		49.7 %	42.4 %
1		50.3 %	57.6 %
Dummy variable for three or more children (plus3child)	363	0.3 (0.4)	0.2 (0.4)
0		72.8 %	82.6 %
1		27.2 %	17.4 %
Women's Education Level (educWom)	360	4.0 (1.2)	-
1 – Primary School		1.7 %	
2 – Interrupted secondary school or vocational education		15.3 %	
3 – Upper secondary school (3-4 years)		20.0 %	
4 – College without degree or practical vocational training		11.9 %	
5 – College degree or graduate studies		51.1 %	
Men's Education Level (educMan)	359	-	3.6 (1.3)
1			4.7 %
2			22.3 %
3			18.9 %
4			17.0 %
5			37.0 %
Women's Income (incomeWom)	360	4.3 (1.8)	-
1 – Below 100,000 sek		9.2 %	
2 – 100,000 to 150,000 sek		9.2 %	
3 – 150,000 to 200,000 sek		11.9 %	
4 – 200,000 to 250,000 sek		20.8 %	
5 – 250,000 to 300,000 sek		21.9 %	
6 – 300,000 to 400,000 sek		17.8 %	
7 – 400,000 to 500,000 sek		6.4 %	
8 – Over 500,000 sek		2.8 %	
Man's Income (incomeMan)	360	-	5.9

			(1.5)
1			1.4 %
2			1.7 %
3			3.1 %
4			7.2 %
5			18.9 %
6			35.6 %
7			17.5 %
8			14.7 %
Women's work hours per week (WorkHrsWom)	362	31.1 (13.1)	-
Men's work hours per week (WorkHrsMan)	361	-	39.9 (8.5)
Dummy for women's satisfaction with parental leave (SatisfiedChcWomDum)	363	0.4 (0.5)	-
0		57.0 %	
1		43.0 %	
Men's involvement in childcare (totchcare2Y)	333	-2.2 (1.8)	-1.9 (1.6)
-8		0.5 %	0.7 %
-7		1.0 %	0.0 %
-6		2.6 %	0.0 %
-5		6.3 %	4.2 %
-4		11.6 %	10.5 %
-3		18.4 %	14.7 %
-2		21.6 %	25.2 %
-1		22.6 %	29.4 %
0		13.2 %	11.2 %
1		1.0 %	3.5 %
2		0.5 %	0.0 %
3		0.5 %	0.0 %
4		0.0 %	0.7 %

Table A2. Couple characteristics at the time of the first in-depth interview (i.e. before the birth of the child) for the 20 couples interviewed.

Couple	Age (woman/m)		Occupation (w/m)		Income euros/month (w/m)		No of hours normally worked (w/m)		Type of contract (w/m)	
	woman	man	w	m	w	m	w	m	w	m
Sara & Simon	30	32	business adviser at bank [företagsrådgivare, bank]	internal consultant at bank [internkonsult, bank]	3391 - 3960	3391 - 3960	45	45	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Maria & Patrik	33	40	social community planner [konsult, samhällsplanerare]	sound technician [ljudtekniker]	3961 - 4520	2831 - 3390	43	40	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Sofie & Mike	34	37	city planner [stadsplanerare]	builder [byggare, arbetar med ventilation]	3391 - 3960	3961 - 4520	39,5	40	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Kajsa & Andreas	30	29	teacher	construction engineer [byggingenjör]	2261 - 2830	2831 - 3390	45	40	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Karin & Peter	27	29	teacher	system analyst and web designer [system- och webbutvecklare]	2261 - 2830	2831 - 3390	45	42	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Ellinor & Stefan	33	33	IT manager [IT-chef]	process and business developer at bank [process- och verksamhetsutvecklare, bank]	3961 - 4520	2831 - 3390	40,45	40,45	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Elin & Dan	30	33	physiotherapist [sjukgymnast]	physiotherapist [sjukgymnast]	2261 - 2830	3391 - 3960	42	40	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Tina & Niklas	35	37	administrator [handläggare]	controller [controller]	2261 - 2830	>=4521	40	40	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Kristina & Lars	29	29	school counsellor [skolkurator]	[behandlingspersonal]	2261 - 2830	1701 - 2260	40	37	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Emma & Magnus	27	28	teacher	nurse's assistant, student [vårdbiträde, student]	2261 - 2830	1701 - 2260	50	40	temporary, full-time	temporary, full-time
Linda & Emil	33	36	project manager [projektledare]	bank clerk [banktjänsteman]	3391 - 3960	2831 - 3390	37,5	40	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Eva & Erik	32	33	web editor [webbredaktör]	editor [informatör, redactor]	3391 - 3960	2831 - 3390	40	37,5	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Therese & Lukas	32	33	HR consultant [HR-konsult]	logistics manager [logistikchef]	2261 - 2830	>=4521	40	50-55	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Lena & Carlos	29	37	journalist	operations manager [nationell verksamhetschef]	3961 - 4520	>=4521	37,5	50-60	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time



Couple	Age (woman/man)		Occupation (w/m)		Income euros/month (w/m)		No of hours normally worked (w/m)		Type of contract (w/m)	
Sofia & Johanne s	29	28	graphic designer [graphic designer/trafficansvarig]	system analyst [systemutvecklare/projektledare]	2831-3390	3391-3960	40	42	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Ninna & David	34	34	laboratory assistant [BMA/lab.ass.]	programmer [programmerare]	2261-2830	3961-4520	40	40	temporary, full-time	permanent, full-time
Ylva & Anders	29	31	lawyer [skattejurist]	lawyer [universitetsjurist]	2831-3390	3391-3960	40-45	45	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Ellen & Petter	24	27	office junior [kontorsassistent] (has a couple of odd jobs and is on part-time sick leave)	interaction designer [användbarhetsexpert/interaktionsdesigner]	<1131	2831-3390	20	40	temporary, part-time	permanent, full-time
Stina & Per	35	29	pensions calculator, consultant [pensionsberäknare / konsult arb.givare]	section leader [gruppchef]	3391-3960	3391-3960	40	45	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time
Isabella & Markus	28	36	auditor assistant [revisorsassistent]	project manager [projektledare]	2261-2830	>=4521	40-45	45	permanent, full-time	permanent, full-time

Table A3. OLS regression of the reason for the division of leave and parental leave length for women and men, separating between main respondents' only and main and partner respondents.

Most important reason for the leave	The man's parental leave length (in ln leave) <b>Main and partner respondents</b>	The woman's parental leave length (in ln leave) <b>Main and partner respondents</b>	The man's parental leave length (in ln leave) <b>Main respondents only</b>	The woman's parental leave length (in ln leave) <b>Main respondents only</b>
Wanted to share the parental leave with the other parent	REF	REF	REF	REF
The other parent's will to be home/not to be home	-0.74*** (0.13)	0.18* (0.08)	-0.78*** (0.17)	0.14 (0.10)
I wanted to be home a long period	0.27* (0.14)	0.37*** (0.05)	0.31+ (0.18)	0.47*** (0.05)
I did not want to be home for so long	-1.33*** (0.24)	-0.15 (0.10)	-0.80* (0.41)	-0.05 (0.10)
Work related reasons for me	-0.95*** (0.12)	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.85*** (0.18)	0.26*** (0.07)
Work related reasons for the other parent	-0.43+ (0.23)	0.26** (0.08)	-0.34 (0.37)	0.37*** (0.08)
The family economy	-0.97*** (0.12)	0.30*** (0.07)	-0.92*** (0.15)	0.31*** (0.07)
I used the part of the leave the other parent could not use	-0.84*** (0.20)	0.09 (0.17)	-0.73 (0.47)	0.65*** (0.20)
The availability of child care	-0.11 (0.25)	0.30* (0.13)	0.08 (0.32)	0.37** (0.13)
Other reason	-0.56*** (0.16)	0.19** (0.07)	-0.73*** (0.20)	0.25*** (0.07)
Constant	2.93*** (0.09)	3.60*** (0.05)	2.90 (0.10)	3.68*** (0.05)
Adj. R2	0.26	0.16	0.23	0.20
Total N	444	593	239	404

+  $p < 0.1$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

*Table A4. OLS regression of parental leave uptake (in ln weeks of leave) for women and men, dependent on the reported main reason for how the leave was divided.*

Most important reason for the leave	The man's parental leave length (in ln leave)	The woman's parental leave length (in ln leave)
Wanted to share the parental leave with the other parent	REF	REF
The other parent's will to be home/not to be home	-0.74*** (0.13)	0.14 (0.10)
I wanted to be home a long period	0.27* (0.14)	0.47*** (0.05)
I did not want to be home for so long	-1.33*** (0.24)	-0.05 (0.10)
Work related reasons for me	-0.95*** (0.12)	0.26*** (0.07)
Work related reasons for the other parent	-0.43+ (0.23)	0.37*** (0.08)
The family economy	-0.97*** (0.12)	0.31*** (0.07)
I used the part of the leave the other parent could not use	-0.84*** (0.20)	0.65*** (0.20)
The availability of child care	-0.11 (0.25)	0.37** (0.13)
Other reason	-0.56*** (0.16)	0.25*** (0.07)
Constant	2.93*** (0.09)	3.68*** (0.05)
Adj. R2	0.26	0.20
Total N	444	404

+  $p < 0.1$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A5. OLS regression model of the father's involvement in child care

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
The mother's parental leave uptake (ln)	-0.19+ (1.90)	-0.16+ (1.67)	-0.14 (1.34)	-0.18+ (1.89)	-0.17 (1.60)	-0.13 (1.02)
The father's parental leave uptake (ln)	0.47*** (8.27)	0.42*** (7.19)	0.43*** (7.36)	0.42*** (7.57)	0.42*** (7.24)	0.40*** (5.70)
Age of the father	0.01 (1.21)	0.01 (1.22)	0.01 (0.58)	0.01 (0.72)	0.00 (0.40)	0.00 (0.11)
Two children	-0.17 (1.41)	-0.21+ (1.71)	-0.14 (1.11)	-0.13 (1.08)	-0.14 (1.15)	-0.08 (0.53)
Three or more children	-0.13 (0.86)	-0.18 (1.23)	-0.09 (0.60)	-0.11 (0.74)	-0.11 (0.76)	-0.02 (0.11)
Woman highly educ		0.20+ (1.83)				
Man highly educ		-0.06 (0.52)				
Woman's income			0.09** (3.08)		0.04 (1.31)	0.04 (1.05)
Man's income			-0.03 (0.73)		0.01 (0.36)	0.02 (0.49)
The woman's work hours				0.01*** (3.85)	0.01* (2.50)	0.01* (2.29)
The man's work hours				-0.01+ (1.96)	-0.01* (2.01)	-0.01+ (1.79)
The mother's will to be home						-0.26* (2.10)
_cons	-0.83 (1.41)	-0.85 (1.43)	-0.89 (1.41)	-0.58 (0.95)	-0.57 (0.84)	-0.52 (0.67)
$R^2$	0.22	0.22	0.24	0.26	0.26	0.28
$N$	332	327	328	332	328	256

+  $p < 0.1$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table A6. Regression models (logistic regression; LR and OLS regression) of the mother's satisfaction with the division of child care

Variables	LR 1	LR2	LR3	LR4	LR5	OLS 1 <sup>1</sup>
The mother's parental leave uptake	0.80 (0.18)	0.74 (0.17)	0.86 (0.22)	0.81 (0.18)	0.80 (0.21)	-0.16 (0.12)
The father's parental leave uptake	1.29* (0.17)	1.32* (0.18)	1.28+ (0.17)	1.26+ (0.17)	1.36* (0.20)	0.12+ (0.06)
Two children	0.68 (0.18)	0.68 (0.18)	0.73 (0.20)	0.75 (0.20)	0.78 (0.22)	-0.14 (0.13)
Three or more children	0.89 (0.28)	0.90 (0.29)	0.90 (0.29)	0.93 (0.30)	0.94 (0.32)	-0.11 (0.15)
Woman highly educ.		0.71 (0.17)			0.65 (0.17)	-0.21+ (0.12)
Man highly educ.		1.20 (0.30)			1.21 (0.31)	0.08 (0.12)
The woman's income			1.04 (0.07)		0.94 (0.08)	0.03 (0.04)
The man's income			1.00 (0.08)		1.08 (0.10)	0.04 (0.04)
The woman's work hours				1.02** (0.01)	1.03** (0.01)	0.01* (0.01)
The man's work hours				0.99 (0.01)	1.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
_cons	1.19 (1.23)	1.64 (1.75)	0.76 (0.89)	0.68 (0.80)	0.42 (0.58)	4.35*** (0.61)
N	363	356	358	361	351	355
R2						0.07

+  $p < 0.1$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

1. Although model assumptions are violated in the OLS model as the dependent variable in this model only can take on five values, we estimate it as a robustness check in order to study if the results from the logistic regression models are mirrored in the OLS model.