

# Organizational Practices of Paternity Leave

Sybille Reidl, Florian Holzinger

JOANNEUM RESEARCH Forschungsgesellschaft mbH  
POLICIES – Institute for Economic and Innovation Research  
Vienna, AUSTRIA

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This working paper is based on empirical results of the research project “Paternity Leave: Impacts on Male Careers”<sup>1</sup>: The aim of this project is to explore the impacts and consequences of paternity leave on male career progression. First results of this project, based on an analysis of Austrian social security data, indicated that male academics who have taken paternity leave do not face disadvantages or discriminations in the workplace (Reidl & Schiffbänker, 2013) as they have only a slightly higher risk of unemployment and hardly any salary losses compared to equivalent academics without paternity leave periods.

For this working paper we have conducted interviews with managers and executives of companies and organizations where fathers have already taken paternity leave. Through this organizational perspective on paternity leave we wanted to address the following research questions:

1. What kind of organizational practices are related to paternity leave? What kind of framework conditions and support structures are in place?
2. How do companies and organizations perceive the political instrument of paternity leave? Do companies and organizations mention any advantages and disadvantages of paternity leave usage?
3. What kind of organizational culture exists in these companies and organizations and how does this effect the usage and design of paternity leave?

The paper is structured as follows: In the first chapter we review available literature on different types of organizational practices and cultures and their impact on paternity leave decisions and designs. On this basis we develop a framework for analysing the effects of organizational cultures on the usage of paternity leave. The second chapter summarizes the research and sampling methodology. The description and analysis of organisational practices related to paternity leave is part of chapter 3. The actual organizational practices of paternity leave and their effects on the careers of male academics are described in chapter 4. Finally, in chapter 5, we summarize and discuss our findings and develop a typology of organizational cultures and related paternity leave practices.

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## 2 PATERNITY LEAVE DECISIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES

The decisions of fathers to take parental leave are influenced by a range of different factors: their own value based desire to be more involved in child care (Williams, 2008), the gender role identity of the spouse or mother, the division of labour in the household (Schulz & Blossfeld, 2012), the employment situation of partners when the child is born (Whitehouse *et al.*, 2007), the available household income respectively the income of the spouse or mother (Reich, 2010), the attitudes of the social environment (family, relatives, friends, colleagues) concerning fatherly involvement in child care and paternity leave and the employers attitudes and practices (Tremblay & Genin, 2011; Bygren & Duvander, 2006; Haas & Hwang, 2007; Brandth & Kvande, 2001; Kvande, 2009; Whitehouse *et al.*, 2007). In this study we focus on the organizational factors that support or hinder usage of paternity leave.

Studies from different countries show that usage of paternity leave varies between industries (Reidl & Schiffbänker, 2013; Naz, 2010; Whitehouse *et al.*, 2007; Bygren & Duvander, 2006). Fathers working in industries with a high participation of women workers use paternity leave significantly more often than fathers working in male dominated industries. One explanation for this fact is that companies in male and female dominated industries have different organizational cultures. This has an essential impact on the usage of paternity leave. Bowen and Orthner (1991) are providing the following definition of organizational culture:

*“Like other societal institutions and organizations, work organizations have cultures—rules and expectations for behavior...that arise through both the deliberate actions of leadership and the on-going interaction of group members. Typically unwritten and often unspoken, this culture gives the organization a certain style and character and may have considerable impact upon the values, attitudes and actions of employees in both work and non-work domains. (...) Although the nature of organizational culture may have a tremendous impact on how individuals in the organization think, act, and feel, they may not be totally conscious of the influence of this culture on their actions.” (Bowen & Orthner, 1991, cited in Haas & Hwang, 2007, p. 321).*

According to Joan Acker organizational cultures are gendered as they are structured along gendered assumptions, cultural beliefs and norms about women and men, femininity and masculinity (Acker, 1990; Acker, 2012). Acker calls these assumptions, cultural beliefs and norms the gendered subtexts of organizations. These gendered subtexts reproduce gender inequalities within organizations as well as the gendered division of labour in modern societies (Haas & Hwang, 2007). In male dominated businesses the organizational culture is based on male norms and values.

*“[It] requires the ideal worker to strive for high pay and output, concentrate on obediently performing specialized tasks, and know their place in a well-developed hierarchy of power. Male norms in organizations also include competitiveness, aggressiveness, a compulsive orientation to task accomplishment, reliance on rational, unemotional decision making, focus on short-term self-interest and emphasis on individual achievement and material success (Bailyn, Rapoport & Fletcher, 2000; Bowen & Orthner, 1991; Fondas, 1997; Maier, 1999). These norms affect all aspects of work-recruitment,*

*promotion processes, reward determination, and how work is organized and coordinated.” (Haas et al., 2002, p. 324f.)*

These gendered norms are embodied in working time regulations, collective agreements, employer/works council agreements, performance evaluation tools etc. (Acker, 1990) and are realized through organizational and social practices (Gherardi & Poggio, 2001) like working time, overtime, flexibility and mobility demands/requirements, performance assessments or internal paternity or parental leave arrangements (van den Brink u. Benschop, 2012); (Acker, 1990); (Gherardi & Poggio, 2001). Many organizational cultures are based on a masculine ethics, the idea of a male breadwinner and the rigid separation of work and the domestic sphere (Allard et al., 2007).

*“An organizational culture comprises discourses, practices, norms, languages and values which reflect the socially constructed images of maleness and femaleness and define specific power relations among the members of an organization according to their sexual membership.” (Martin & Meyerson, 1997, cited in Gherardi & Poggio, 2001, p. 251)*

Femininity and masculinity are perceived by these organizations as opposed in their behaviours, social roles and spheres. Although organizations view themselves as gender neutral their organizational practices are oriented on male norms and standards which results in gender specific allocation of tasks and resources (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012; van den Brink u. Benschop, 2012). As already mentioned in the quotation above, the inscription of gendered subtexts in organizational cultures and practices is sublime and therefore often unintentional (Gherardi & Poggio, 2001; Valian, 1998; Valian, 2005).

The gendered subtexts of organizational cultures do not only structure the working environment but also influence considerations of fathers to use paternity leave. Consciously or unconsciously they know that paternity leave is not compatible with organizational cultures based on masculine ethics as these demand a highly flexible and available employee without any care responsibilities (Mairhuber et al., 2010, p. 19). Following Lewis A. Coser (1967, 1974) these organizations are characterized as greedy organizations. They are called greedy as they offer time and effort consuming jobs and occupations, demand total commitment and loyalty and are hardly compatible with responsibilities for children and a family (Coser, 1967; Coser, 1974; Rasmussen, 2004). Greedy organizations establish compliance with these organizational norms and practices on a voluntary basis by appearing as highly attractive (Coser, 1967). Especially research companies, universities or knowledge intensive service organisations are characterized as greedy organizations (Currie et al., 2000; Lind, 2013; Sallee, 2012). Sandra Acker puts it in a nutshell: *“like housework, academic work is never done”* (1994, p. 6).

Besides the organizational culture based on masculine ethics the literature also describes organizational cultures shaped by a caring ethic:

*“The caring ethic of organizations concerns the extent to which they stress the relational dimensions of life, such as empathy, helpfulness, caring, nurturing, interpersonal sensitivity, long-term orientation toward the collective interest, preference for cooperative and egalitarian relationships, and interest in community (Fletcher, 1998; Fondas, 1997).” (Haas et al., 2002, p. 325)*

Organizational cultures based on a caring ethic take the family role of their employees as fathers and mothers seriously and are therefore committed to enabling a work-life balance for them. They are more family friendly. These organizations are also more aware of their societal responsibilities and are therefore more open to gender equality issues.

The cultures of greedy and family friendly organizations can be empirically captured and described through observing organizational practices. To assess the impact of organizational

cultures on the usage and design of paternity leaves it is necessary to take organizational practices, which are directly related to fathers' usage of paternity leave, as well as working conditions into focus. Allard *et al.* (2007, p. 476) specify the following practices characterizing family friendly organizational cultures: flexible working time, telework, part time work, flexible usage of parental leave. Corresponding with this list of organizational practices we developed our own list of practices to analyse organizational cultures on the axis of greediness and family friendliness:

- Working time arrangements
- Overtime (long hours)
- Part time work
- Availability of part time work in management positions
- Work-life balance
- Attitude towards parental and paternity leave.

### 3 METHODOLOGICAL NOTES AND SAMPLE COMPOSITION

As we were not able to observe these practices, we have conducted interviews with supervisors and managers – who are in the position to facilitate or impede paternity leaves and work-life balance – to see how they talk about and reflect on these organizational practices (for this approach see van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). Therefore, this working paper builds on interviews with managers and supervisors from organizations in which at least one father has taken paternity leave. This sample of managers and supervisors is based on a sample of fathers who have taken paternity leave and who we have interviewed in the first phase of our research project. We used a theoretical sampling approach (Strauss, 1994) to construct the sample of paternity leave fathers who were differentiated along the following criteria: point in time of paternity leave usage (between 1998 and 2012), duration of leave (2 to 20 months), industries (male dominated, female dominated, mixed<sup>2</sup>), job changes after paternity leave and province of workplace. We have interviewed 17 fathers besides asked them whether we are allowed to contact their supervisors to arrange an interview with them. This was the basis for the sample of this working paper: we conducted 10 interviews with managers and supervisors of our paternity leave fathers and substituted the missing ones with 5 managers and supervisors from similar organizations with leave taking fathers. All in all we interviewed 15 supervisors and managers from organizations similar to the sample of paternity leave fathers. The substitution of 5 organizations of our original sample leads to positive distortion as we had to find organizations where fathers have taken paternity leave and where a manager or supervisor was willing to participate in our study. These interview partners might have a more open and positive attitude towards paternity leave and work-life balance than it would have been the case with the supervisors of some interviewed paternity leave fathers. Nonetheless, the results of this study are highly relevant as they show the consequences of different organizational practices and cultures on the usage, the design and the internal handling of paternity leaves.

All interviews were semi-structured and conducted face to face or in individual cases via telephone. They were recorded electronically, protocolled and transliterated. The transliterated interviews were coded with a special software tool for qualitative data analysis. The coding system was developed on the basis of the literature review and the main research questions but

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the proportion of women among all employees in 2012 of about 45% (more precisely 46.5% – see Statistik Austria, 2014), we define professions as female-dominated with a minimum female share of 55% and occupations as male-dominated with a maximum female share of 35% (see Reidl & Schaffer, 2009, p. 91; Kreimer, 1999).

was flexible to integrate new codes which turned out to be relevant during the coding process. We performed a content analysis of coded sequences to identify main messages, topics and groups of organizations (Bortz & Döring, 1995, p. 306–312; Mayring, 1996).

## 4 ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

In the following chapter we will focus on social practices and attitudes of organizational actors in the investigated organizations. This will give us insights into the dominant organizational cultures with which fathers are confronted when deciding to take paternity leave. These practices can support or inhibit the usage of paternity leave, the career consequences and the involvement of fathers in childcare in different ways.

### **Flexible working time**

In most of the organizations we have found practices of flexible working time. Only in some organizations working time was very structured and followed a strict schedule like in care or further education organizations. In knowledge intensive organizations like the interviewed research organizations, the architecture firm or the NGO working time can be organized very individually in respect to the requirements of projects and workload. In these organizations it is not relevant when the work is done. As mentioned by some supervisors and managers these flexible working time practices are not only in the interest of employees but also in those of employers as they can more easily shift resources in times of higher or lower workloads. Therefore, these practices do not necessarily facilitate work-life balance of employees and are thus not a valid indicator for a family friendly organizational culture (Allard *et al.*, 2007; Kvande, 2012). As a manager of a consulting company describes it, flexibility of working time can lead to ...

- ... a shift of working time of employees into night hours because they have to take care for children during the day.
- ... more competition/rivalry between colleagues especially in project based work. To be recognized as more productive, efficient and ambitious, employees tend to do more (unpaid) work in their leisure time. These practices put pressure on those employees who have not so much leisure time to invest as they have e.g. care responsibilities or other private interests.
- ... extensive working time as boundaries between private time and working time disappear and organizations expect total availability and reachability of their employees. In these cases working time never really ends and private time is never private alone.

Flexible working times can therefore facilitate the work-life balance of employees, especially in public and semi-public organizations, as well as the greediness of organizational demands like, for example, in the business consultancy. In some cases even those organizations that offer little flexibility, allow more work-life balance (e.g. the adult education organization or the social organization) because they have indeed fixed working hours but generally no overtime culture.

### **Part time work**

Like flexible working time part time work is also very common and highly accepted in the investigated organizations. But organizational practices tend to restrict the usage of part time work:

- In some organisations part time work is only granted if employees work more than a specific defined number of hours per week. For example one interview partner states that he only employs part time workers who work at least 30 hours per week. Otherwise it would not make sense for his organization as arranging work schedules would be too

complex and coordination costs too high (this is an organization which does not offer flexible working time).

- In other companies workers with a part time contract make a lot of extra work. Part time workers in these companies work longer hours than agreed upon in their work contract which thwarts their work-life balance.
- In most of the investigated companies part time work is not made available for employees in management positions.
- Some organisations report that part time work is only possible under specific circumstances (like paternity leaves) and only for a limited period of time. It is only a minority programme.

Although organizations report that part time work is available for their employees, the concrete practices restrict its usage, especially in the interviewed Universities, the business consultancy and the social organization.

### **Overtime**

Regular overtime hours report interview partners from universities, consulting companies and a company from the transport sector. In these organizations long working hours are a social norm where employees are expected to work more than 40 or even 50 or 60 hours per week. Even though these companies are very aware of this challenge as it is often addressed in attitude surveys by employees these organizations do not really change these practices and organizational norms. Some organizations try to make use of flexible working time arrangements to enable their employees a compensatory time-off in periods with a lower workload.

*„It would be a lie and you would not take me seriously if I would claim that there are no weeks when I work more than 50, 60 or 70 hours. But there is the freedom to compensate this in periods when it is not necessary to work as much and therefore to relax.“ (R&D Company, 20:50)*

On the one hand it can be seriously doubted that compensatory time-off is possible in all organizations<sup>3</sup> and on the other hand these regular overtime hours impede the constant involvement in child care activities and contribute to an unequal division of labour in the household. Only in a minority of the investigated organizations workers are not doing long hours (female dominated public organizations, a social organisation and an organization for adult education).

### **Work-life balance practices**

Work-life balance issues are very differently perceived and handled in the investigated organizations. In some organizations like universities, banks or consulting companies these issues are neglected. A research group leader of a technical university said that work-life balance is not a problem in his organization as his colleagues do not have any work-life balance needs as they are mostly young without any family obligations or older with grown-up children. He described the university system as a hostile environment for young people who want to have a family because of its high mobility demands and short-term contracts. The interview partner in a consulting business stated that colleagues have always been working long hours and work-life balance has insofar never been an issue as colleagues were quite young and highly career

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<sup>3</sup>In international comparison, Austria has especially for scientists and engineers with 44 hours per week very high average weekly working hours (Holzinger & Reidl, 2012, p. 50). This suggests that, especially in highly qualified areas overtime is compensated rarely entirely with compensatory time off.

oriented. He reported an interesting development that when his colleagues got older their way of life changed and family issues became more important. They were now more focused on work-life balance and less career ambitious. The organizational practices did not change a lot – it still demands long hours and high flexibility. Employees who focus too much on their individual work-life balance still have to face career impediments.

In other organizations work-life balance of employees is more important and is seen as an organizational asset which makes the organization an attractive employer and raises the identification and loyalty of colleagues. Especially in public organizations and in companies offering adult education work-life balance is highly valued. However, mostly women make use of work-life balance offers. Some organizations, which are in principle affine to work-life balance issues, report that their employees are highly motivated and loyal and therefore think that they are indispensable. They work long hours and hinder themselves in balancing their work and family obligations. It can be assumed that these are not only individual practices but are supported by an organizational culture which expects a high commitment from its employees which they embody through long hours and high flexibility.

#### **4.1 Practices of paternity/parental leave**

Parental leave is common in organizations with a high share of female employees. In these organizations practices are in place to solve challenges related to parental leaves. These organizations arrange meetings to clarify the conditions of the parental leave period, they search for a replacement in cases of longer leaves and they make provisions for the re-entry. In more male dominated organizations with extensive work time practices parental leave is quite unusual (in some cases there has been only one father who has taken paternity leave so far). As these organizations do not have a lot of practical experiences with organizing paternity leaves they are not well prepared when fathers want to take leaves.

The main challenge of parental leaves mentioned in the interviews is to find an adequate replacement or substitution for employees on paternity or parental leave. This is especially problematic in knowledge based organizations (universities, consulting company, expert organisations) as highly qualified and specialized employees are hardly replaceable. This is even more problematic when leaves are shorter because finding a substitution for a few months is nearly impossible. In these cases organizations try to shift work between colleagues rather than searching for a replacement. This means that shorter leave periods put more burden and stress on co-workers than longer periods where it is more likely that organizations search for and find an adequate substitution. Organizations in which no substitution will be searched for and work will be redistributed between co-workers put much more pressure on the fathers (and mothers) to work parallel to their leave period (which is in many cases not supportive for a stronger involvement of fathers in child care) or might even keep fathers from taking parental leave at all (out of respect for the consequences for co-workers and for the atmosphere at work). Especially fathers taking paternity leave in knowledge based organizations with extensive but flexible working hours and high workloads are expected to work part time or at least to be reachable for emergent matters during their leave periods. The design of the paternity leave periods (duration, time and season) is determined by work requirements and not so much by care responsibilities.

Most interview partners report that fathers return full time after their paternity leave. In only three cases fathers work part time afterwards to share care responsibilities with their partners (R&D company, NGO, expert organization).

In our interviews we have observed that organizational practices concerning parental leave are different for mothers and fathers – although all interview partners emphasize that they do not make any difference between men and women:

- Mothers' leave periods are significantly longer than those of fathers

- Fathers are more often employed (on a part time basis) during their leave periods
- Fathers return in full time whereas mothers mostly work part time after their leave periods

The reasons for these differences are perceived by our interview partners as private or individual decisions based on traditional social roles and values or stemming from different career orientations of men and women. Organizational practices are not seen as relevant for these private decisions.

That paternity leaves are still not accepted as normal can be seen in statements by two women managers who explicitly welcome paternity leaves as they see them as essential for gender equality in the labour market. But their statements are ambivalent when it comes to paternity leave or work-life balance practices of fathers:

*“It is really complex to organise, when someone is suddenly not available anymore or even, what is unfortunately or thankfully or however seldom the case for fathers, is for mothers quite common that they return on a part time basis ...” (Bank, 2:24)*

The ambivalence of paternity leaves is also clearly articulated in the following statement of another woman manager: “... *sure it is possible [to organize a paternity leave], you cannot prohibit it anyway.*” (Expert organization, 05:18)

In this view paternity leaves are a cumbersome obligation, but it is not something organizations care about or even want to support. Consequently organizational practices and values are not in favour of paternity leaves.

The reactions of managers to announcements of paternity leave are also valid indications of their perceptions of leave taking fathers. Some interview partners told us that they have welcomed fathers taking paternity leave and feel committed to enable these leaves without negative consequences for them. The managers in a public organisation and a care organisation try to motivate fathers in daily conversations to take paternity leave or even to take longer leave periods. The manager of an NGO and of a publicly funded research organization reported that they are expecting fathers to take paternity leave and ask fathers why they are not making use of this right. But only in two cases we have found an explicit organizational commitment for supporting paternity leave (in a public organization and an organization for adult education). Explicit negative reactions are not reported in our interviews but still we have encountered some mixed reactions which reveal reservations concerning paternity leave: our interview partner in the consulting company said that they were not sure when the first father wanted to take paternity leave whether they wanted to make this possible because of its exemplary character. The interviewed architect reported that his first thoughts were how to find an adequate replacement. These organizational representatives are inexperienced with paternity leaves and their reactions are not very welcoming and supportive in the first place. Leaves are perceived as burden for the organization and the design of the leaves is then very much aligned with the work requirements. This seems to be very often the case in male dominated knowledge based organizations (architecture firm, consulting company, research organizations...). Only in public and semi-public organizations, care organizations and NGOs is paternity leave formally or at least informally supported.

In none of the investigated organizations our interview partners reported specific support structures for paternity leaves. But in four organizations (public and semi-public organization, organization for adult education and a bank) information was available for employees who wanted to take parental leave. One organisation offers re-entry workshops (bank) and in one public organisation employees on parental leave are entitled to participate in further education and qualification courses. All other interview partners are not reporting any formal support structures. This does not mean there aren't any but this paper is based on the information the



managers and supervisors gave us about their companies. In some cases we know from other sources that there are some activities to support employees on parental leave but it seems they are not known in the whole organization.

We can assume – as already indicated earlier – that we have interviewed managers who are quite open-minded concerning paternity leave and are therefore not representative for managers in Austrian organizations or for organizational beliefs and values. This is supported by statements of managers who emphasize the discrepancy between their personal and the organizational view of paternity leave. Organizational values and practices do not always value paternity leave whereas in their personal attitude and behaviour they try to be supportive and to see the social value of paternity leaves. These discrepancies make also visible the impact managers can have on the usage of paternity leave – even in organizational cultures which are not supportive for fathers' stronger involvement in childcare (see also Burnett *et al.*, 2012).

## 4.2 Consequences of paternity leaves on careers

The organizational practices concerning paternity leaves and work-life balance are quite varied. How do these practices now affect careers of men? Nearly all interview partners agree that there are no negative consequences for fathers taking paternity leave<sup>4</sup>. They return to their former positions, are still very well connected to colleagues and clients, get promoted and are in general not treated differently than their co-workers. In three interviews it is mentioned that paternity leave fathers have made significant career progressions after their leave periods. But paternity leaves have to meet specific requirements to make them compatible with organizational cultures and practices. Leaves should ...

- ... be short, ...
- ... combined with part time work, ...
- ... concluded with a full time re-entry and ...
- ... not be taken in higher management positions.

Only one interview partner reported that one paternity leave father did not get the project management position for a big project as his leave period interfered with the project runtime. But this had – at least from the manager's perspective – no consequences for his career.

No interview partner stated that fathers taking paternity leaves experience a de-qualification or a lower recognition from colleagues and supervisors. Neither do paternity leaves increase competencies of fathers which are valued and rewarded by the organization. Only one interview partner sees possible positive impacts of paternity leaves for career progression.

*“Because I think it is good, because I think, this man wants to take over responsibility. These are mostly young men who sit in front of me [during job interviews], and if he wants to take this responsibility, I assume that he is willing to take over responsibility at work too ...”* (architecture office).

That no manager or supervisor has reported negative career consequences does not mean that there are not any but that it is not socially acceptable to talk about this frankly. On the other hand this might also be due to the positive bias in our sample of organizations.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The reactions of interviewed managers show that it is not opportune to openly disapprove of or even prohibit paternity leaves. Our empirical findings show that paternity leaves are possible in

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<sup>4</sup> Our findings from interviews with fathers who have been on parental leave don't confirm this entirely. Some fathers who took a long parental leave had a problematic re-entry (Schiffbänker & Holzinger 2014, p.34).

different organizations which are characterized by different organizational practices in respect to paternity leave and work-life balance. These practices are embodiments of different organizational cultures. In accordance with and as an extension of the results of the literature review we can distinguish three types of organizational cultures in our sample of paternity leave organizations. These organizational cultures do not only influence the design of paternity leaves – as described by Schiffbänker and Holzinger (2014) –, but do also affect the possibilities of work-life balance and consequently the involvement of fathers in childcare. Below we will describe these different types of organizational cultures and practices and their effects on fathers taking paternity leave:

1. **Greedy organizations:** these organizations demand an absolute commitment from their employees and are therefore characterized by extensive working times: long hours, full time jobs, high flexibility demands. Work-life balance is therefore not an issue for these organizations. They are shaped by masculine ethics and based on the male breadwinner model – a male worker free of all family and care responsibilities.

Only rarely fathers take paternity leaves in these organizations and they take leaves only for a very short period of time. Therefore, no replacement will be hired and fathers are expected to work part time during their paternity leave (this is more or less the only legitimate possibility to work part time in these organizations). There are no support structures in place to encourage fathers to make use of their entitlement to paternity leave. Fathers return from their leaves on a full time basis which often hinders a stronger involvement in childcare responsibilities (Holzinger *et al.*, 2014). In our sample universities and consulting companies can be characterized as greedy organizations. The scientific field and universities are very often labelled as greedy organizations (Currie *et al.*, 2000; Sallee, 2012; Lind, 2013).

Universities are shaped by a culture which is based on long hours, high mobility and flexibility demands which are opposed to work-life balance and family foundation – especially relevant for young researchers. To be successful scientists must prioritize research over all other responsibilities and interests otherwise they have to face disadvantages that will inhibit their prospective careers (Sallee, 2012). This results in a high share of full time as well as temporary employed scientists without children at universities (Metz-Göckel *et al.*, 2009; Schiffbänker, 2011, p. 53f.). Therefore, paternity leave will not be rewarded and hardly enabled in these organizational cultures as these fathers signalize that they are not totally committed to the scientific vocation.

2. **Organizations with greedy tendencies:** Employees work overtime in (sometimes often occurring) periods of higher workload. Working time is flexible. These organizations articulate a gender equality attitude which is not (fully) put into practice. They have flexible working time. This is obvious in a statement from an executive manager of an R&D company who rejects different leave practices of fathers and mothers (and therefore refused to participate in an interview in the first place).

*“... it is necessary to establish conditions that parents [mothers and fathers] can equally share childcare responsibilities ... regardless of so called gender roles ...”* (R&D Company, 5:25)

It suggests itself that in his company no differences between leaves and working times of mothers and fathers are observable. But paternity leaves are actually very short in his company which is not an indication of equally shared childcare responsibilities. Nevertheless there are quite a lot of fathers who have taken paternity leave in this company. These organizations exemplify ambivalent views and practices of paternity leave: in our interviews we have found discrepancies between statements which welcome paternity leaves as contributing to more gender equality in the labour market and statements as well

as practices which are not encouraging the usage of paternity leaves. Fathers' leaves are therefore often perceived as problematic and challenging for the organization. Consequently paternity leaves are short but comparatively more common than in greedy organizations. Still no replacements are hired for fathers on paternity leave who then work part time during their leave. In some cases it was possible for fathers to return to work on a part time basis. This group of organizations contains R&D companies as well as a male-dominated transport- and infrastructure company.

So these organizations embody elements of greedy organizational cultures as well as of modernized more work-life balance oriented cultures. The modernization is not only but to a high degree on the rhetoric level. We interpret these organizations as going through a process of change which is still ongoing and it is not yet clear what culture will characterize these organizations after its completion.

3. **Work-life balance oriented organizations:** These organizations take responsibility to enable work-life balance of their employees and are therefore characterized by organizational practices which avoid long hours, facilitate part time work – also for managers – and support parental leaves for mothers and fathers alike. Therefore, leaves are quite common in these organizations and they have a lot of practical experiences in handling leave periods. Managers and supervisors in these organizations report that they try to encourage and support fathers formally and informally to take paternity leave. Two organisations are explicitly committed to supporting paternity leave. This type of organizational culture in our study is represented by female dominated organisations in the (semi-)public sector, a social organisation, an adult education organisation and an NGO.

Fathers take leaves for at least half a year. As these organizations search for adequate replacements fathers are not expected to work part time during their leaves and can devote their time solely to childcare responsibilities. Re-entry in part time is also possible for fathers. In these organizational cultures fathers are able to take longer leave periods without being afraid of negative consequences for their careers. Nevertheless leave periods of fathers are still significantly shorter in these organizations than those of mothers.

Our empirical results confirm what we have found in earlier research (Reidl & Schiffbänker, 2013): paternity leave does not have negative effects on careers of fathers (which does not mean that negative consequences cannot occur in individual cases). This can also be asserted for greedy organizations or organizations with greedy tendencies as long as paternity leaves are compatible with the dominant organizational culture (see also Schiffbänker & Holzinger, 2014). Fathers taking paternity leave in greedy organisations should take following advices into account:

- leave periods should be as short as possible
- leave periods should be timed according to work requirements
- work part time during leave periods
- return to work on a full time basis.

For these fathers paternity leave is only an excursion into family life. Afterwards family and childcare responsibilities have to be left behind again. But these requirements do not facilitate a stronger involvement of fathers or even a shared responsibility for child care between fathers and mothers (Holzinger *et al.*, 2014) as it does not support involvement beyond the short leave period.

But we have also found evidence that if more fathers make use of paternity leave it will change work environments:

“... in our organization quite a lot of men have taken paternity leave and gradually a culture has been developed ...” (non-university research centre, 2:27)

Fathers taking paternity leaves are pioneers and role models who can shape a new organizational culture. But if short paternity leave times combined with part time work are the norm in an organization, this culture will promote parental leave as a short family vacation and will not enable fathers to share childcare responsibilities equally and sustainably.

Concluding we would like to discuss limitations of our study. Our sample is not representative for all organizations in Austria. We have interviewed managers and supervisors in organizations which already have made experiences with paternity leaves. This is still a specific group of organizations which is assumedly not very big. This is in accordance with findings of Wagner (2008, p. 222), who diagnoses a lack of work-life balance for fathers in Austrian organizations and of Mairhuber *et al.* (2010, p. 18) who report in their study on employment and parenthood in Vienna that organizations have no activities implemented to foster paternity leave. We can therefore assume a positive selection of organizations in our sample: the investigated organizations have a positive attitude towards paternity leave which is above average. Nevertheless we have been able to identify organizational practices which enable and restrict the usage of paternity leave at the same time. In these environments paternity leaves do not really contribute to gender equality but are only a short family vacation. But we still need more empirical evidence how different organizational practices and cultures impact on fathering practices and therefore facilitate (or obstruct) a stronger involvement of fathers into childcare after their paternity leaves.

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#### Short Biographies:

Sybille Reidl studied sociology at the University of Vienna. Since 2003 she works as a researcher at the Centre for Economic and Innovation Research (POLICIES) of JOANNEUM RESEARCH which is focused on applied research and consulting services in the fields of science, technology and innovation (STI). Her main research areas are gender/diversity and human resources in STI (especially promotion of equal opportunities, promotion of young researchers / teenagers in natural sciences and engineering). Currently she is involved in three different gender in research projects in the fields of medicine, sensor technology and optotechnology as a gender consultant.

Florian Holzinger studied Political Science, Philosophy and Contemporary History at Vienna University. Since 2007 he is working as researcher for JOANNEUM RESEARCH, POLICIES – Institute for Economic and Innovation Research. The focus of his research interests is currently on gender equality in science, technology and innovation – especially on issues of structural/organizational change and gender in research. Other foci of his work are science, technology and innovation governance and Creative Industries in a knowledge based economies.