WORK AND PARENTING STRUCTURES IN TRANSITION:
AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF PAID PARENTAL LEAVE
ON THE CORPORATION AND THE FAMILY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Chapter One: An Introduction ................................................................. 3
II. Chapter Two: The Gender Gap in Work-Family Conflict ....................... 27
III. Chapter Three: Paid Parental Leave and the Family .............................. 51
IV. Chapter Four: Paid Parental Leave and the Corporation ...................... 73
V. Chapter Five: Paid Parental Leave as a Policy Directive ....................... 95
VI. Appendices List:
   A. Lotus Corporate Policy ................................................................. 114
   B. Paid Parental Leave: The Survey .................................................. 119
   C. Interview Framework ................................................................. 128
VII. Bibliography ....................................................................................... 129
CHAPTER ONE: AN INTRODUCTION

The structure of families in the United States is changing due to the increasing occurrence of dual-career couples, but work structures have not changed to accommodate this new situation. Policies that integrate work and family issues are very rare; most work environments still assume that the worker has someone at home to take care of all domestic activity. However, the majority of mothers in America now work before their newborn child reaches the age of one: in 1990, the figure was 55.3%.1 By the year 2000, women will constitute two-thirds of new entrants into the labor force2 and 47% of the entire workforce.3 If workers in dual-income marriages are to continue to have children, policies that integrate work and family issues must become more accessible to the entire population of working parents.

As baby boomers grow older, the number of net entrants into the labor force is decreasing. The fertility rate in this country has stayed around an average of 1.8 children per family for decades now, and shows little propensity to increase.4 Employers have further reason to worry about the supply of educated, skilled laborers because of failures in our public education system.

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3 Schwartz, 137.

4 Ibid., 129.
Women, however, are gradually becoming the greater source of educated labor. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of men who received BA or MA degrees declined, whereas the number of women earning BA or MA degrees actually increased. Between 1980 and 1986, the number of men earning MBAs increased by 8.3%, compared with 69.7% for women. As this country’s demographics change, women’s place in the labor market increases in significance every year.

A major problem arises, however, when these women try to integrate work and family. Tradition dictates that women take full responsibility for childcare and domestic chores -- the "second shift" of work. However, when only women perform this extra work, only men are truly free to excel in the public sphere. These traditional sex roles have resulted in real barriers for working women. Arlie Hochschild noted in her study of dual-income couples that "One reason that half the lawyers, doctors, business people are not women is because men do not share the raising of their children and the caring of their homes...Women who enter these traditional structures and do the work of the home, too, can’t compete on male terms." Men have not traditionally taken significant responsibility for domestic activity, and this has negatively impacted the situation of working women to a major degree.

If dual-career couples are to have families, men must take a more active part in what has traditionally been the woman’s domain. Otherwise, women will continue to have to sacrifice career fulfillment in order to have a family;

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5 Ibid., 137-8.
they will be forced to choose between either having a family or having a career. This situation is a negative factor in two-job marriages that often do not survive the tensions created by the "second shift." Hochschild noted that the couples in her study often clashed over who had responsibility for the "second shift" -- and saw that these clashes often reflected a "broader social tension -- between faster-changing women and slower-changing men." The solution to these tensions is to create a more equal division of labor for the "second shift" of work. I will refer to the term co-parenting throughout this thesis, and it is meant to refer to such sharing. The gender-neutrality and paid aspect of paid parental leave provide tangible support for couples who want to move away from traditional sex roles. Co-parenting is a direct matter of eliminating "primary" and "secondary" caregiving roles, leaving parenting responsibilities (the good and the bad) equally to both the mother and father. Yet it also implies a greater sharing of the entire "second shift" -- a co-domestic life: if the care of children is shared equally, traditional sex roles will already have been overcome to some degree and other chores should also be more easily shared. However, before working fathers can take a more active role in child care and domestic work, they must be given more flexibility to manage work and family responsibilities. This flexibility can only come from the workplace itself.

Unfortunately, most corporations have not responded to this need for "family-friendly" policies. The belief that workers have someone else to take care of child care and domestic responsibilities is a powerful, top-down assumption. A 1988 study at Harvard of high-ranking senior executives found

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7 Hochschild, 205.
that these men assume that between 40% and 70% of families consist of a working father with the wife at home while the actual figure is less than 12 percent.8 This assumption, however, may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. If companies do not offer working parents the flexibility they need, women will be forced to give up their careers in order to have a family. This situation could only be detrimental to our nation’s future productivity given the increasing significance of women in the workforce. But before co-parenting can happen, the workplace must provide flexible support mechanisms to facilitate the change.

The traditional American system of laissez-faire government and free market competition (with the emphasis on profit-maximization) is not conducive to supporting family policies. However, it is after all in the best possible interest of our society to sponsor support networks for families: "A society is only as strong as its components, who are family members. The family, in turn is only as strong as the institutions of society permit it to be."9 If employers support active parenting by both the mother and father, that is one step further towards the integration of work and family issues. Programs that increase the flexibility of working parents’ time will allow them to be productive at work while also being responsible to their children.


THE STUDY

The purpose of this thesis is to study the effects of paid parental leave in how it influences work-family integration, the division of labor in the home, and the status of working parents in the workplace. Given the context of changing demographics and the increasing significance of women in the workforce, it is important that workplaces support working mothers in their efforts to combine work and family. Such support would include policies that encourage men to take more responsibility in the second shift. Structural and cultural barriers related to unpaid parental leave have previously discouraged such change.

There is inherent class discrimination in unpaid leave in that financially, most working parents cannot afford to take several weeks off without pay. Realistically, the parents who need a parental leave policy the most -- middle class, working class, and single parents (mostly women) -- will find unpaid leave inaccessible and useless. Unpaid parental leave is ineffective from the gender perspective because culturally, it is not an active endorsement of the leave time. If men are to overcome traditional sex roles, there must be more encouragement than an unpaid leave policy. However, unpaid leave is for the most part the only policy available to working parents who have parental leave at all.

I am therefore interested in determining the unique benefits that paid parental leave creates as a policy. Does it effectively eliminate the structural barriers that have prevented many working parents from taking unpaid parental leave? I will also look at the policy's significance to dual-career couples and examine its potential for creating equality in the domestic sphere. Does it eliminate some of the cultural barriers that have in the past prevented men from
actively taking part in the care of their children? Do men who use the policy often become more active fathers and more equal participants in the domestic sphere? I will lastly examine its significance to the workplace. Does the policy increase equality in the workplace for working parents by legitimizing the time needed to care for children? Does the corporation benefit from offering paid parental leave in any way?

For my empirical work, I administered a survey and performed interviews at Lotus Development Corporation in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The company has a paid parental leave policy that provides men and women equally with one month of leave, reimbursed at 100% normal salary once the worker has been on the job again for another month. Workers must have been with the company for a year and eight months to have accrued the full twenty working days of leave. The policy is for care of newborn or adopted babies, or in the case of emotional or physical hardship with a son or daughter. Given that very few working parents in the United States have access to paid parental leave, the population of leave takers at Lotus are in a unique position to help us understand the importance of the policy. I asked participants for their opinions with regard to the significance of paid parental leave in their lives, and on the potential effects it has on working parents, families, the corporation, and society.
PAID PARENTAL LEAVE IN SWEDEN: 
THE INTEGRATION OF WORK AND FAMILY

The United States is actually trailing industrialized countries worldwide in its development of parental leave policies. It is the only industrialized country besides South Africa lacking a nationally mandated parental leave policy.\(^{10}\) The typical leave policy in Europe offers five months of post-childbirth leave, with at least partial reimbursement of salary.\(^{11}\) In the interest of developing a comprehensive examination of the nature and potential of paid parental leave, I feel it useful to examine a country which has made enormous progress in establishing policies to promote equal parenting and equality of opportunity between the genders. This country is Sweden.

Sweden's social welfare policies were motivated by three factors which have not previously been significant issues in the United States. First, in the 1930s, the Swedes became concerned about population replacement. The Depression had brought low birth rates all over the world, but Sweden had the lowest rate in all of Western Europe. Second, the country has always had to actively work to maintain economic productivity so as to be competitive on a global level. Third, in the 1960s the Swedish government began to address problems related to gender inequalities. The government has thus aimed at creating a pronatalist society in which women are utilized in the workforce. Sweden now has some of the most comprehensive social welfare programs of any nation in the world. What is the situation then for working parents in

\(^{10}\) Hyde and Essex, 68.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 17.
Sweden?

Sweden provides working parents with national policy support. In the late 1960s, the government came to the conclusion that parental leave would benefit all of society -- by easing women’s responsibilities in the domestic sphere, increasing workforce productivity, and giving children a stronger family environment. In 1974, comprehensive, gender-blind, paid parental insurance was first implemented. The government sponsored national advertising in order to encourage male participation in the program.

As of 1990, Sweden’s paid parental leave policy provided for fifteen months of gender-neutral parental leave. The first twelve months are paid at 90% of regular pay (100% if the employee works in the public sector), the last three months are paid at a minimal rate of about $10 per day. These fifteen months may be divided up between the couple as they desire; however, all fifteen cannot be taken by one spouse unless the other signs over his or her rights to leave time. There is also a paternity leave for fathers of two weeks, also at 90% of regular pay, in the days directly following birth. There is a 12 week maternity leave (six weeks each before and after birth), with an option for extension if medically necessary. This leave is also paid at a rate of 90% of regular salary. The individual’s job is guaranteed after these leaves and seniority rights are protected throughout them. The policies are funded by payroll taxes on all employees (85%) plus general revenues (15%); it is administered by the government.13

12 Haas, 13.
13 Hyde and Essex, 69.
Sweden also offers its citizens other policy options for parenting. Until the child is eighteen months old, either parent may take a fully job-protected unpaid leave. After the end of parental leave and until the child is eight years old, either parent also has the right to decrease their work to a six-hour day. All parents are also given sixty days (to be shared between mother and father) of paid leave per year to care for an ill child at home if it is medically necessary. Couples get two days off with pay per child each year to visit day-care centers and schools.\textsuperscript{14} The Swedish parenting policies are in this sense somewhat like a cafeteria plan by which parents can choose the leaves that best suit their families' needs and work situations.

The limitations of the Swedish policy. Sweden's parental insurance gives working parents great flexibility in combining work and family. It allows parents to care for their children without suffering severe losses in income. However, in order to discern the real effect that the paid parental leave policy has had in Sweden, we must examine patterns of leave taken by both mothers and fathers. Have men taken advantage of the policy? Has the policy improved women's status in the workplace?

There is an obvious asymmetry between men and women in patterns of leave taken. In 1987, only 24\% of eligible fathers took parental leave in the first year of the child's life. The percentage of leave days take by all fathers was a mere 7.5\%.\textsuperscript{15} Even though the participation rate of fathers is greater

\textsuperscript{14} Haas, 13.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 61. This was the most recent statistic available.
than in other countries that offer leave, the actual number of days taken is almost insignificant. Of all fathers, only 1% shared the leave time equitably with the child’s mother.16 Women are still the primary caretakers, who sacrifice their jobs and careers to make time for child care.

From these results, it is therefore not surprising to hear that Swedish women who had husbands who also took parental leave were no more committed to their work, no more active in the labor force, and had no higher status than women whose husbands took no leave. Due to the low commitment of Swedish men to parental leave, women’s status in the workplace has not improved significantly since the policy’s inception. Still, when the father did take leave, the woman’s post-birth income was less likely to drop as significantly from the pre-birth level as women whose husbands did not take parental leave17 -- a phenomenon that was especially true in couples where the father took longer leave time. In these more egalitarian couples, the mother also tended to work more hours per week. So the policy can facilitate the development of equality in the home and the workplace, but only if men use it more actively.

The participation rate of Swedish fathers is higher in other policies which are more short-term than paid parental leave. For example, in 1986, 85% of fathers took an average of 9.4 days off for paternity leave, which offers them a total of ten days off at the birth of their child.18 However, fathers have not

16 Ibid., 64.
17 Ibid., 169.
18 Ibid., 66.
actively participated in the leave programs that are unpaid, or in the policy that would allow them to reduce their work week to thirty hours. Clearly, the paid aspect of leave is crucial to Swedish men. Another point of interest is that these other leave policies do not offer the long "solo" parenting time that parental leave does. Parental leave therefore represents more of a break with traditional sex roles -- but Swedish men have been least active in making use of this opportunity.

There are three main factors that discourage men from taking leave. First, Swedish men comment that their employer and supervisor are more likely to react negatively than positively to their taking parental leave.\(^{19}\) When the workplace does not support men in their leave, serious and career-minded male workers fear the ramifications of extended leave on their career. Second, the problem also arises that women may in some cases discourage their husbands from taking the leave.\(^{20}\) The structure of the leave program asks parents to voluntarily divide the fifteen months available between them, which actually forces mothers and fathers to "compete" for the leave time.

The final discouraging factor is economic. The labor market in Sweden is still highly segregated, despite the nation's work policies: only 43% of Swedish women work full time\(^{21}\); for the most part, they occupy the lower paid, lower prestige jobs that allow them to work part-time or to participate in job sharing arrangements. Swedish jobs are among the most highly segregated in terms of

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 100.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 117.
\(^{21}\) Ibid., 214.
male-female stereotyping in the world. A mere 7% of women and 6% of men have jobs that are occupied equally by both sexes.\textsuperscript{22} The income gap between men and women, while less than in the United States, is still significant enough to warrant economic reasons for women taking more parental leave since they will most likely have a lower opportunity cost for staying home.\textsuperscript{23}

The Swedish paid parental leave policy, although formally gender-neutral and aimed at changing traditional structures, has in practice been ineffective at creating a more egalitarian society for men and women. Though the policy has achieved greater female participation in the workforce, the reality is that the division of work in public and private spheres in Sweden is still based on traditional sex roles. As one author concludes: "the fact is that Sweden's equal opportunity approach does very little to change the fundamental balance of power between the sexes. It creates the possibility of further change but it does not guarantee it."\textsuperscript{24}

Sweden's parental leave policies provide working parents with the support mechanisms they need to combine work and family. The policies have achieved the government's original goals in that women now have high participation rates in the workforce and the country's birth rate has been maintained at an adequate level. Yet it is clear that the policies have not facilitated movement

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 35.

\textsuperscript{23} Recall that the paid parental leave program is paid at a rate of about 90% of regular salary with a cap on earnings.

\textsuperscript{24} Jennie Farley, ed., \textit{Women Workers in Fifteen Countries} (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1985), 146.
away from traditional sex role stereotypes. Workers often use the policies in a manner that reinforces women being primary caregivers. This pattern has certainly been a factor in preventing women from being able to pursue the higher paid, higher prestige jobs in Sweden. The gender-neutrality of paid parental leave as a policy certainly does not mandate such results. In fact, the policy may actually encourage a more equal division of labor in the home.

In this essay, I examine the experiences of working parents at Lotus who have used paid parental leave and attempt to determine what potential paid parental leave has to achieve change in the gendered divisions of labor in the United States (in both the home and in the workplace). Do men and women at Lotus use the policy equally? Can the policy influence the domestic division of labor and facilitate movement away from traditional cultural attitudes?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

Parental leave is a policy which allows both mothers and fathers time away from work to care for newborn or (in some cases) seriously ill children. It is completely separate from maternity leave, which is a disability program for mothers only. In this country, paid parental leave is a low-profile policy. A mere 2% of women and 1% of men have access to some form of it, which on average lasts from one to three days. However, paid leave may arguably be the only policy that could effectively integrate work and family issues for working mothers, dual career couples, and companies.

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25 Haas, 189.
The most obvious advantage of paid parental leave is structural. In the cases where unpaid leave is offered to both parents, lower income families do not realistically have access because they cannot afford to take several weeks off of work without pay. They can either stay on the job, pay their bills, and be forced to neglect their family members' personal needs, or they can give the latter top priority, take leave without pay, and push themselves into further financial straits. When there is a choice between financial survival and emotional growth, the latter can in no way take priority. The problem is further exacerbated by the fact that the time surrounding childbirth is associated with enormous new expenses; many parents cannot afford to take a few months off to care for their families without financial support. Paid parental leave is simply more useful and realistically accessible to the majority of working parents.

A Families and Work Institute study that included three states with mandated unpaid parental leave found that lower-income women take shorter leaves (9.5 weeks on average) than more wealthy female workers (13.8 weeks on average). The wealth of the woman's household was thus a direct determinant of the length of leave taken in these states. The fourth state in the study, Rhode Island, offers some wage replacement to working mothers in both the public and private sector during leave. It was also the one exception to these trends. Poor women from Rhode Island took longer leaves (13 weeks on average) than lower-income women in other states (9.4 weeks on average).

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27 Ibid., 76.
Paid leave eliminates the class discrimination inherent in unpaid leave.

The second major advantage of paid parental leave is cultural. Men have empirically encountered attitudinal barriers to their usage of unpaid parental leave. A Catalyst study of large companies with unpaid leave policies for both parents found that 41% of managers felt that no amount of time was "reasonable" for fathers to take off for parenting.2 Further, men who are truly "serious" about their careers are often sensitive to this and are even more reluctant to take leave if it is unpaid, or therefore "illegitimate" time off. By substituting other leave policies, they avoid "publicizing" the true reason for their time away. However, men should not feel that they cannot take time off to care for their children; "We need to degenderize dependent care assistance benefits policies so that men realize that they are entitled to take time off from work for no other reason than to provide emotional and physical support to their spouses and children."29 By making parental leave a paid policy, the corporation is overtly legitimizing the man's time away -- thereby overcoming to some degree traditional biases.

Paid parental leave has other specific merits with regard to working mothers, dual-career couples, and children:

Working Mothers. The policy of paid parental leave is of special significance to working mothers from three perspectives. First, if the woman is a single

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28 Ibid., 7.
parent, the policy allows her to take leave and care for her newborn during the crucial time after birth without (1) fear of job loss or (2) drastic loss of income. Such flexibility is crucial to preventing single working mothers from having to fall into poverty as a result of caring for their children. Second, when a policy like paid parental leave is available to mothers, they can actually spend quality time parenting beyond the medically advised period of recuperation. Mothers need such time to adjust to the changes that come with having a child. Third, for working mothers in dual-career couples, the gender-neutrality of parental leave gives them the policy support they need to initiate a co-parenting situation in their family. Since approximately 80% of American women do work full time, there is a need for alternative caregiving situations. Co-parenting gives women the energy and freedom to pursue their careers since they would not then be entirely responsible for all domestic activity. Further, if men do take advantage of paid parental leave, employers will be less likely to discriminate against women since parenting will cease to be a "liability" for only working women.

**Dual-career couples.** If husbands and wives in dual-income couples to not share the "second shift," marital tensions inevitably arise. Hochschild found in her own study of two-job couples that active sharing of the "second shift" was

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30 It should be noted that these arguments apply to single working fathers as well; however, the argument is put forth in this format because the population of single parents in this country is predominantly female (the Census Bureau estimated that in 1990, nearly 90% of single-parent households were headed by mothers).

31 Haas, 214.
crucial to marital harmony: "Sharing the second shift improved a marriage regardless of what ideas either had about men's and women's roles."\textsuperscript{32} If dual-career couples are to have children, maintain two incomes, and establish strong familial relations, traditional sex roles must dissolve.

From the perspective of dedicated male workers, there is an enormous difference between paid and unpaid leave. Paid leave is evidence that the company is overtly supporting the worker's time away; unpaid leave may be seen as "illegitimate" -- and as a result "Only 2% of eligible men have used unpaid parental leaves" in this country.\textsuperscript{33} In a Families and Work Institute study of four states that have mandated unpaid parental leave, 75% of men took leave after the birth of their children. However, only 22\% of these men took the unpaid leave, for an average of a mere 4.7 days -- certainly not sufficient time to develop co-parenting trends. The remainder used company policies that provide paid time off, such as vacation, personal, or sick days.\textsuperscript{34} While often unspoken, the significance between paid and unpaid leave policy is crucial -- and is a major determinant of male participation in parental leave. When fathers do participate in parental leave and are left alone with their newborns, they often gain competence in child care that they otherwise would never have had. A paid leave policy would thus not only help to equalize the usage between working fathers and mothers, but also to more evenly distribute childcare and domestic responsibilities. Hochschild was able to conclude from

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{32} Hochschild, 211.
\item\textsuperscript{33} Alan Deutschman, "Pioneers of the New Balance," \textit{Fortune} (20 May 1991), 68.
\item\textsuperscript{34} Bond, 77.
\end{itemize}
her study that this is of utmost significance: "In an age of divorce, marriage itself can be at stake."^{35}

Despite the continued prevalence of traditional sex roles, there does seem to be an increasing interest on the part of men in our society to become more active fathers. *Working Mother* magazine recently featured an article that focused on "an invisible 'Daddy Track' at work, a growing national phenomenon."^{36} Fathers who avoid the fast track or remove themselves from it in order to spend more time with their families are creating the male version of the "Mommy Track." Fathers have always made compromises between work and family, but until recently this has not translated into initiatives to make the workplace more family-friendly. Such changes are the key to creating the support mechanisms dual-career couples need as they try to create strong family units.

**Children.** One last motivating reason for us to support paid parental leave is for the sake of this country's children. From the standpoint of making parental leave truly accessible to all working parents (regardless of sex or class), paid leave is the most viable option. It will therefore affect more children than an unpaid leave would. By encouraging active, shared parenting in families, the policy will affect these children positively. Children of co-parented families tend

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^{35} Hochschild, 215.

to be less constrained by sex biases as they grow older.\textsuperscript{37} They would benefit from having \textit{two} primary parents instead of just one -- and the greater the parental involvement, the better the growing environment for the child. Children with two active parents learn early on to be open, relate to many different people, and easily adapt to new situations.\textsuperscript{38} In a nation with increasing controversy over loss of "family values," such a gain would be invaluable.

Consider the alternative scenario when companies do not adopt some form of paid parental leave: demographics change, women become the major source of new entrants into the labor force, but companies do not create policies to integrate work and family. Since the woman generally has the most to lose in the workplace by having children, she will continue to be the one who has to make the choice between work and family. Men who wish to be active fathers will not be given the option. Dual-career couples will find that they can parent on a "weekends-only" basis. What policy-makers should realize is that the issue of co-parenting has significant implications for working parents, corporations, our economy, families, children, and hence the future of our society; "Work, family, and gender roles, far from being independent of one another, are interactive and mutually determining."\textsuperscript{39} How can paid parental leave help to resolve this conflict? Can it effectively equalize the division of labor in the


\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 205.

home? What effect would it then have on the workplace? An examination of paid parental leave in active use will give us an understanding of its true potential in our society.

administrative study was a nine-page survey, 9 administered to employees at Lotus Development Corporation, 69 Cambridge Parkway, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Lotus is a large company in the software industry with 2,943 employees in the United States. 10 It adopted a paid parental leave policy in 1985. 11 By December of 1992, 166 employees had used the policy. I chose Lotus because as I surveyed companies in the greater Boston area that was known for progressive, "family-friendly" policies, I found only one other corporation with paid parental leave. This company was Work Family Directions, a consulting firm that deals specifically with work and family issues. Since the focus of Lotus's work is not employee benefits, I reasoned that the work environment, defined primarily as attitudes and job structure, there would be much more indicative of most corporate environments in the United States.

The population of parental leave participants at Lotus is representative of the general population of working parents in the United States in that the majority of them are in dual-income marriages. The pressures the Lotus leave-takers face on the job and at home are thus similar to those faced by many working parents in the United States. However, the Lotus leave-takers are not representative of this population because they are more highly educated than the average American (the vast majority have at least a college degree) — which

9 For a copy of the survey, see Appendix B.
10 Personal interview with Maria Capossi, 11/6/92.
11 For a copy of Lotus's paid parental leave policy, see Appendix B.
METHODOLOGY

THE SURVEY

The main focus of my empirical study was a nine-page survey, administered to employees at Lotus Development Corporation, 55 Cambridge Parkway, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Lotus is a large company in the software industry with 2,943 employees in the United States. It adopted a paid parental leave policy in 1985; by October of 1992, 183 employees had used the policy. I chose Lotus because as I explored companies in the greater Boston area that were known for progressive, "family-friendly" policies, I found only one other corporation with paid parental leave. This company was Work Family Directions, a consulting firm that deals specifically with work and family issues. Since the focus of Lotus's work is not employee benefits, I reasoned that the work environment (defined primarily as attitudes and job structures) there would be much more indicative of most corporate environments in the United States.

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40 For a copy of the survey, see Appendix B.
41 Personal interview with Marla Capozzi, 11/6/92.
42 For a copy of Lotus's paid parental leave policy, see Appendix A.
is not surprising given the nature of the work that Lotus does. It should also be
known that there is no evidence to show that the population I studied is
representative of all parents at Lotus or the total population of employees there;
however, I am confident that the respondents are representative of the
population of employees at Lotus who have taken advantage of the company’s
paid parental leave program. Any conclusions I draw in this study are thus not
meant to apply to any Lotus employees other than the participants in the
company’s paid parental leave program.

Lotus was also an interesting choice for my study because it is in the high-
tech industry, which is typically characterized by rapid change, high-pressure
work environments, and high rates of turnover among employees. At Lotus, the
average turnover rate is 2.8 years. This figure is of particular significance
because the software industry typically requires large investments in human
capital. Thus, when an employee leaves the company, it often incurs major
losses.

Lotus’s reputation for being a “family-friendly” company is thus part of a
crucial strategy to bolster worker retention in an industry plagued by high
turnover rates. The policy is rare throughout the country, so it is one way in
which Lotus may differentiate its benefits program to employees. The potential
importance of paid parental leave from the corporate perspective is thus
magnified by Lotus’ working environment.

I established contact with Lotus in May of 1992 and continued relations
with Diane Duval and Marla Capozzi in Human Resources about the logistics of

43 Personal interview with Diane Duval, 9/29/92.
my study through the next several months. I administered the survey in October 1992 to the 183 (41% male, 59% female) leave users in the company, and accepted responses through the end of the year. I received a total of 100 responses, for a return rate of 55%. The survey responses that I received accurately reflected the distribution of men and women in the general population of people who took paid parental leave at Lotus between 1985 and 1992 (approximately 40% men and 60% women). I compiled statistics and created graphs from the responses on Microsoft Excel.

THE INTERVIEWS

In addition to the survey, I decided to explore certain issues in further depth through interviews. I interviewed thirteen of the 100 respondents -- six women and seven men. I chose my interviewees by examining their written responses, choosing those who had the strongest opinions about the policy and/or had been most affected by taking the leave. I also interviewed one Lotus employee who opted not to take the leave when he had a child. I would have interviewed more employees who opted not to take the leave to try to determine what considerations would influence someone not to use it, but this population of employees was not readily identifiable. The interviews occurred at Lotus on December 8, 9, 10, and 17 of 1992 and on January 7, 1993. The interviews lasted on average one hour, were taped for their duration, and were later transcribed.

The interviews focused on issues raised in each interviewee's survey. I maintained some degree of consistency by framing each interview with four
basic inquiries. The first involved examining what factors surrounded the
leave (workload at the time, managerial relations, length and pattern of leave
taken) and the significance of the paid aspect of the program. The second issue
focused on what effects the leave had on the division of child care in the
respondent’s family. The third inquiry was about what effects the leave had on
the interviewee’s career and on-the-job performance. The last issue addressed
was what impacts the interviewee thought paid parental leave could have on
equality between working mothers and fathers in the workplace. The interviews
therefore produced more extensive feedback on the policy of paid parental
leave.

For an exact copy of the four basic themes addressed in the
interviews, see Appendix C.
CHAPTER TWO:  
THE GENDER GAP IN WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

Over the past twenty years, our working hours have increased, our leisure time has decreased, and our families have suffered as a result. Juliet Schor estimates that compared to 1970, not only are more people working, but the average worker is on the job for the equivalent of one extra month per year.¹ Hochschild argues that, despite the importance of children, the current "'job culture' has expanded at the expense of a 'family culture.'"² With the decline of the family wage, it is difficult for dual-income couples to cope with the demands of work and family.

In the traditional American family, public and private work were kept entirely separate: men worked for a salary, women took care of the domestic sphere. However, the "balance" between these two spheres has become increasingly unstable as more and more women have entered the workforce. Despite these changes in the public sphere of work, there has been little change in the division of labor at home. Arlie Hochschild estimated that "Adding together the time it takes to do a paid job and to do housework and childcare...women worked roughly fifteen hours longer each week than men" during the 1970s, or an "extra month of twenty-four hour days a year."³

Working mothers now often joke as this one: "I need a wife at home, to cook:

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² Hochschild, 231.
³ Hochschild, 3.
and clean for me." With regard to childcare, the primary caregiver (usually the mother) faces competing pressures for her time and energy, each of them a "top" priority. How is this gender gap currently affecting work and family integration? Is it possible for a balance to be struck? Or must active parents who work all conclude as this single working mother, that "There is no way to balance career and family; at most, you can juggle."5

LEAVE TAKERS AT LOTUS

The working parents at Lotus certainly experience conflicts between their family and on-the-job demands. The company is in a high-tech industry that is characterized by rapid change; companies who compete must constantly search for a competitive edge. Lotus thus typically demands a strong commitment from its workers. In this sense, the conflicts between work and family are intensified for working parents at Lotus. Survey results support this assertion: when asked how frequently they experience conflicts between their roles as parent and also as working professional, the majority of respondents were evenly divided between experiencing significant conflicts several times a week versus on a daily basis. The remaining two-fifths of participants responded that they experience significant conflicts only once a week or less. We therefore may say decisively that working parents at Lotus experience conflicts between work and family frequently.

4 Personal interview, 12/8/92.

5 Personal interview, 12/10/92.
The population of parental leave takers at Lotus\(^6\) are nonetheless relatively well positioned to handle work and family conflicts. They are a predominately caucasian population (less than 10% are from non-white origins). The majority of respondents are married; only two women reported a different status. They are well positioned financially; Lotus pays its employees well. The Lotus survey population is also very well-educated. Only 7.5\% of male and 16\% of female respondents do not have a college degree. These characteristics are signals that the Lotus survey population is in a relatively optimal position to handle work and family conflicts. As Hochschild noted in her study, "If these middle-class couples find it hard to juggle work and family life, many other two-job families across the nation -- who earn less, work at less flexible, steady, or lucrative jobs, and rely on poorer daycare -- are likely to find it much harder still."\(^7\)

Nonetheless, participants at Lotus are career-oriented and had many tensions to report. Through the survey, the working parents studied at Lotus expressed several dimensions of the conflicts they feel between work and family.

**SPOUSAL STATUS**

The majority of participants in Lotus’s paid parental leave program do indeed come from dual-income marriages. Only one female respondent has a

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\(^6\) Reminder: the population of leave takers at Lotus is not necessarily representative of the entire population of Lotus employees or Lotus parents.

\(^7\) Hochschild, 19.
spouse who does not work outside the home. This figure was much higher for
the male participants, of whom one-third have partners who do not work
outside the home (see Figure 1).

When both parents work, there is much less flexibility in addressing
domestic chores. However, Lotus men are still more likely than Lotus women to
have a spouse at home to take primary responsibility for such work. One-third
of them do have a stay-at-home spouse. Accordingly, it is of little surprise to
note that male respondents have on average more children than female
respondents, since the men’s families have more flexibility in handling family
responsibilities.

The variable of whether or not the participant’s spouse works is the first
revelation then of a gender gap in work-family conflict. Although men are fairly
active in participating in Lotus’s parental leave policy, the fact that they more
consistently have a spouse who is a full-time homemaker alleviates work-family
pressures for them. Working mothers at Lotus are thus at an immediate
structural disadvantage in terms of balancing work and family.

CAREGIVING

Despite the fact that the American mother typically works outside the
home, American families for the most part still depend on her being the primary
caregiver. Couples with truly equal caregiving situations are extremely rare;
Arlie Hochschild found that 80% of the men in her study did not even share the
Figure 1

PERCENTAGE RESPONDENTS WITH SPOUSES WHO DO NOT WORK OUTSIDE OF THE HOME

FEMALE RESPONDENTS

N = 60

MALE RESPONDENTS

N = 40

work at home. Given the significant time and effort that child care requires, the division of care at home is thus a significant indicator of the different pressures working mothers face vs. working fathers.

The survey responses reveal the prevalence of traditional sex roles in Lotus families. The vast majority (two-thirds) of women responded that they are primary caregivers. Even more significant, none of the male respondents said that they had primary responsibility for the care of their children. Despite women’s changing status in the public sphere of work, this stark contrast reflects the fact that women are still the ones responsible for the domestic sphere.

A significant proportion of respondents claimed to share caregiving responsibilities equally with their spouse. Of the women, one-third said that they are in an equal caregiving situation. A much higher proportion of men -- 45% -- claim this situation exists in their own family. These figures may not necessarily represent reality accurately since there are often contradictions between how people feel about their marital roles vs. how those roles play out in reality, as Hochschild found in her study. Couples may believe in traditional or egalitarian ideals, but act differently in their own marriage due to economic pressures, stubbornness, or some other factor. Nonetheless, these perceptions are still significant because attitudes are an independent force in themselves shaping roles at work and in the home.

The prevalence of traditional sex roles again reappeared when respondents identified themselves as secondary caregivers. The majority of men (55%) said

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8 Hochschild, 200.
that they have secondary responsibility whereas none of the women responded thus. We see from this that even though two-thirds of male leave-takers have working wives, more likely than not these men still take secondary responsibility for caregiving and leave their working spouse in charge of primary care.

Not only are Lotus women less likely to have a full-time homemaker of their own to alleviate work-family pressures for them than Lotus men -- but they also are more often than not the primary caregiver in their family. The situation for working mothers at Lotus is thus much more constrained than that for working fathers. Participants suggested a range of opinions about why traditional sex roles still dominate in families -- from biological to habitual. Regardless, the significance of the inequality it implies between working mothers and fathers is undeniable. Working mothers at Lotus have more responsibility and are thus under greater pressure to care for their children than their male counterparts.

PROMOTIONAL TRACK

Respondents’s assessment of their career path is a decent indicator of how serious the pressures are that they experience on-the-job. For example, someone who is on a "fast-track" of promotion would prioritize career over all else -- including family -- with corresponding ramifications. Since only 10% of participants responded that they are on a fast track, such imbalance is not the case in general for leave takers at Lotus.

Most participants are attempting to strike a more even balance between career and family. The majority of both men and women reported that they are
on a moderately paced track of promotion. Several respondents commented that they have consciously chosen a slower track of advancement; one man wrote that he would be on a fast track if he were not committed to being an active father. A female interviewee said that "Once you have children, you start to make choices. I've slowed my career down at my own choice, because I've put my personal priorities first." A male interviewee commented: "if I miss the promotion because I spent time with my kids, then that was a promotion worth missing as far as I'm concerned." Many working parents at Lotus have thus made some compromises of their own -- giving up rapidly-paced career advancement in return for time spent with family.

The participants' assessments of their promotional tracks revealed yet another aspect of inequalities between working mothers and fathers. Whereas only one-eighth of men reported that they are on a very slow promotional track, fully one-third of women said that they are expecting little change with regard to promotional opportunities in the near future (see Figure 2). Certainly the forces that have resulted in this outcome have come from several sources. Nonetheless, the fact that women are more likely to be in a stagnant work situation is consistent with the previous findings that women are more likely to be primary caregivers and have less flexibility overall in balancing work and family. One married woman at Lotus who is caught between traditional values and her desire to have a meaningful career commented bitterly: "Being a woman

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9 Personal interview, 12/10/92.

10 Personal interview, 12/8/92.
in general means no growth. The gender gap is such that the toll of work and family conflict falls more on women than on men.

Figure 2

EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Are there any implications for equality in the workplace that arise from the gender gap at home for respondents who are primary caretakers in the domestic sphere, they are automatically at a disadvantage in the workforce.

To what degree is this evident at Lotus?

There was a significant difference between male and female respondents of either sex felt that there is currently equal treatment of men and women. A mere 5% of women and 10% of men are content with the current situation.

A varied picture was said of women’s opportunities, gender equality, compared to only one-fifth of the men (see Figure 3). Thus, the male responses are heavily weighted towards the belief that there is no equality in the workplace. In comparison, the male responses are shifted more towards the belief that there is some degree of equality in the workplace. Female respondents therefore perceive that there is less equality in the workplace than men do—though overall respondents feel that even at best there is not complete equality.

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EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Are there any implications for equality in the workplace that arise from the gender gap at home for respondents? When women are primary caretakers in the domestic sphere, they are automatically at a disadvantage in the workforce. To what degree do respondents feel this is evident at Lotus?

There was a distinguishable difference between male and female responses on this issue. Still, very few respondents of either sex felt that there is complete equality in the workplace between men and women. A mere 5% of women and 10% of men said opportunities are completely equal. Given that, how do respondents view the current situation?

About half of the female respondents said opportunities between the sexes are somewhat equal, compared to 70% of the men. The remaining two-fifths of women felt that they are not at all equal, compared to only one-fifth of the men (see Figure 3). Thus, the female responses are heavily weighted towards there being little to no equality in the workplace. In comparison, the male responses are shifted more towards the belief that there is some degree of equality in the workplace. Female respondents therefore perceive that there is less equality in the workplace than men do -- though overall respondents feel that even at best there is not complete equality.

The structural differences between men and women and the tendency for
Figure 3

PERCENTAGE RESPONDENTS WHO FEEL THAT JOB OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN ARE NOT AT ALL EQUAL

FEMALE RESPONDENTS  MALE RESPONDENTS

N = 60  N = 40
women to be primary caregivers corresponds to inequalities at work. Women at Lotus feel these pressures in their everyday lives. One married woman has primary responsibility for domestic chores in her own home: "I carry more of the burden. My husband will do things if I nag him and goad him." As a result of their inability to evenly divide work at home, she has lost all leisure time: "There is a lot of conflict over the weekend...unfortunately, the things I always need to do are household related and no fun. So, I've lost all leisure time; he still has that." Due to her burdens at home, she has made corresponding sacrifices with regard to her own job growth. She concludes: "I am paying a price for limiting myself because I'm a mother and I have a family." Another woman claimed with reference to her seven and ten year old sons: "I've been a single parent ever since the day they were born, but I've only been divorced for five years." Working women at Lotus are living with constant demands from home and work, and have often sacrificed their careers for their families.

SOCIAL PRESSURES

Working parents at Lotus interact with various groups of people and thereby face many possible sources of social pressure. I decided that in examining work-family conflicts, the most revealing analysis would arise from asking participants how these pressures differ for working mothers versus working fathers. They were asked to analyze pressures on working parents.

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11 Personal interview, 12/10/92.

12 Personal interview, 12/10/92.
from friends, relatives, and working associates.

When asked what pressures mothers and fathers face when they want to have a career, respondents felt that friends did not discourage either mothers or fathers significantly from combining these roles. However, men and women responded slightly differently on this question. Women responded at a rate of 32% to affirm that friends do discourage women from being active mothers and working women at the same time. While still a minority percentage, it is much higher than the 15% rate of response (by both male and female respondents) expressing that men are discouraged by friends. So while friends do not place significant negative pressures on either working mothers or fathers, women feel more pressure from them than do working fathers.

Respondents were also asked what pressures relatives place on mothers and fathers who have a career. There was a significant difference in the respondents' perception of what kind of pressures relatives place on working fathers versus working mothers. Slightly more than four-fifths of respondents felt that men are not discouraged by relatives from being an active father and a successful professional at the same time. However, about half of the respondents felt that women are discouraged from being a mother and a working woman at the same time by relatives. According to the population of working parents at Lotus, working mothers face more pressures from relatives than working fathers.

Respondents were asked lastly about the pressures working parents feel from working associates. The responses on this question differed between male and female respondents. When asked if women are discouraged from
combining parenting and work roles by working associates, women were evenly split between answering yes or no. However, two-thirds of men responded that women are *not* discouraged by working associates. Women thus feel more negative pressure from their working associates than men perceive that they do. Neither male nor female respondents felt that working fathers are significantly discouraged by working associates. However, there was a slight difference in responses in that men actually feel *less* pressure from working associates than women perceive that they do.

From these analyses of relations working parents have with friends, relatives, and working associates, we can see a general trend: women face more social pressures when they try to combine mothering with a career than men do. Hochschild aptly notes that the reason for this is that women are the ones challenging tradition, not men: "women differ more from their mothers than men differ from their fathers. The 'female culture' has shifted more rapidly than the 'male culture'; the image of the go-get-'em woman has yet to be fully matched by the image of the let's-take-care-of-the-kids-together man." The accompanying social pressures that have resisted such change only reinforce traditional attitudes and divisions of labor.

Sacrifices

One final measure of the gender gap in work-family conflict is how participants view the sacrifices that women make vs. those that men make

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13 Hochschild, 205.
when they plan to have a career. This viewpoint can help us to visualize how work-family conflicts are really affecting working mothers and fathers.

Respondents were thus asked a series of questions about the sacrifices (major, minor, or none) working parents make with regard to several issues: number of children to parent, amount of time spent with family, the smooth running of a household.

Men and women in dual-income marriages can never pursue family and career simultaneously with full energy and capability; the individual demands of both spheres inevitably require compromises. When a working individual decides to have a family, this principle is always put into practice. Career orientations inhibit the potential parents’ ability to care for and support expected children, and thereby modify working parents’ choices with regard to the number of children to parent. The absolute majority of both male and female respondents agree that working women make major sacrifices when deciding the size of their families. However, male and female respondents differed when asked about the sacrifices men must make with regard to the number of children to parent. Over 70% of female respondents feel that men make minor sacrifices to none at all with regard to this matter. Male responses were skewed in the opposite direction, with the majority of them estimating that men make mostly minor and sometimes major sacrifices when deciding how many children to have. Still, the aggregate responses (male and female combined) show clearly that respondents feel that working women make more sacrifices than working men in deciding the size of their families (see Figure 4).

The principle of compromises also comes into practice on the issue of how
TO WHAT DEGREE DO WOMEN WHO WANT TO HAVE A CAREER LIKE YOURS HAVE TO MAKE SACRIFICES WITH REGARD TO THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN THEY CHOOSE TO PARENT? 
(N = 100)

Figure 4

TO WHAT DEGREE DO MEN WHO WANT TO HAVE A CAREER LIKE YOURS HAVE TO MAKE SACRIFICES WITH REGARD TO THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN THEY CHOOSE TO PARENT? 
(N = 100)
much time working parents spend with their families. Career-minded individuals all must sacrifice time that they would otherwise spend with their families in order to maintain their career, and responses tended to reflect this fact. When asked what sacrifices men and women must make with regard to the amount of time spent with family, male and female respondents gave fairly similar answers for the situation of working women. Nearly two-thirds of female respondents and three-fourths of male respondents felt that working women must make major sacrifices with regard to family time. The remaining respondents felt that women make only minor sacrifices on this issue. We therefore see overwhelming agreement among male and female respondents that working women must make significant sacrifices in trying to balance work and family time. Male respondents answered in the exact same proportions when asked what sacrifices men must make when it comes to family time; however, female respondents were almost evenly split between saying that men make major versus minor sacrifices on this issue. The female respondents thus feel that men more often than women make only minor sacrifices when it comes to family time, whereas male respondents feel that men and women make equally major sacrifices when it comes to family time.

Lastly, I asked respondents about the sacrifices working women and men must make when it comes to the smooth running of a household. When career and family are in the balance, the household very easily falls to a lesser priority. When respondents answer who makes the sacrifices with regard to the household, they are in effect also designating responsibility for domestic chores to either the working mother or the working father. It is important to keep in
mind that respondents were to assume in answering this question that the man or woman whom they were talking about had equal career status as themselves.

About half of both male and female respondents agree that working women make major sacrifices with regard to household maintenance; another two-fifths say women make minor sacrifices when it comes to their household. When asked about the sacrifices men make on this issue, respondents overall agreed that they are minor. Only one-fifth of male respondents said men make major sacrifices with regard to their household; the majority of male respondents felt that men make only minor sacrifices. Women, on the other hand, felt that men make either minor sacrifices or none at all. Respondents thus agree on the prevalence of this very traditional principle: women, regardless of their work status, are responsible for the domestic sphere (see Figure 5). This clear gap between the sexes in responsibility for domestic chores reinforces our perception that working women face more structural and social barriers in trying to integrate work and family than men do.

A gendered analysis of sacrifices working parents make allows us to see beyond social pressures to the actual situation of working women and men. Male and female respondents agree that on all three issues, working women must make more sacrifices than working men. Certainly paid parental leave could not alleviate all the forces (structural and attitudinal) that have made the situation thus for working women. However, its potential would lie in helping to equalize the situation by encouraging men to become more active in parenting. Would such a change would help to eliminate inequalities that working mothers
TO WHAT DEGREE DO WOMEN WHO WANT TO HAVE A CAREER LIKE YOURS HAVE TO SACRIFICE THE SMOOTH RUNNING OF THEIR HOUSEHOLD?

(N = 100)

TO WHAT DEGREE DO MEN WHO WANT TO HAVE A CAREER LIKE YOURS HAVE TO SACRIFICE THE SMOOTH RUNNING OF THEIR HOUSEHOLD?

(N = 100)
face in the home and complementarily in the workplace? If so, the policy would thereby facilitate the resolution of many work-family conflicts. Having established the contextual significance of paid parental leave, how exactly have men and women at Lotus used the policy?

**PATTERN OF LEAVE-TAKING**

Is paid parental leave a remedy for work-family conflicts? Can it help to alleviate the gender gap in such conflicts? Before we can begin to answer analyze such issues, we must establish how men and women at Lotus have used the leave. From this understanding of patterns of leave, we may then go on to analyze how paid parental leave has affected working parents at Lotus.

Leave-taking can be differentiated in two ways: by length and by pattern (continuous or non-continuous leave). Men and women differed in their leave-taking on both terms. With regard to length, women on average took slightly longer time using the parental leave program than men did. Whereas women took an average of about 18 working days of leave, men took an average of 15 working days of leave. It is interesting to note that the mode of leave time for both sexes was 20 days; however, the median (20 days for women versus 15 days for men) reveals the overall tendency of men to take slightly shorter leaves. So while both mothers and fathers at Lotus were more likely to take the entire leave time available to them under the policy, men in general took fewer days than women. These differences between working mothers and fathers at Lotus in the length of time taken for parental leave again reveal the general
existence of traditional sex roles in Lotus families. Women take more leave, which corresponds to their greater responsibility for caregiving.

The second variable by which to differentiate leave-taking is the pattern of leave taken. The Lotus policy does not specify whether or not the leave should be taken continuously or non-continuously, so employees work out the situation with their managers on an individual basis. Ninety-percent of women took their leave days in a continuous block of time, versus two-thirds of men. The clear majority of both sexes therefore preferred continuous leave time; however, a substantial minority of men (33%) took their leave days in a non-continuous pattern (leave days interspersed with work days). Only ten-percent of women took their leave non-continuously. Thus, there is a discernible difference between the sexes in the pattern of leave taken.

We conclude from the above evidence that women in general took more time off for parental leave than men did, and were more likely to take it in a single block of time. One should keep in mind when analyzing this tendency that women generally added paid parental leave on to the end of their maternity leave, which is at least six weeks long. So women asked for parental leave in the context of a larger pattern of continuous leave time; their usage of paid parental leave generally continued this pattern. However, men had to arrange for the leave independently of any maternity leave that their wife might have. Some male workers specifically mentioned that they felt pressure from their managers to break up their leave days into a non-continuous pattern such that they still would come into work for part of the week.

It is significant to point out that the non-continuous leave pattern that men
took at Lotus is not necessarily correlated with secondary caregiving. One man whom I interviewed is in an equal-caregiving situation and took his leave non-continuously in a manner that actually increased his caregiving responsibility. He took two weeks off when his children were born, one week when his wife went back to work, then saved the last five days "for doctor's appointments, child illness, days when day-care were not available." By using his leave time in this manner, he was able to take on more responsibility with his children than he would have otherwise. So while the continuous/non-continuous distinction does indicate to some degree the amount of responsibility a given parent has for child care, it is not always directly correlated with primary responsibility.

Male participation in unofficial parenting leave is not accounted for in the aforementioned statistics. Even though Lotus has a company-wide policy for parental leave and generally positive support from management, there could very well still be a population of men who do not ask for it, but take some other form of leave at the time of birth. One woman commented: "I think men are reluctant to take parenting leave...I think plenty of men just take a week's vacation or a day or two off instead of taking a leave." Of course, this population should be proportionately small at Lotus since the company-wide policy is generally well supported. Another version of unreported parenting leave is the following: one man whom I interviewed along with his wife (who also works at Lotus and was actually the one to turn in the survey) was not on my list of leave takers even though he took the full twenty days. He said that the reason for this was most likely that his manager "probably wouldn't even fill
out a form because he's too lazy to do that."14 The tendency to either take unofficial parental leave or to not go through the rigor of reporting it means that there may be a population of leave-takers at Lotus who are unidentified.15

THE GENDER GAP IN WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AND PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

Men and women at Lotus reveal traditional values in their family and work structures, in the pressures that they feel from others, and in the sacrifices they make. At the same time, Lotus is a company touted for its progressive policies. It is a standout in Corporate America -- as is evidenced by its election for the second year in a row to Working Mother magazine's list of "100 Best Companies for Working Mothers," which calls the company a "pioneer in creating work/family programs."16 Paid parental leave is certainly one of the reasons for this comment. In a relative sense, leave participants at Lotus are in a much more progressive situation than most working parents in this country. How do they assess their situation?

Though there is much evidence to point to the prevalence of traditional sex roles among Lotus employees, a closer look at the participants in the company's paid parental leave program reveals a slightly different picture. A more accurate

14 Personal interview, 12/17/92.

15 It is impossible to predict how this unidentified group might have affected my analysis of gender differences in leave-taking -- for the purposes of this study, they are assumed insignificant.

16 Milton Moskowitz and Carol Townsend, "100 Best Companies for Working Mothers" Working Mother (October 1992), 56.
assessment of their status would acknowledge the transitions working parents there are going through. In the surveys and interviews, I discerned as Hochschild did in her study three types marital role ideologies: traditional, transitional, and egalitarian. Traditional women, though they work, identify themselves more with their activities in the home than men do. Their husbands support such beliefs. Egalitarian couples want to identify equally between work and family spheres, and thus have equal power and division of labor in all that they do. Transitional couples combine aspects of both; however, the transitional woman is different from the traditional woman in that she wants to identify with her role at work as much as with her role in the home.\textsuperscript{17}

What I found most striking at Lotus was the small group of male respondents whose views on work and family were entirely transformed as a result of having taken parental leave through Lotus's program. These men's marriages are currently in the transitional or egalitarian categories -- when they might otherwise have been defined as traditional. The transitional nature of the population of leave takers at Lotus -- a direct result of paid parental leave -- is what draws our attention to them. The question at hand is: If men use paid parental leave and become more active fathers as a result, how will it affect the gender gap in work-family conflict?

\textsuperscript{17} Hochschild, 15.
CHAPTER THREE:
PAID PARENTAL LEAVE AND THE FAMILY

Given that the gender gap in work and family structures is a major impediment to the ability of working women to combine career and family, and given estimates that women will constitute the majority of new entrants into the labor force by the year 2000, the greatest potential importance of paid parental leave for families and workplaces lies in its ability to close that gap and ease the burdens on working mothers. Paid parental leave can do this by facilitating one major change: the transformation of working men into more active fathers. If men take on more responsibility in childcare and become more equal sharers of the division of labor in the domestic sphere, it would be a positive factor in relieving tension in dual-career marriages. Women would be less constrained by their responsibilities at home and subsequently more free to pursue their careers. Moreover, children would benefit from the co-parenting.

LOTUS MEN¹

Even though the amount and pattern of leave taken by Lotus employees in general tends to reflect traditional sex roles, male participants at Lotus have used the policy with enthusiasm. Lotus men are evidence that some men in the United States have a strong interest in using paid parental leave. We see this

¹ Reminder: the term "Lotus Men" is not meant to refer to the entire population of male employees at Lotus, but rather to the population of male participants in the company’s paid parental leave program.
enthusiasm in a clearer light when we compare Lotus men to men in Sweden. The differences between mothers and fathers there in terms of parental leave usage are far from trivial, and far greater than the differences found at Lotus.

Women and men in Sweden use the national policy for paid parental leave in such a way that women's traditional position as primary caregiver is simply reinforced, which is much less the case at Lotus. Women in Sweden tend to take longer blocks of leave than men,\(^2\) as do the women at Lotus. However, the statistics in Sweden reflect a much greater gender gap. In 1987, men who participated in the program accounted for a mere 7.5\% of all leave days taken.\(^3\) Men who participated at Lotus accounted for 35\% of all leave days taken. In the Lotus example, men did take fewer days than women did on average (15 vs. 18 days), but were still more likely to take the full 20 days (mode value) than not. The men at Lotus, while not exactly on par with the women, have still been much more active in using the leave than men in Sweden.

In comparing the Lotus case versus Sweden, we should keep in mind that we are also comparing different cultures and different leave policies. Lotus's program offers one month away from work per employee, whereas the Swedish policy offers fifteen months off per couple at 90\% pay, with a cap on earnings. In some ways, the Lotus policy is thus more equal between working men and women since leave time is given equally per individual at full pay, not devised such that the parents must split the leave time between themselves. In this case, it is of little surprise that Swedish women take the majority of leave since

\(^2\) Haas, 61.

\(^3\) Ibid., 61. This was the most recent statistic available.
there is a definite wage gap between men and women there. Men still dominate the most prestigious and highly paid jobs in Sweden -- in 1989, women made between 75-90% of male wages. Thus, from a strictly financial point of view, it makes more sense for families to have the woman take the majority of leave. The nature of Lotus’s paid parental leave policy thus seems to encourage more active use by men -- a statement that is supported by the fact that Lotus fathers have taken a larger proportion of leave than men in Sweden.

The comparison between Lotus and Sweden is made more impressive when we consider that Lotus’ policy was introduced very recently (in 1985), whereas Sweden’s policy has been in existence since 1974. One would expect that a policy which has been around longer in a country known for its egalitarian policies would have more equal rates of participation between the sexes than a policy introduced only seven years ago in a U.S. corporation. The fact that this is not the case makes Lotus’ case even more important.

Lotus men are also more enthusiastic about participating in parental leave than one would expect when surveying the general U.S. population. A recent article in Fortune magazine estimated that a mere 2% of eligible men have used unpaid parental leave policies offered in the United States: "There are insidious cultural stigmas at work here. Men are afraid of showing that work isn’t the be-all and end-all of their existence." Men will often take paid vacation or sick leave as unofficial parental leave, but "just don’t talk about it, so they don’t lose

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4 Ibid., 34.

5 Deutschman, 68.
Thirty-one percent of Swedish men and 23% of Swedish women have responded that they experienced difficulties at the workplace when they went on parental leave. Cultural stigmas create significant, legitimate fears for employees when they consider taking parental leave.

The vast majority of male leave-takers at Lotus (80%) did not feel that taking the leave harmed their career advancement at all. The paid aspect of the leave is certainly a legitimizing factor. Another possible explanation for this phenomenon is that Lotus is highly self-conscious about maintaining a "family-friendly" image. It could very well be that Lotus managers overall are more open to integrating work and family issues than managers in the U.S. working population as a whole. Lotus employees (especially men) would subsequently feel more encouraged to actively participate in the program.

In the previous chapter, we analyzed the gender gap in work-family conflicts at Lotus in an absolute sense. However, when we compare Lotus men to the Swedish case and to the general U.S. population, we see that Lotus men are relatively active in using paid parental leave. This point is important because the population of working parents at Lotus may thus be considered to be in a transitional phase. As noted in the conclusion of the previous chapter, traditional sex roles are still evident among leave takers at Lotus. But the greatest value of the Lotus example lies in the transformative nature of the population of parental leave participants. We can learn from them how paid parental leave can directly bring about change for working parents, families, and

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6 Ibid.
7 Haas, 131, 143.
the corporation. Lotus is therefore an excellent focus for a study on how paid parental leave can affect work and family structures.

THE DUAL EFFECTS OF PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

In the last forty years, many women have made a historic shift, into the economy. Now it is time for a whole generation of men to make a second historic shift -- into work at home.

-Arlie Hochschild, The Second Shift

The virtue of paid parental leave with regard to Hochschild’s "call to action" is that it is a policy from the workplace that encourages men to become more active in sharing caregiving responsibilities. It thereby has the potential to change the very social structures she refers to throughout her book. We already know that Lotus men constitute a significant proportion (40%) of participants in Lotus’s paid parental leave program. What effects has their leave-taking had on parenting styles, the division of domestic responsibilities, and families? Has it affected the division of labor with regard to the second shift?

In my examination of paid parental leave and its effect on parenting patterns, I discovered two general trends. First, for women whose husbands did not work at Lotus and were not offered parental leave, the policy overall tended to reinforce traditional sex roles. Second, for men whose working wives were not offered much more leave time than the standard six to eight weeks, the men’s participation in parental leave often led to egalitarian parenting situations. For men whose wives had more flexible work schedules, the policy still facilitated their becoming more active fathers but not to the same degree.
because external forces were not pushing them as much to become co-parenters. The presence of paid parental leave in all cases had direct effects on the division labor in the home.

**When paid parental leave reinforces traditional sex roles.** Female respondents expressed how their usage of paid parental leave could reinforce their role as primary caregiver in their written comments. If their husbands did not take advantage of or were not offered a parental leave policy, there was no opportunity or incentive for the couple to move away from traditional sex roles.

I think since I was the one home longer with the baby at the beginning, my husband viewed me as the primary caregiver. This label did not change after I went back to work.

Since I was home for three months with each child, I became the 'expert' on the children, their schedules, doctor's visits, selecting daycare and nannies, etc. It still remains that way although my husband has a more flexible schedule.

I feel that due to the time I had off, I took more care of my child than my husband, because he had to continue working. I believe that worked against my advantage because when I started back to work it still continues to be my responsibility that my child gets fed and put to bed every night, on top of other chores.

If anything, [paid parental leave] made me more of the primary child care provider since I have the most time to spend with them. I imagine it would be very different for the man taking the parenting leave.

Women first become primary caregivers while on maternity and parental leave -- a pattern that will not change if their husbands do not have the opportunity or incentive to become active fathers. This tendency works against these women and is particularly detrimental if it creates long-term habits in caregiving, as it often will. When women are the only spouse to take parental leave, the policy might thus actually undermine the ideal of co-parenting.
Co-parenting might also be undermined for leave-takers if mothers choose to breast feed their newborn infants for an extended period of time, without using a breast pump to let the father share in the feedings. Paid parental leave in these cases only serves to lengthen the woman’s time at home during which she has almost exclusive responsibility for the nurturance of her child.

I viewed a long maternity leave as a time to continue breast feeding as long as possible for the health of my baby. My husband couldn’t directly help with that activity...

...as a breast feeding mom, the majority of the responsibility was mine. The problem with making feedings into an exclusively female activity is that it perpetuates the problems of the second shift; if the division of labor in the domestic sphere is to become more equal, women must consciously let their husbands in. Hochschild concluded from her own study: "If women want men involved at home, they will have to share the power and the respect for the work it takes."\(^8\) In some instances, women will indirectly shut their husbands out of caregiving through exclusive breast feeding -- an inequality that paid parental leave would only prolong.

The women whose husbands did not have access to a parental leave program often wished that their husbands had been home more often in those crucial first months. They commented that if their husbands had been offered paid parental leave, the division of child care in their families might very well be different now.

I continue to be the primary caregiver, while my husband takes on an ‘assistant’ role. If he had been at home after the birth of our son, I believe we would share the responsibilities better.

\(^8\) Hochschild, 214.
I wish that my husband (who does not work at Lotus) had been offered the same opportunity. He could only take one week off when our child was born, and really feels he missed out.

Even though paid parental leave is a gender-blind policy, it reinforces traditional sex roles when it is only available to the woman from her corporation.

There were several women whose husbands did not have access to a paid parental leave program but nonetheless have highly flexible work schedules. These women are an exception to the aforementioned trends because paid parental leave did not undermine co-parenting for them. Instead, it actually helped to establish an equal division of labor in the home: "It helped us work out our responsibilities before the added pressures of both working...we have a strong team approach that took some time to work out. It still keeps changing but that time gave us a comfortable time to work things out." This woman’s husband consults out of their home and thus is free to determine his own work schedule. He takes their daughter to day care and picks her up, and also takes responsibility for at least half of the domestic chores in their family. From them we learn that even if paid parental leave is available only to the wife, a co-parenting situation may still be achieved if the husband has a flexible work schedule and is committed to being an active parent.

When paid parental leave fosters co-parenting. The second major effect that parental leave can have on parenting patterns happens when the wives of male participants have inflexible work schedules, such that parental leave actually pushes the couple to a more egalitarian caregiving situation. The wife of one male participant works for the state of Massachusetts; her work
schedule is very strict. Since she could not take days off from work but they still wanted to have children, it was his schedule that had to change. He therefore used parental leave for doctor’s appointments, child illness, and on days when day care was not available. However, he felt that if he had not been offered paid parental leave, he would have instead succumbed to traditional sex roles. He grew up in a traditional Irish-Catholic family in which his mother performed all childrearing and household tasks, as well as maintaining a job outside the house to supplement the family income. He said: "My mother will tell you that with seven kids, my father never changed a diaper." His time on parenting leave transformed his view of the role of a good father: "I hate to say it now, but I always took a woman’s responsibility for children for granted, even if she worked full time. I don’t know why, it sounds pretty narrow minded now that I’ve lived through it. Parental leave really made me notice how difficult it is to hold down three full time jobs -- mine, my wife’s, and our kids!" He concluded that his own transformation, facilitated by paid parental leave, was for the best: "Overall the paid parental leave policy has made me understand that child care responsibilities should not be taken for granted...both parents need to be involved in the daily care of a child, especially if both parents are working."

This man’s story of transformation lies at the heart of my study: paid parental leave changed his family’s structure from traditional to egalitarian -- a major shift. He now says: "With both people working, I don’t know how you couldn’t do it this way. It’s a lot of pressure on one or the other."9 It is lastly

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9 Personal interview, 12/8/92.
crucial to note that an unpaid leave policy would not have had the same effect; he says: "We wouldn’t have been able to afford that" -- and further, "It wouldn’t have changed my views about being an active father in general." 10

PAID PARENTAL LEAVE AND THE CLOSING OF THE GENDER GAP

Paid parental leave is the one work-family policy that would effectively encourage co-parenting from childbirth. Other support networks would be necessary to maintain egalitarian caregiving, but paid parental leave is the crucial starting point. As women become an increasingly significant segment of the workforce, paid parental leave is one policy that will give dual-career couples the support they need to also have a family. In the process, it also has the potential to create a more egalitarian division of labor in the home. We saw through examples that this is already happening with some of the parents at Lotus.

Many respondents believe in the policy’s potential to accomplish these changes on a wide-scale basis. One interviewee commented that if more men took paid parental leave, "they would learn more about the child. Some men are almost afraid of children...it would help them become more of a pro-active parent. And in turn, the woman could spend more time on her career"; he also added: "I think true co-parenting is possible...and it will definitely help women’s place in the workforce. A woman only has so much energy...if she has to

10 Ibid.
spend so much time doing work at home, she cannot devote herself to her
work." The key point he is making is that equality on the homefront will
foster and support equality in the workplace -- no small accomplishment if it is
indeed possible.

There were several male respondents who found that paid parental leave
had a transformative effect on their parenting behavior. From their experiences
on paid parental leave, they gained an understanding of the demands and joys of
raising children; several male participants specifically mentioned the educational
value of their leave. Men who would otherwise have been traditional, distant
father figures have now become active participants in their children's lives. The
following are examples of written comments from the surveys:

I learned to appreciate parenting and understand the commitment required.
Otherwise, I would have fallen into the 'traditional' male role as an observer,
not a participant in parenting. (emphasis mine)

I learned to talk to my kids more, to take more of a role in household
chores. I learned to value time spent with my kids.

I learned to be a parent in a full-time way instead of in the morning or in the
evening.

Parenting leave gave me an opportunity to 'learn the basics' of taking care
of a baby; and, actually afforded me the time to actively participate...Parenting leave gave my family the 'time' to adjust to changes
and focus on the very most important unit in society.

It let me experience being the primary caretaker of my children. I have new
respect for my mother...It gave me a chance to be 'Mr. Mom.'

Except for nursing, my wife and I feel equally suited to handle, with
confidence, virtually any aspect of the child care responsibilities. This,
could not envision happening had I not been involved right from the start in
such a proactive way.

" Personal interview, 12/17/92.
Several male participants therefore established permanent co-parenting patterns in their households as a direct result of their experiences on paid parental leave. Many found the time rewarding: "I look back at that time as a very successful thing that I did." The policy therefore can change traditional social structures by influencing working fathers, which then has positive implications for working women, dual-career couples, and children. The transformative potential of the leave is real and significant. Paid parental leave thereby takes on real importance when we think about trying to close the gender gap in work-family conflicts.

Female participants at Lotus noticed the change in their male counterparts. They saw male co-workers who used the leave become more sensitive to the traditional role of women -- and often take on more responsibility in the domestic sphere as a result.

In others around me at Lotus, I see men who return from parenting leave with a better appreciation for balancing work and home.

Men I know at Lotus who took advantage of paid parental leave took a much more active role right from the start.

Some women have husbands who also work at Lotus. They commented on the value of the leave in allowing their husbands to become active fathers, which then helped them to establish a shared parenting pattern in their family.

Since my husband also works at Lotus and took parenting leave, it made him a much more active participant in raising our baby -- he is very much a contributor because he learned early on how to care for the baby.

The parenting leave allowed us to get comfortable with a shared responsibility for raising the children. I think it would be harder for him to feel included if he wasn’t able to be there and get established from the start.

Being an active parent is a matter of interest and commitment. As one woman...
wrote, this is something that men have the opportunity to learn while on parental leave: "I think men tend to think that women naturally or automatically know how to care for babies -- but if they could afford to be at home, they'd know it's all just trial and error and time spent!" Female participants thus tend to support the notion that paid parental leave can successfully "sensitize" men to the demands and difficulties of parenting, and during the process also make them more active fathers.

The working parents at Lotus have obviously appreciated the policy and its helpfulness to them in administering to their family's demands. One father said that paid parental leave is "one significant part of my very favorable feelings about the company...it's not money or anything else; it's an attitude -- it's a better reflection of what's really going on in society." Paid parental leave meets the needs of this country's workers as they are existing today: in dual-income marriages.

PAID PARENTAL LEAVE AND THE INTEGRATION OF WORK-FAMILY ISSUES

Paid parental leave represents major progress towards the integration of work and family issues because it allows mothers and fathers to take time away from work to care for their children with the financial support of their company. The policy encourages active parenting and thus helps dual-income couples to build a stronger family unit. However, given that women and men are positioned differently in social and work structures, the changes the policy

12 Personal interview, 12/8/92.
encourages will affect women and men differently. By examining the various effects the policy can have on individuals and the family unit, we can better understand the policy itself.

Significance for working mothers. Mothers tend to use paid parental leave to lengthen the time spent at home with their newborn. For some women, the policy was crucial in this manner because they did not feel that the normal time allotted for maternity leave was sufficient. The policy therefore gives the mother a chance beyond the medically allotted time for physical recovery to become acquainted with her newborn. One interviewee commented that six to eight weeks -- the standard allotted time for maternity leave under short-term disability -- is not enough time for a mother to bond with a baby. She felt that "four extra weeks of paid leave should be the absolute minimum in a humane society," and added: "Just because you're a mother, you shouldn't feel like a leper; the workplace should be more flexible."13 She assesses her time on parental leave: "I look back on my leave as a wonderful and relaxing time spent with my baby. I returned renewed, well rested, and refreshed."14 Though this woman strongly felt that she could never be a traditional mother, she also is a primary caregiver by her own desire ("I just think that it's a natural thing with a mother and a baby"). In this situation, paid parental leave provides women with the opportunity to maintain a career commitment while also upholding major responsibilities at home. It therefore facilitates successful integration of work and family for those women who might otherwise find it very difficult to choose

13 Personal interview, 12/10/92.

14 Ibid.
between giving up a career and their strong desire to "be a good mother" in the traditional sense.

There was one woman at Lotus who found that without paid parental leave, her current co-parenting arrangement at home might have been undermined. She commented during an interview: "I was 35 when I had my first kid; I really needed the time to adjust to the whole idea" and added: "If I had to come back six weeks after my first child was born, I would have been completely distracted. It would have taken me that much longer to be completely functional. I probably would have decided not to continue working here. [Paid parental leave] gave me that opportunity to really adjust." The addition of a child into a person's life is a major change; paid parental leave provides new parents with adequate time to make the necessary adjustments.

This scenario is similar to the one just mentioned in that paid parental leave helped the second woman to integrate work and family instead of having to choose between the two. However, it is different because the leave also helped to establish a co-parenting pattern in her household. Her time on leave thus served a two-fold purpose: it allowed her to make the adjustments she needed for having a baby "at her age," and it gave her and her husband a chance to work out a successful shared parenting pattern. She now says of their arrangement: "It takes a huge burden off of me. He does all the laundry, he’s always cleaning, everything like that. So we don’t have hired help" -- something that many dual-income couples assume they cannot do without.

15 Personal interview, 12/8/92.

16 Ibid.
These are some of the many benefits of a shared division of labor in the home. When only women have primary responsibility for the domestic sphere, only men have the freedom to excel in the public sphere of work. Paid parental leave represents major change from this tradition by moving towards eliminating the pressures that force parents to choose between having a career or having a family. By creating a flexible workplace, paid parental leave allows women to make the adjustments they need to and still continue to commit to a career. It is important to note that the woman just mentioned is now a senior manager at Lotus; she was promoted since her first child. The company has thus gained by her continued employment since she has proved herself to be a valuable employee. If it were not for paid parental leave, Lotus might very well have lost her.

Significance for working fathers. Men have not traditionally had to choose between having a career versus having a family. Still, it is difficult for dual-income couples to maintain traditional sex roles in their family -- the burden is just too great for the spouse who is the primary caretaker. We have already seen that in a case where the wife has a strict work schedule, paid parental leave allows the couple to still have children since the husband can thereby take on more of the caregiving burden. In what other ways have working fathers at Lotus found the policy significant?

There are men who have a natural interest in being an active father; for them, paid parental leave is important for several reasons. One man took the entire month of parental leave directly following his wife’s maternity leave. He wrote in his survey that the reasoning behind this pattern of leave was: "1. So l
could get to know the baby and vice-versa; 2. So the baby could stay home longer before having to go to the baby-sitter; 3. So we could go one more month without having to pay for a baby-sitter." Because of paid parental leave, this man was able to understand the demands of child care since he was the sole caretaker of his newborn for an entire month. He was able to give his child longer care under its natural parents -- and feel financially secure during this time because (1) the leave was paid and (2) they were saving on baby-sitting expenses during that time period. It is crucial to note that if the policy were unpaid, he would not have taken any of it because he could not have afforded the time off without pay. Paid parental leave was therefore unique in giving him the opportunity to become an active parent without financial stress.

Paid parental leave has helped many men at Lotus to move away from tradition and support their families as active fathers, instead of just as financial providers. In families that are in more dire economic situations, the original motivation to take the leave is financial. As one respondent commented: "Economics are a driving force" -- which is in some cases a positive factor in establishing co-parenting. Because the birth of a child brings with it a myriad of new costs, an unpaid leave would have had very little practical significance for many participants. One man concluded in his survey: "In general, paid parental leave is one of the things I appreciate most about Lotus -- both the money and the cultural ramifications of a serious plan."

Paid parental leave has helped mothers and fathers in many different situations to integrate work and family. There are other benefits from the policy
that are less obvious. One is that for parents in dual-career couples, the shared parenting that paid parental leave encourages is often an important factor in their ability to combine two careers with family successfully. Hochschild found this true in her own study of two-job couples: "What did contribute to [marital] happiness was the husband’s willingness to do the work at home." 17 In a society where about one-half of all marriages currently end in divorce, paid parental leave helps to ease tensions and strengthen families. Hochschild cited a national study that found working wives suffered less distress when their husbands were active in child care and domestic chores.

Paid parental leave is lastly important from the perspective of the newborn child. Hochschild noted the importance of an active father in child development: "the more involved the father, the better developed the child intellectually and socially." 18 The policy also helps to emphasize the importance of both parents taking an active role in the raising of their children, which could only be a positive change for our society: "In the end, caring for children is the most important part of the second shift, and the effects of a man’s care or his neglect will show up again and again through time." 19

EXCEPTIONAL CASES

We have seen how paid parental leave can be beneficial to parents as they

17 Hochschild, 211.
18 Ibid., 236.
19 Ibid., 237.
adjust to the addition of a new family member in the context of their marriage, family life, and financial and emotional stability. However, the policy has special significance for the minority of leave-takers who have used it to take a leave of absence "because of an emotional or physical hardship with a son or daughter." The two interviewees whose cases follow are in extreme situations -- and are further evidence of the importance of paid parental leave for working parents.

Carol Kish is a 37 year-old single mother of two. She used the leave when her elder son had to be hospitalized at the age of ten for severe depression. At the time, she was recovering from surgery to remove a brain tumor. Her husband had deserted them approximately one year earlier, and her son was overcome with the fear that he would lose her too. "It got to the point where he was attempting suicide...I myself was just an emotional wreck over this last year. I can sit here and talk about it now because I've been allowed to get help. That's a very important thing in this company." In her desperate situation as a single parent, she had to continue to work in order to support her two children. However, there was no way that she could ignore the needs of her child. Her manager suggested that she use paid parental leave to facilitate integration of the two.

Carol used Lotus's parental leave to make it through that tough period. She broke up the 20 leave days into 40 half days at work, and commented: "The

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20 see Appendix A.

21 Names have been altered to protect anonymity.

22 Personal interview, 12/10/92.
fact that it was paid took a lot of pressure off. I think I’m a healthier employee because I did take as much time off as I really needed."23 Her situation as a single parent magnified the significance of the policy, because there is that much less flexibility in dealing with parenting responsibilities. She concluded: "Being a single parent...the benefits are so great here that I can’t afford not to work here. I can’t imagine what our economic status would be had I gone a month without pay...it was very important."24 By allowing her to take the time she needed to care for her son, paid parental leave in turn has made her a more committed employee: "I will always feel a stronger loyalty to this company, because it was here when I needed it." By offering Carol this policy, Lotus gained her loyalty, increased her productivity, and helped her to rebuild her family.

Donald Harris25 is a 41 year old father of two. His wife is currently terminally ill, dying of breast cancer. To this date, he has used the leave to care for his children when his wife was in the hospital for treatment or too ill to care for them herself. His family is of ultimate importance and his aspirations at work are not high ("I’m not interested in the fast track, just in living a simple and good life with my family"). However, as the breadwinner in his family, he must constantly worry about how he will balance increasing responsibilities at home with his job.

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Names have been altered to protect anonymity.
Paid parental leave has helped Donald to cope with the tragedy he is facing. As he looks to a future when he will be a single parent, he realizes that his time on leave has prepared him for the demands of primary parenting: "I've recognized that women are expected to be a full-time 'homemaker' even if they work full-time, and I have learned just how difficult this is. I will shortly have to be both, and I don't know if I can do it. I feel that without parental leave, I won't be able to do it." The pressures in his life have caused him to have Anxiety Disorder, which only compounds his problems: "It may turn into a long-term disability issue. I'm at the limit of my medication now, and if my situation gets worse, I may have to be hospitalized."26 For the few working parents in an extreme situation like his, paid parental leave increases flexibility on the job such that they can continue to contribute to the company for as long as possible. He expresses his gratification: "I would like to have the opportunity to pay Lotus back for what they've given me."27 But as he looks to the future, he worries: "...am I going to be fit to take care of my kids? I don't know" and says: "Now that she is dying, I feel that the parental leave policy will be a large factor in the ability of the three of us to survive as a family."28

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26 Personal interview, 12/10/92.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.
Working parents in dual-career couples and single working parents need paid parental leave in order to successfully combine work and family. In some cases, paid parental leave can make the difference between an employee retained versus an employee lost. We have seen many of the benefits the policy brings to working parents and the family -- yet very few workers in the United States have access to it. What corporations should realize is that the benefits families receive are also their concern: "The psychic welfare of workers -- and of their children -- is increasingly a legitimate management concern, and companies that ignore it risk their employees' future as well as their own."29 In what ways has Lotus found the policy useful?

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Paid parental leave has the potential to affect perceptions in the workplace of working parents -- working mothers in particular. If more men become active fathers as a result of the leave, this would be a change from the traditional sex role stereotype in which the mother (whether or not she works outside the home) has full responsibility for the domestic sphere. Paid parental leave might then legitimize parenting overall in the corporation by placing value on childcare, thereby creating new respect for parents in the workplace. Or the policy might further stigmatize workers who are active parents, creating a "daddy track" that has the same negative stigmas as the "mommy track" currently has. How has paid parental leave affected perceptions of parents at Lotus? Have leave takers encountered much discrimination? Lastly, one issue which we have not yet examined is how Lotus might gain from offering the policy. Are there any direct benefits for Lotus from paid parental leave?

PAID PARENTAL LEAVE AND EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Obstacles to Equality

Several respondents felt that paid parental leave increases equality in the workplace only when men use it. "I think if a man stayed home it would help co-parenting and building relationships. If a woman takes it -- it's more the norm and doesn't seem to push equality." Another woman wrote: "Babies
don’t perform their duties in evenings and on weekends. Aware fathers must be able to understand whole-day needs of their children, wives, and households.” If men do not actively use the policy, then there is little chance that the workplace would change its traditional view that the domestic sphere is not an issue for workers.

One man felt that male participation does not help to establish equality in the workplace. He wrote that ironically the policy in some ways decreases equality in the workplace: "Men who take leave are sometimes looked at with skepticism. The rest of the time they’re looked upon as really caring, sensitive guys who are ‘helping the wife.’ Women who take leave are sometimes looked upon as not career-minded. It’s funny, in several ways paid leave helps to reinforce inequality and old stereotypes." This man made these comments because in his experiences, the gender-blind policy of paid parental leave was not viewed in practice as an egalitarian opportunity. From these written responses, participants expressed their belief that paid parental leave can only increase equality if (1) men use it; (2) men change as a result; (3) the workplace embraces the policy on a gender-neutral basis.

Respondents also expressed the importance of managerial support if paid parental leave is to increase equality in the workplace. "I have heard here at Lotus that even though Lotus claims to encourage men to take parenting leave, in fact, managers don’t encourage/permit it." Since official approval for paid parental leave is at the manager’s discretion, if the policy is to change the way the workplace views active parenting, then managers must actively encourage and support workers to use the leave. Otherwise, the policy could only have a
minimal effect on the workplace.

A minority of respondents were skeptical of the policy's potential to increase equality in the workplace. Most of their comments were based in the belief that discrimination against women would persist despite the policy. One woman wrote that the policy does not increase equality "as much as I would like to see. People are still very conservative and traditional in their thinking." A male respondent wrote that sex discrimination exists regardless of the policy: "Women still suffer from parenting stereotypes -- paid leave doesn’t change the unspoken perception of commitment of women after birthing." Another man agreed: "Once the leave is over, women still do not have equality." These men came to these conclusions because they believe that women will still be branded as "mommy trackers" regardless of what men do, and also because they probably feel that traditional parenting roles will continue. Would this necessarily be true if the policy were used by men on a more widespread basis?

Paid parental leave might find obstacles to creating equality in the workplace for other reasons. One respondent felt that the policy would have limited effects on the workplace because non-participants pay little attention to active fathers and then face increasing discrimination in the workplace. One respondent commented similarly: "I don't think parental leave affects any employee who has not taken advantage of the benefit." Another respondent commented similarly: "The issue is far beyond paid parental leave. Ask Jim Manzi [CEO of Lotus] how many women he has at VP or above??" To these respondents, the policy could only have minimal effects because Lotus does not support gender equality or active parenting at all levels of the corporation.
The Potential for Equality

Having gone through the reasons why paid parental leave might not foster equality in the workplace, it is important to note that several respondents thought that paid parental leave has enormous potential to change the way the workplace views active parenting.

It goes a long way by sending the message that men have parenting responsibility as women do. It also makes parenting a priority, as it should be.

I believe that the paid parental leave policy at Lotus has fostered equality in the workplace. No longer are women seen as the ones responsible for family ‘homelife’ -- it makes men realize that it is a responsibility that should be shared equally.

Men who experience some of what are traditional female roles are more understanding of family issues in the workplace.

I guess the rule here could be, 'if all is equal on the home front, then all should be equal in the workplace.'

According to these respondents, a workplace that offers paid parental leave is sensitive to the needs of working parents and is more egalitarian because of this.

One last issue to consider is whether men who defy tradition and become active fathers will then face increasing discrimination in the workplace. One man who felt that the policy increases equality of opportunity wrote: "when both parents take leave, the mommy track and daddy track become one and the same." This comment could thus be viewed negatively if the "daddy track" is defined according to the same negative stigmas as the "mommy track."

However, working parents deserve better -- and if workplaces supported this right, then the corporation could become more egalitarian: "Being on the 'parent track,' rather than the 'mommy track' is becoming more appropriate to describe
both men and women workers' roles vis-a-vis job and home. Being on the parent track means that employers must realize that both sexes need and want work flexibility to be able to accommodate home factors.\(^1\) While discrimination due to a "daddy track" did not come up as a significant problem in the Lotus study, it is certainly something to be conscious of in the future.

Survey respondents expressed the full range of opinions with regard to equality of opportunity in the workplace and the effect paid parental leave can have on this issue. They agree for the most part that workplace opportunities are at best only somewhat equal, but differ both on why the situation is thus and on whether or not it can be changed. Unless the workplace totally discourages workers from using the leave, it seems as if paid parental leave could only help parents integrate work and family issues. Though several other factors besides parental leave will influence workplace attitudes, it is important to not forget how much the policy has already affected change to some degree at Lotus. One respondent wrote: "It is wonderful to see some of the traditional roles fade away which allow fathers more involvement with children and women more involvement in their careers."

**EFFECTS ON CAREER**

A legitimate worry for any career-minded individual is how taking leave will affect their chances for promotion. If the ramifications have empirically been

\(^1\) Crawford, 122.
significant at Lotus, the policy would be of little real benefit to leave-takers.

Taking one month off of work for any reason can impact someone's career negatively in several possible manners: (1) the worker's manager is reluctant to grant them leave and penalizes them for the time away with regard to future promotions; (2) the worker is in the middle of a project such that their time away negatively impacts that project and their reputation at the company; (3) the worker's time away establishes them as someone who is not "career minded" by co-workers and/or supervisors. However, for the majority of leave-takers at Lotus, these problems did not arise when they took the leave.

An important finding from the Lotus survey is that 70% of respondents felt that taking paid parental leave did not impede or delay their professional growth in any way. Another 20% felt that taking the leave hurt their careers only slightly. So the absolute majority of respondents did not experience significant problems in their career advancement as a direct result of having taken the leave. One man who felt that it impeded him slightly wrote, "It is a worthwhile trade-off." Even though time away from work might result in a short-term career setback, respondents overall have not found such setbacks to be unreasonably punitive.

Lastly, the paid aspect of Lotus' policy is an important factor when we analyze the effects that taking the leave has on someone's career. Employees feel that the pay legitimizes their leave, as if the company is overtly supporting them in their time away. One female respondent expressed this clearly: "...not only is the pay a benefit, but because it is a company sanctioned program, I believe it does not hurt your career as much as an unpaid leave of absence.
does." Another woman commented: "Because parenting leave is sanctioned by the company, co-workers and managers accept the time-off with support and good grace. This would not be the case if employees had to petition for unpaid leave on a case-by-case basis." The Lotus example is strong evidence that employees can actively take advantage of paid parental leave without having to fear negative repercussions on their professional reputation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Despite the finding that most participants had a positive experience in utilizing Lotus's paid parental leave program, many had suggestions for improvement. While the proposed solutions to existing problems with the policy vary in complexity, they are nonetheless valid points for consideration.

Eligibility Requirements. A few respondents asked that Lotus remove the clause requiring employees to have worked for one year and eight months at the company before they qualify for the month of leave. One female interviewee who as a result only qualified for three days of parental leave felt extremely bitter about the requirement: "I think it's a clear statement that a woman should not change jobs during her childbearing years."2 She feels that most employees do not understand the technicalities of the policy until the woman is already pregnant, such that the regulation means in effect that "They're making ethical statements about birth control."3 She wrote in her survey that Lotus

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2 Personal interview, 12/8/92.

3 Ibid.
should "allow people to receive paid parental leave even before they've worked there 2 years, and if they do not subsequently fulfill the 2 year obligations, they should be required to pay back the unaccrued benefit." While there are certainly legal complications inherent in this proposal, a few others agreed that the current policy is unfair. One male interviewee commented that if the company is going to offer the policy, it should offer it to employees as soon as they come -- otherwise, "they're making it sound as if the woman came here to get pregnant to take advantage of the policy. It's just too important not to give this policy...if you're going to offer it to them, offer it to them." From Lotus's standpoint, the goal of the accrual requirement is to establish some degree of employee loyalty before the leave is granted -- however, for at least some employees, the controversy it caused has actually been a negative factor in their employment.

Expansion for the "Sandwich Generation." A small number of employees also asked that the policy be extended to include elder care. While this issue is not the focus of my study, workers who are caring for elderly relatives are in just as dire need of leave time as new parents. However, the problem with this issue from the corporation's standpoint is that even though parental leave can be limited to a certain length of time, elder care may require an unknown, extended period of leave depending upon the situation and/or illness. Several employees have actually petitioned Human Resources to consider such a change in policy, but as of February 1993, negotiations are still ongoing.

Length of Leave. Several respondents -- both male and female --

4 Personal interview, 12/8/92.
specifically requested that the leave time be lengthened. One female participant went so far as to present "An option to extend it for women with a possible pay scale reduction: i.e. 1-4 weeks, 100% pay; 5-8 weeks, 75% pay; 9-12 weeks, 50% pay OR 1-4 weeks, 100% pay; 5-8 weeks, 75% pay; 9-12 weeks, 60% pay; 12-24 weeks, 50% pay. If I could 'have it all,' 6 months at 100% pay would be my dream!" There is a significant population of participants who would appreciate and most likely utilize an option for extended leave if Lotus were to offer it. For them, four weeks are not sufficient to adjust and bond with their newborn.

**Waiting Period.** The Lotus policy does provide for 100% wage reimbursement -- but only after the leave taker has been back on the job for a full month. Several participants asked that pay not be withheld for that period of time, but instead be disbursed during the leave.

I'd like to be paid on schedule without a delay of one month. Funds are so tight for me that I had to borrow $2,000 to cover my bills until I got paid!

It is simply not economically feasible to take one month unpaid...but it was hard enough saving the cash needed to float our household until the disbursement was paid out.

The purpose of this requirement is to try to ensure that leave takers do not just take the leave, get the pay, and then quit. However, many participants challenged the merit of the waiting period.

I would not delay pay until the employee returns. I know it's meant as an incentive, but I think people who really don't want to return come back for the mandated 30 days and then leave anyway...but most people could use the money at such a difficult new time!

As long as a person could sign something stating that they would come back for the minimum of 30 days, I would like to get paid as usual instead of waiting 30 days after you return to work.
While the fact that Lotus's policy is paid has positively influenced participation rates and experiences with the leave, a significant portion of leave takers have found that the waiting period increased financial stress in their families.

**Managerial Approval.** The Lotus policy requires managerial approval for the leave. While only the absolute minority of respondents (less than 10%) felt that taking the leave had hurt their careers significantly, the common feeling among them was that due to demanding, unsympathetic managers, they were penalized for being away from the workplace while on leave. Several participants -- even those who had positive experiences with their own supervisors -- requested that Lotus make more of an effort to assure managerial support of the program. In this manner, the policy could be administered more equally throughout the corporation. Of course, one way to sidestep such approval mechanisms would be to do as some respondents suggested: make the leave be mandatory throughout the company. Aside from this proposal, participants had other ideas for change.

Two possible solutions were suggested to minimize managerial biases. First, some interviewees suggested that there should be a **mandatory training program** for managers to make them sensitive to integrating work and family. There would be two parts to such training: the first would deal with leave approval, the second would deal with re-evaluating employee performance to take into account the leave time. With regard to the former, one male interviewee suggested: "The way to encourage it is to have a section on that in management training so that every manager would be aware of the policy and its affect on people...if the managers were aware, I think it would be
administered a lot better." With regard to the second issue, a female participant at Lotus described her own positive experience: "I had such great managers that I don't think that [being on leave] will have any effect [on my career] at all. What they did was temper my goals and objectives to reflect that [I had been away on leave]." If all employees were guaranteed such treatment, the policy could be administered in a truly egalitarian fashion. In fact, several studies have found managerial sensitivity programs to be effective: "Sensitivity training to inform managers and supervisors of employee family situations is being initiated in some companies, such as the Merck subsidiary in Lawrence, Kansas. Since the inception of awareness training, few complaints about supervisor insensitivity have been heard among the 15,000 employees." The importance of managerial support is even more important when we consider the issue of productivity. Several interviewees told stories about both positive and negative experiences with managers, all of them concluding that the managerial support was directly related to their productivity and commitment on-the-job. One working father took parental leave twice at Lotus for his two sons; the first time, his manager was reluctant to grant him the leave time and unsupportive of him during his time away. Their relationship was antagonistic and he felt less committed and put forth less effort under this manager as a result. The second time, he had a different manager who was much more supportive and told him, "'Take what you need; don't worry about

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5 Personal interview, 12/17/92.
6 Personal interview, 12/10/92.
7 Crawford, 84.
it...come back when you need to.'" This employee commented: "It's funny because in that situation, I came back earlier than I did when the other boss was giving me a hard time about it." Lotus may very well find that by making its managers more supportive of the policy, it will benefit by the improved management relations and employee commitment and productivity that result.

The second solution with regard to managerial biases was also suggested by several respondents. One female interviewee noted how the leave "is very much affected by individual personalities" because of the influence that individual managers have in approval for leave. To resolve this problem, she proposed that Human Resources create a review board whose sole purpose it is to make sure that the company's yearly reviews of employees do not discriminate for parental leave. This same suggestion was also brought up by a Lotus employee who actually opted not to take paid parental leave when his son was born. A self-proscribed workaholic, he felt that taking the time off would have severely harmed his career development. Incidentally, at the time that I interviewed him, he also had 13 weeks of unused, paid vacation time and had not taken the month-long paid sabbatical that Lotus offers to employees who have been with the company for seven years. He took only two days off when his son was born, even though his manager had offered him a full week, and did not ever ask for permission to take paid parental leave. This employee suggested that he might have taken the leave if he had an absolute guarantee.

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8 Personal interview, 12/17/92.
9 Personal interview, 12/10/92.
10 These annual reviews rate employee performance according to twelve-month goals stated one year previously.
from Human Resources that the year-end review would not in anyway
discriminate against those who had used the policy. He proposed that Human
Resources, which is in charge of administering these reviews, create official
guidelines against such discrimination and that it actively enforce these rules.
He said that Human Resources should "monitor the people that did take
parenting leave, check the reviews, the wording of it, making sure that nothing
is related to it."\textsuperscript{11} In this manner, workers could be judged on an eleven-
month work period instead of the typical twelve-month period -- assuming that
the leave had been planned and communicated to the necessary authorities for
months in advance. This proposal for a Human Resources review board would
be more effective than the managerial training program in that the latter is no
guarantee against attitudinal biases and subsequent discrimination, which the
review board would actively enforce against.

It is important to note the drawbacks of not guaranteeing managerial
approval and support. Either working parents are unfairly penalized for spending
time with their family, or in the case of the man just mentioned, family suffered
for the sake of work. He and his wife had a baby that was sick with reflux; if
he had been home, he said: "I immediately would have been in tune more. I
actually thought my wife was overanalyzing the situation...I was dead wrong. I
didn't connect well with that in the early days because I was away from it."\textsuperscript{12}
If people like him felt more confident of taking parental leave, conflicts such as
these could be resolved in a better fashion and families would no longer always

\textsuperscript{11} Personal interview, 1/7/93.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
BENEFITS TO THE CORPORATION

We have seen how paid parental leave is a valuable policy to working parents as they try to balance work and family demands, and how the policy might affect equality of opportunity in the corporation -- but we have not yet seen how the corporation itself benefits from the policy. In my study, there is strong evidence that Lotus has in fact gained substantially by offering paid parental leave to its employees.

Participants at Lotus expressed gratification to the company for offering the policy. Over ninety percent said that paid parental leave was proof to them that Lotus has a strong commitment to meeting the needs of its workers. This is an important statistic given Lotus's desire to establish a reputation for being a "family-friendly" workplace. In the high-tech industry, which is plagued by high turnover rates, such a reputation could be a key factor in the recruitment and retention of employees.

In fact, the company's commitment to its workers through paid parental leave has translated into real benefits for Lotus. Ninety percent of respondents said that they feel more loyal to Lotus as a result of its offering paid parental leave. Respondents stated the reasons why this was so in their written comments.

[ Paid parental leave ] shows company commitment to the 'family' which is important (actually critical) to me at this stage in my life. **Without it, I'd leave.** (emphasis mine)
I seriously think I would have accepted a recent job offer if not for Lotus' commitment to supporting families at birth.

They treat me the way I would want to treat them. I am very committed to Lotus.

This program really works towards family and employee happiness...The more the company commits to me, the more I commit to them.

It is a very important reason to stay.

The leave made me feel very good about the company as a whole -- that they valued me.

The statistics and comments like these show how Lotus benefits from offering paid parental leave in that participants are actually more loyal to the company because of the policy.

Paid parental leave can also be a positive factor in increasing productivity levels of working parents. When the company gives working parents the time they need to bond with their newborn, these employees in gratitude often make the most of the time they are on the job.

It comes right down to productivity. If you’ve got an unhappy employee, for whatever reason...then that person is not going to be as productive. My current boss has said this to me a number of times, assuring me that the time I was taking off was valuable time.\footnote{13 Personal interview, 12/17/92.}

I’m more loyal because of [paid parental leave], and I work harder.\footnote{14 Personal interview, 12/17/92.}

Obviously, a happy worker is a productive worker.

The increase in productivity of leave takers is certainly a positive effect for Lotus.
The benefits to the corporation of offering paid parental leave are real and significant. For a company like Lotus which is in an industry plagued by high turnover rates, a policy like paid parental leave that positively influences recruitment, retention, and productivity of employees is highly valuable. One woman’s written response sums up the benefits to Lotus well:

"I rave about Lotus’ benefits such as parenting leave and, despite a long commute, I wouldn’t dream of leaving this company...Companies can no longer promise job security, so parenting leave is an excellent tool for retaining loyalty. Paid is more effective than unpaid...This policy also serves to create a healthier work force and future work force."

A male interviewee also pointed out that positive employer-employee relations could only be a benefit to the company:

"Most companies don’t realize that they can make money by treating their employees well. So they never make enough money to treat their employees well."

A cooperative and supportive workplace will have loyal and productive workers that could only be a positive element in the corporation, whatever situation the company itself is in. Another male interviewee concluded eloquently:

"I recently read something comparing corporate profits to breathing. It said: ‘You need to breath to live, but that’s not why you live.’ In the same way, a company needs to be profitable to survive, but that’s not why the company exists. A lot of companies think that’s the only reason they exist, instead of what they produce, the jobs they provide, and the benefits they give back to their employees and communities."

Paid parental leave is certainly a policy that emphasizes the human needs of workers; we have seen it in turn be beneficial to working parents, families, corporations, and thus, communities.

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15 Personal interview, 12/10/92.

16 Personal interview, 12/17/92.
That Lotus offers a gender-blind, paid leave policy is a rare occurrence among U.S. corporations. At the same time, the paid aspect of Lotus' parental leave program is what gives it such great potential. There are several reasons why the paid aspect is valuable to working parents -- and why an unpaid leave policy would not accrue the same benefits just mentioned. A total of 86% of respondents would have taken less leave time if the policy instead provided four weeks of unpaid parental leave. Of these, about half answered that they would not have taken any leave time if the policy were not paid. One respondent wrote that unpaid leave is for many employees not affordable and therefore useless: "Unless it's paid (at least partially) many of us can't utilize it." The other half said that they would have taken less time if the policy were not paid. These statistics show us how much of a factor pay is when workers decide to take leave.

Participants gave fuller dimension to the significance of the paid aspect of parental leave in their written responses. Many commented on the extra financial burden that children bring to the family that the paid aspect of leave helped to alleviate.

Paid leave really reduced stress levels. We were very grateful for the chance to care for a new baby without financial repercussion.

I would not be able to take four weeks without pay at any time. Especially with a new baby (all the expenses involved) and also a new mortgage three months before she was born.
I would have taken the time off anyway, and borne the financial risk and the risk to the security of my employment, but with great fear and stress. I outearn my husband and our finances would have been greatly affected if it weren’t for paid leave.

For these working parents, the paid aspect of parental leave is not a luxury, but a necessity.

Of the thirteen respondents for whom the paid aspect had no effect on their decision to take leave time or on the pattern of leave that they took, several specifically commented that this was out of the importance of caring for their children at that time. Many would have taken a combination of paid sick, personal, or vacation days during the time off in order to minimize financial stress. However, when people use these other leave policies for parenting purposes, it defeats the original intent of those policies (to provide necessary vacation or sick leave). When parental leave is paid, it allows employees to focus their energies on caring for their newborn without having to worry about financial status. We have already seen what an enormous factor this is in employees’ decision to take leave in the first place. Paid parental leave is therefore more effective at integrating work and family issues than any unpaid parental leave policy could be.

The paid aspect of parental leave is crucial lastly from the perspective of the few single parents there are at Lotus. One single mother in particular brought to life the problem inherent in unpaid leave: single parents or parents from the working class just cannot afford the time off without pay. She said: “That’s a tough choice -- that’s hard. What’s more important: maintaining your economic stability or caring for the people you love? That’s terrible -- that’s a
horrible choice to have to make -- and I'm glad I didn't have to make it."17

Paid parental leave was clearly more helpful to her in integrating work and family issues than any unpaid leave policy could have been.

If the policy were unpaid... If Lotus's policy instead provided four weeks of unpaid parental leave, it would have very little significance to employees or the corporation. An unpaid leave policy does not send the same message as a paid policy -- that the company is overtly supporting the parent in their time off. According to survey responses, only 14% of the current leave takers at Lotus would actually have taken full advantage of an unpaid parental leave policy. Very few of them would likely be men; we have already seen a recent estimate that only 2% of eligible men use unpaid parental leave policies in the United States.18 If the leave time is not financially sanctioned, men empirically do not use it. With such a small participation rate, an unpaid leave policy would not effectively help the population of working parents at Lotus to integrate work and family. Lotus would not make substantial gains in the recruitment, retention, and loyalty of its workers. The benefits of paid parental leave would disappear.

Unpaid parental leave is clearly a step backwards in employee-employer relations. If Lotus were to switch to an unpaid policy, the company and all individuals involved would witness the difference. One male interviewee commented on such a scenario. During his time off on paid leave, he felt as if

17 Personal interview, 12/10/92.
18 Deutschman, 68.
he were a 'virtual employee' because he was constantly checking in with his co-workers in order to maintain his ties to the job. He said that the reason he held such a high level of commitment was because of the positive managerial and financial support he received in taking the leave. Conversely, "If they said [no more paid parental leave], I would take the leave time and I wouldn't bring my PC [personal computer] home with me; I would not do anything. Draw the line there if you want -- don't expect anything. Whereas in this case, I appreciate it, I'm there until midnight, typing away."\textsuperscript{19} His productivity and loyalty to the company would thus have decreased if there were an unpaid leave policy: "It would've been like...I'm not here, I'm not getting paid for being here, I'll see you in a few weeks."\textsuperscript{20} An unpaid leave policy therefore might introduce a level of antagonism in employee-employer relations -- disadvantageous to both sides -- that does not exist with paid parental leave.

The ramifications for the family of not providing paid parental leave are also significant. Consider that beyond the financial aspect, there are emotional implications of parents not taking time off from work to care for their newborn. Fathers would be more affected by such a change in parental leave policy, since women already take six to eight weeks off at birth on short-term disability. One man who could not have afforded an unpaid leave was instead transformed into an active father by his experience as primary caretaker for one month on Lotus's leave. He said that he would not be as active a father as he is now if he had taken less leave: "I would strive [to be an active parent], but I'm not sure that I

\textsuperscript{19} Personal interview, 12/8/92.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
would have the same appreciation for it that I now do if I didn’t have the opportunity to do it myself." He noted: "If the policy had been unpaid...things would definitely have been different. I think the child and I benefitted from the constant interaction during that one month." Many other respondents would have taken little or no leave if the Lotus’s parental leave policy were unpaid. Another man said that he would probably have taken only one week of vacation time if Lotus’ policy were unpaid, which "wouldn’t have allowed me to become an active father at a time when my family really needed me to; I got to get to know the kids; they didn’t just get to know their mother...I think that that closeness would have been missed out on at some level." Paid parental leave facilitates strong family bonding to a magnitude that unpaid leave would just not achieve. This same man concludes: "After being involved, in this program, getting closer with my wife and children -- ‘bonding’ if you will -- without having to worry about bills, I think it should be mandated ASAP."

THE CALL FOR PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

The vast majority of American companies assume the second shift is not an issue for their workers, which does not address the reality of dual-income couples. LouEllen Crawford stated in her analysis of dependent care and

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21 Personal interview, 12/17/92.
22 Ibid.
23 Personal interview, 12/8/92.
employee benefits that "To more fairly distribute worker benefits, then, corporate officers may need to update their views of women's and men's 'proper' roles. 'Proper,' today, should refer to what works best and what is functional for all concerned." Adherence to traditional roles will not help families or corporations; conversely, both groups would gain significant benefits from paid parental leave. The policy would put us well on the way to meeting the real needs of workers in the modern economy.

We have seen how paid parental leave can create enormous benefits for working parents, families, and the corporation. But Lotus is only one company among hundreds of thousands of companies in the United States. If our entire society is to reap the benefits of the policy, the frequency with which it is offered must increase. What possibility is there for paid parental leave to become a national mandate?

ON A NATIONAL POLICY

The Lotus Experience. Lotus leave-takers were asked their opinion on parental leave as a national policy. More than eighty percent of respondents want some kind of national policy for parental leave. Nearly half of all respondents felt that there should be a national policy that applies to all corporations and that it should be paid. From these two statistics alone, we can already see that participants in Lotus's program feel strongly about supporting a national policy. Perhaps the most important point is that Lotus employees took the initiative in bringing such a program into their workplace.
CHAPTER FIVE: PAID PARENTAL LEAVE AS A POLICY DIRECTIVE

Attention to the importance of the family and its concerns cannot be overemphasized...It is the family that is the key nurturing force in our society...But the family is not atomistic; it does not exist as an entity onto itself. It derives support -- social, economic, and political -- from society’s other institutions...Without this support, the family can become dysfunctional.¹

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¹ Crawford, 136.
Respondents explained their desire for a national mandate in their written comments. Many felt that paid parental leave is a crucial way by which policy can work to effectively support social structures in our society:

We need to stop pumping our social support systems with children of broken down families, "broken down" being problematic - not single families - and allow parents to work on helping children become more whole and healthy so that they don’t need social medicine.

Why are people penalized for having a family? With the economy the way it is, you need both parents working. Parenting leave lets them get to know their children before returning to the ‘real world.’

Others felt that the United States is simply long overdue in adopting a policy like paid parental leave:

I think it’s time Corporate America stepped out of the Dark Ages in this regard! Other countries are far ahead of us in these areas.

I’m not a radical feminist, but I feel that if men had babies there would be no question as to parental leave.

Whatever the reason, the majority of respondents feel that a national mandate for paid parental leave is well-justified.

One male respondent felt so strongly about the issue that he submitted an essay with his survey. He concluded that the policy would benefit all parties involved if it became a national mandate; the employee and child because of the time they are given together, and the company because of improved relations with employees. He therefore felt the policy of utmost value to society overall.

If companies recognized the importance of family and supported programs like Paid Parenting Leave, EVERYONE WOULD WIN:

1. The employee would win because he/she would be able to enjoy the new family member. In addition, he/she can use this time to adjust. Although this is a time of great joy, it is also a stressful time because of the major adjustment required in bringing a new person into the family; this

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2 Personal interview, 12/17/92.
time is invaluable in making this transition as smooth as possible.

2. The new family member would win because it would receive additional bonding and love that is so vital in the first few weeks of existence and to a healthy upbringing. The new member also has to go through major adjustments. The parents’ time off helps the new addition make the adjustment that much faster.

3. The company would win too. In most cases, the employee would get a feeling that the company recognizes not only their importance, but appreciates the importance of the family to the employee. This could be the most important "ingredient" in the employer-employee relationship "recipe."

This really could be taken further. One could argue that society wins because of the additional attention and bonding (which is so important in the beginning) that takes place during the parents’ time off. This could mean the difference between a reared child that excels socially, academically and professionally and one that maintains an ever-declining status-quo.

He later added in an interview: "It boils down to there not being that good strong family unit, and kids learning morals and ethics, because no one is home.

You’re not going to get it from day care, you’re only going to get so much from the schools; kids learn from the people whom they are around." A national policy for paid parental leave would send a message that it is no longer legitimate for workplaces to assume that family concerns are not their responsibility -- rather, it would send the message that families need and deserve public support.

Another male respondent went so far as to suggest an incentive scheme in his survey: "This should be supported by tax credits on a sliding scale, with 100% credit for small businesses to somewhere around 50-70% for large corporations. Provisions for auditing the reporting to corporate parental leave data must be kept simple. The program could probably be financed in its

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3 Personal interview, 12/17/92.
entirety by cancelling a few bombers or Star Wars or something like that."

One-third of respondents want a national policy for parental leave but not without restrictions. About half of them would support a nationally mandated policy for unpaid leave. The remainder would support one of the following: a national policy mandating paid leave for large corporations and unpaid leave for small corporations; a national policy mandating paid leave for large corporations only; an unpaid parental leave in large corporations only. Of the minority of respondents who would not support any national policy for parental leave at all, some commented that this was not because they thought it was a bad policy. They are simply against the federal government mandating benefits to the private sector.

The Benefits of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The FMLA was passed in February of 1993. It requires Federal, state, and local governments as well as employers with more than 50 employees to provide twelve weeks of unpaid, job-protected parental leave. This leave must be used within a twelve month period for the birth or adoption of a child, the care of a child, spouse, or parent with a serious health condition, or in the case of the worker's own serious health condition. It is available to both male and female employees who have been employed for at least one year and for at least 25 hours per week. The employee must be able to return to the same job or equivalent position upon returning from leave. Health insurance would have to be maintained over the period of leave, but the employer may ask that such premiums be repaid if the worker does not return. The FMLA will take effect in August of 1993.
The FMLA represents a major step forward in work-family legislation. Culturally, it legitimizes the private demands in workers’ lives. One author wrote that this would aid our economy by encouraging workforce participation: "labor policy promoting entry into the labor force and, most importantly, keeping those entrants steadily employed has positive effects on the economy. The intent of the Family and Medical Leave Act is to do just that." Parental leave might thus help our nation’s economy by facilitating the utilization of the maximum potential of workers.

Businesses, however, have generally been reluctant to support the FMLA. They will, however, have less to fear with regard to providing parental leave than they often think. Dade County, Florida, has had a law very similar to the FMLA in place for over a year now. A recent article from The New York Times claims that "many of the 2,500 businesses covered by the law say it is less expensive than anticipated and actually increases worker satisfaction and productivity." This finding is reinforced by other studies, such as one conducted by economics professors at Cornell University and the University of Connecticut which found that "the costs of allowing such leaves for most workers is less than letting them quit and hiring permanent replacements."

One personnel director of a 600 employee company in Dade County says: "We had reservations about being told what we could and couldn’t do, but it hasn’t

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4 Crawford, 116.
6 Labich, 52.
really had any affect on us."7 A human resources official from a Dade County
Burger King noted: "'Not only do you get a tremendous amount of loyalty, since
they know they can come back to their job, but from the productivity
perspective you get more done because they come back refreshed" -- he adds:
"'This has been nothing but positive for us."8 Companies have actually gained
more productive and loyal workers as a result of providing a policy that supports
work and family integration.

What opponents of the FMLA should further realize is that without a
federally mandated policy, all taxpayers absorb the ultimate costs. Without the
program, many workers experience severe loss of income or unemployment.
People in such situations must then turn to welfare policies such as
unemployment insurance, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and food
stamps, which are all funded through national taxes.

A study performed by the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that
the costs of not having a nationally mandated policy for parental leave are in
fact greater than if there were one.9 Without the policy, workers are left
unemployed when they take time to care for their children. Workers suffer from
wage loss, society suffers from the loss in productivity due to their
unemployment, and taxpayers must bear the costs of welfare, food stamps, and
unemployment insurance. FMLA might therefore create a new financial cost for

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7 "In Florida, Family Bill Wins Converts," The New York Times (5
February 1993), A14.

8 Ibid.

9 Heidi I. Hartmann and Roberta M. Spalter-Roth, Family and
Medical Leave: Who Pays for the Lack of It? (Washington, D.C.: The
Women's Research and Education Institute, 1989), 23.
employers that do not already have provisions for parental leave, but in fact decrease the overall economic costs to society.

The Limitations of FMLA. While the FMLA does represent significant progress for working parents in the United States, it does not provide the same benefits as paid parental leave. For the very reason that it is an unpaid leave, we could not expect to see the same magnitude of benefits that we saw at Lotus for working parents, families, or the corporation. Unpaid leave is not actively used by men -- it would therefore not encourage either co-parenting or equality in the workplace for working parents. Unpaid leave is also not accessible to working class or single parents -- the workers who need decent leave programs the most. Further, with its restrictions, the FMLA only covers about half of this country's workers. Very few of them would actively take advantage of the legislation; most would find that the policy has little active significance to them as they try to integrate career and family. In effect, the FMLA is job protection and little more. While employers can be pleased that there is little abuse of the policy since most employees cannot afford twelve weeks off without pay, this also means that the policy would have a much smaller effect on the recruitment, retention, and productivity of workers.

STATE POLICIES

Previous to the passage of the FMLA, 25 states and the District of Columbia had passed some form of family-leave legislation. However, when
assessing the following list of state provisions one must be aware that in practice these leaves are used almost exclusively by women. Whenever men do take time off for parenting, it is most often by using their accrued sick and vacation time (which are paid leaves), or by arranging an informal paid leave with permission from their supervisor. Very rarely do they actually use the unpaid parental leave mandated by state law. The lack of male participation in state parental leave programs is a function of two barriers we have discussed: financial necessity (when it is unpaid) and attitudinal barriers. These factors have proven to be significant for men in the states that have mandated unpaid parental leave.

The unpaid leave that some states mandate also creates significant discrepancies with regard to the class of workers who use it. This phenomenon was evident in an empirical study by the Families and Work Institute of four states that have mandated parental leave: Minnesota, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin. The Families and Work Institute study was done on women who had children a few months before and women who had children a few months after the state laws were implemented. It found that women from lower-income households were (1) less likely to know their rights under the parenting leave laws; (2) substantially less likely to even take leaves of absence in comparison to their more affluent peers; (3) more likely to take shorter leaves on average, and more likely to take less than the medically recommended six weeks for recuperation. The primary reason for this is financial necessity,

10 Bond, 14.

11 Ibid, 75.
since the leaves are unpaid in three of the four states. Rhode Island is the exception; it was the only state in the study to provide partial wage replacement (for mothers only). It actually had contrasting trends to the ones just mentioned with regard to lower-income women.

The benefits from mandating paid leave were evident in Rhode Island. Of the four states examined in the Families and Work Institute study, the women from Rhode Island were least likely to take fewer than the medically recommended six weeks of leave after childbirth. In fact, no lower-income women in Rhode Island took fewer than six weeks off after childbirth after the legislation was implemented. In the other states, 19% of poor women took fewer than six weeks of leave. Even more importantly, in the other three states poor women often took equal or less time off than women in better economic positions. Lower-income women in Rhode Island took an average of 13 weeks of leave compared to the 9.4 weeks on average taken by lower-income women in other states. The Rhode Island policy of partial wage replacement was thus a significant determinant of how much time poorer women could take off from work to care for their children. Its existence has an equalizing influence in that it reduces the disparity between lower and higher income women in their ability to afford to take leave.

In the entire United States, only five states have a paid form of leave that is covered under their Temporary Disability Insurance plans (TDI): California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island. TDI is significant to any

\[12 \text{ Ibid., 76.}
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\[13 \text{ Hyde and Essex, 79.}
\]
study of parental leave because it gives us an example of how a paid leave program might be administered. The plan gives partial wage replacement to workers during disability leaves, with a higher replacement rate for lower-income workers. However, with regard to parental leave, TDI provides wage replacement only to mothers (not fathers). Since TDI is by definition for disability leaves, it is thus in practice only applied as part of maternity leave, not gender-neutral parental leave. The key distinction is between time used directly following birth for the mother’s body to heal (maternity leave, which is often categorized with short-term disability policies) and the time used for mother and father to care for the child (parental leave). Hence, the paid aspect of TDI is wage reimbursement for women, not men. It is therefore not the same policy I examined in my empirical study and does not affect the basic division of caregiving responsibilities in the home -- let alone perceptions of committed parents in the workforce.

Problems with State Policies. While certain states have made progress in developing parental leave policies, none of them represent the potential for change that paid parental leave does. Just as with the FMLA, the states with mandated unpaid parental leave fail to eliminate the class barriers that prevent working class and single parents from utilizing the policy. These state policies

14 The funding schemes for TDI programs are different for each state, but are based in all cases upon contributions from the employer, employee, or the two combined. The Rhode Island TDI plan is financed by employee contributions unless the employer voluntarily contributes -- perhaps as part of a benefit package to employees. The state government administers the policy. The funding schemes for all five states have been budgeted successfully without running a deficit (Bond, 69).
also fail to eliminate the cultural stigmas associated with unpaid leave time that prevent many working fathers from actively participating in the programs. Even the states that have partial reimbursement through TDI face the problem that their policies do not apply to working fathers.

There is therefore a distinct possibility that the states with parental leave policies now would see little of the benefits of paid parental leave. Because working fathers do not utilize the program, there is little facilitation of co-parenting. There is also no institutionalized understanding in the workplace that it is not just working mothers who have children and need support, but also working fathers. The stigmas of the "mommy track" will continue to perpetuate the problems for working women who must also take responsibility for the "second shift." Given the increasing significance of women in the workforce, this will only hurt our country's productivity. Parents will continue to find it difficult to combine career and family, since unpaid leave is of little practical use to them. Lastly, corporations will therefore not see the magnitude of benefits due to increased employee loyalty and productivity that paid leave creates.

THE CORPORATE PERSPECTIVE

The Families and Work Institute study provides us with an excellent opportunity to examine how mandating a policy like parental leave would affect employers. In all states that have some form of mandated maternity or parental leave policy, the exemption level for companies (by number of employees) varies. While the strongest opponents to a parental leave policy come from the...
corporate sector, the empirical findings show that companies do obtain significant benefits from such programs.

Companies who oppose parental leave fear the costs that would be associated with administering the program, obtaining and training temporary employees to replace those on leave, and providing continued health insurance to employees on leave. The Families and Work Institute study, however, confirmed that these costs would in fact not be such a threat to companies.

Employers did not have difficulty implementing the state legislation. Ninety-one percent responded that they had no problems -- perhaps because many already had maternity policies that were not too far out of line with the legislation. Second, the vast majority of employers did not report substantial increases in costs due to training, administration, or health insurance. Third, small companies did not have any more difficulty in complying with the laws than did larger corporations -- nor were they more likely to experience an increase in costs from the legislation. Therefore, implementing a mandated leave policy has not been significantly problematic for corporations in practice.

Many companies express major concern over costs related to hiring temporary workers to replace those on leave. However, the U.S. Small Business Administration has found that, when the employee is at the managerial level, 60% of companies with 1 to 15 employees and 80% of all larger firms instead redistribute the employee’s workload among existing workers while he

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15 Bond, 57.
16 Ibid., 53.
17 Ibid, 54.
or she is on leave. If the employee is non-managerial, 70% of companies redistributed work instead of hiring outside help.\footnote{Ibid., 10.} The Families and Work Institute study found that 67% of employers in the four-state study assigned work temporarily to another employee, and only 23% hired outside temporary replacements.\footnote{Ibid., 50.} The most frequent method of coverage is therefore to reassign work within the company.

Corporations have therefore little to fear with regard to implementing unpaid leave policies for their employees. However, they should realize that they could actually benefit from providing working parents with supportive policies. A recent survey of companies with dependent care policies found that they experienced significant gains with regard to "Improved morale, reduced absenteeism and turnover, and improved productivity."\footnote{Crawford, 43.} Corporations may also benefit from better recruitment and retention of employees. For example, Honeywell, Inc. offers a variety of family benefits programs including an on-site elementary school, sick-child care, and parental leave. It estimated that for every dollar invested in these programs, the company would gain a return of $2.50 -- a goal that was achieved in only one and one-half years because of savings from replacement, recruitment, and retention of workers. It would otherwise take \textit{ten years} to recover the costs of recruiting and training a high-level engineer.\footnote{Gloria Jacobs, "The Search for Sick-Child Care," \textit{Working Mother} (November 1992), 84.} Companies that discriminate against workers who wish to be
active parents are making the mistake of judging their employees not by their potential for productivity on the job, but by their commitment to their families. Such discrimination is absolutely cost-inefficient not only because it fails to focus on what the worker can contribute as an individual, but also because it hides other inefficiencies (i.e. costs) to the company itself.

Statewide studies have also found that parental leave does not hurt corporate productivity. In a study of seven states with parental leave policies versus seven without it that have a pro-business climate, the National Association of Working Women found that the states which mandated parental leave had an economic growth rate that was 21% higher than the other states. Small businesses in the states with parental leave experienced more growth than small businesses in the other states. Several capitalist countries in which profit and productivity are of major concern have nationally mandated paid or unpaid parental leave. For example, Canada offers parents six months of unpaid leave; France offers two years of unpaid leave to parents in firms with over one hundred employees; Italy offers partial reimbursements to both parents for up to six months of leave apiece. Parental leave has empirically not been a drag on productivity and profits.

Companies should further find parental leave to be a cost effective policy with their female employees by simple calculations of return on investment. The Families and Work Institute study found that 85% of biological mothers

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22 Hyde and Essex, 169.
23 Zigler, 238-241.
returned to work to the same employer after their leaves.24 "The more family-friendly the workplace, the more likely the mothers were to return."25 A fact that increases the significance of this statistic is that by the time the typical career woman in the U.S. has a child, she is on average thirty-one years old.26 That means that she has been in the workforce full time for nearly ten years (since she probably graduated at age 22 from college). Ten years is ample time to have had training and experience in a career of choice. The working woman at this point is a valuable employee with skills and accomplishments that probably involved a great deal of investment by the corporation. If the company is to make best use of that investment after the woman has a child, it would be most wise (and profitable) to try to retain her. By giving the working mother flexibility and showing the company's commitment to her, a given corporation may retain greater numbers of women through their childbearing years. These years also coincide with the beginning of professional maturity, during which a worker may be most productive.

IN CONCLUSION

When we assess the changing demographics of this country, it becomes obvious that working women have an increasingly significant place in the workforce. However, these women face structural and attitudinal barriers when

24 Bond, 71.
25 Ibid., vii.
26 Schwartz, 67.
they try to combine a rewarding career with an enriching family experience.

Traditional sex roles dictate that they assume full responsibility for the "second shift" -- which forces many of them out of the workforce, into lower status jobs, or into divorce. Women cannot become full participants in the workforce until the private sphere of work also becomes de-gendered.

With the current status of most parental leave in the United States, working parents have little policy support to create co-parenting situations. The problem remains that even for men who want to become active fathers, the workplace provides few support mechanisms to overcome traditional cultural barriers. Unpaid leave will certainly not accomplish the change; financially, most parents cannot afford it, and culturally, it does not legitimize the time workers might take off to parent in the same manner that paid parental leave does. There is strong empirical proof that men do not make active use of unpaid leave policies, even when they are explicitly gender-blind. But current policy only mandates unpaid leave on a wide-scale basis.

The change that a paid parental leave policy could effect would create major benefits for several different parties. First, it would make the workplace more understanding and supportive of the demands on working parents. It would encourage men to assert themselves as working fathers, which would help to eliminate the biases against women in the workplace since they have traditionally been the ones responsible for caregiving. Second, it would aid working mothers also by providing concrete support mechanisms to facilitate co-parenting. If more families could establish co-parenting situations, women in dual-career couples would not face as much conflict as they try to integrate
work and family. Third, it would positively affect corporations and productivity in this nation overall. We have already seen that Lotus employees claim to be more loyal and productive on-the-job as a direct result of the company having offered them paid parental leave. On a nation-wide scale, our economy would benefit from this and from the long-term participation of women in the workforce.

The Lotus case study provided us with key evidence of the positive effects that paid parental leave can bring about for working parents, families, and corporations. Though traditional sex roles are prevalent among participants in Lotus’s program, the population of leave takers are significant in that they are what Hochschild calls transitional figures. They do not adhere to traditional sex role ideologies, but are in fact in different stages of moving towards an equal division of labor in the home. Paid parental leave often made the difference in encouraging men to take an active role in fathering their children. The men at Lotus, relative to the cultural norm, have been active and enthusiastic in the care of their children.

In surveys and interviews, Lotus fathers expressed the transformative effect that paid parental leave had on their parenting behavior. Men who would otherwise have fallen into the traditional male parenting role as "observer":

instead: (1) felt encouraged to take time off to parent; (2) gained an understanding of the demands of children; (3) found the leave a valuable "bonding" time with their family; (4) changed their outlook on work and family as a result. Paid parental leave valorizes what has traditionally been women’s work: in paying parents for the time spent caring for their children, the
corporation is legitimizing an activity that has never really been acknowledged in the public sphere of work. Yet it is invaluable to our society that we pay special importance to raising our children. The valorization of this activity lies at the heart of the benefits that paid parental leave can create.

When we compare the Lotus study with the Swedish case, we see further evidence of the potential of paid parental leave in this country. Though Sweden has a national mandate for paid parental leave, men there have not made active use of the policy. The difference at Lotus is that a portion of male leave takers there were interested in becoming active fathers and used their time on paid parental leave to establish co-parenting in their family. Several women at Lotus have wished that paid parental leave were available to their husbands such that a co-parenting situation might also be established in their families. Dual-career couples need policy support if they are to successfully combine work and family, and paid parental leave is the one policy that can facilitate such integration at the very beginning of parenthood.

Working parents have for decades lived a reality that corporations for the most part have not acknowledged: that of the dual-career couple. Due to changing demographics, it is imperative that work structures start to reflect this reality -- not only for the sake of working women, but also to ensure this nation's productivity. Paid parental leave is a policy that would effectively facilitate work and family integration for working mothers and fathers. By supporting equality in the division of labor at home, it would also encourage equality in the workplace. The private demands of workers would be
legitimized, and families could resort to stable support mechanisms in times of need. Corporations would also benefit from the increase in productivity and worker loyalty that would result from paid parental leave. In the end, the policy could only be a positive element in society. After all, the ultimate benefit of paid parental leave is a society in which work and family structures harmoniously support success in both public and private spheres of life.
Lotus Corporate Policy

PARENTING LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Policy Number - HR 8.08
Policy Dated 07/01/91 - Supersedes policy dated: 11/01/90

POLICY SUMMARY

Lotus recognizes that today's workforce is changing. Many Lotus employees are at a stage in their lives when they are trying to balance the relationship between work and family. The company is pleased to offer a plan that will address the issues of new parenthood, and that will protect the employment status and benefits of Lotus employees who take a leave of absence because of pregnancy or adoption.

Lotus is also aware that later in child development it may be necessary for an employee to take a leave of absence because of an emotional or physical hardship with a son or daughter. A parenting leave may be available for this purpose, if discussed with and approved by the employee's manager and Human Resources.

Various leave options are available for eligible employees requesting parenting leave, and can be explained by the Human Resources staff in detail. The options are more extensive if the employee has been at Lotus longer than one year as of the anticipated effective date of the parenting leave. All leave arrangements must be made in advance by discussing the options with the employee's manager and Human Resources. Final approval of any leave arrangement rests with the manager, in concurrence with the Human Resources Department.

POLICY

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Lotus is also aware that later in child development it may be necessary for an employee to take a leave of absence because of an emotional or physical hardship with a son or daughter. A parenting leave may be available for this purpose, and would be mutually agreed upon with the manager and Human Resources.

The following leave options are available to Lotus employees experiencing new parenthood:

Men or women, employed at Lotus less than one year, may receive:

* For women, short term disability, for up to six weeks for normal delivery, provided submission and approval of appropriate medical documentation. Leave may be extended for caesarean section delivery or other pregnancy-related medical reason.

* For women, Long term disability leave, if medically unable to return to work after short term disability expires and benefit approval by long-term disability carrier.

* Use of any accrued vacation time.

* Unpaid personal leave of absence not to exceed four weeks OR a flexible work schedule for a maximum of three months.
Men or women employed at Lotus one year or longer may receive:

* For women, short-term disability, for up to six weeks for normal delivery, provided submission and approval of appropriate medical documentation. Leave may be extended for cesarean section delivery or other pregnancy-related medical reason.

* For women, long-term disability, if medically unable to return to work after short term disability expires and benefit approval by long-term disability carrier.

* Up to four weeks paid parenting leave which accrue at a rate of 2.5 days per month for full-time employees, from the one year anniversary date until the date the leave commences, to a maximum of 20 days. (Not available to women during periods of actual disability.)

* Use of any accrued vacation time.

* Unpaid personal leave of absence not to exceed four weeks OR a flexible work schedule for a maximum of three months.

An adoptive parent employed at Lotus less than one year may receive:

* Use of any accrued vacation time.

* Unpaid personal leave of absence not to exceed four weeks or a flexible work schedule for a maximum of three months.

A male or female adopting a child, employed at Lotus one year or longer, may receive:

* Up to four weeks paid parenting leave after placement of the child in the home. Days accrue at the rate of 2.5 per month for full-time employees, from the one year anniversary date until the date the leave commences, to a maximum of 20 days.

* Use of any accrued vacation time.

* Unpaid personal leave of absence not to exceed four weeks or a flexible work schedule for a maximum of three months.

Employees are paid for the parenting leave when they return to Lotus and have worked 20 regularly scheduled workdays.

When there are discretionary aspects of an individual's leave, the arrangements will be mutually agreed upon by the employee and the manager, through the Human Resources Department, taking into account the needs of each party and the following criteria:

* Length of employment at Lotus

* Strength and consistency of past performance

* Current workforce needs in the employee's department

* Ease of transfer of the employee's existing workload to other employees

* General economic needs of the company

Final approval of any leave arrangement rests with the manager, in concurrence with the Human Resources Department.
We have made an investment in the individuals in the company by offering equitable compensation and a progressive benefits package. In return, we expect employees to communicate with us and show a commitment to the company. In terms of parenting leaves, this means discussing and mutually agreeing on work and leave arrangements in advance, and informing the manager and Human Resources Department of any potential changes. In addition, we require a commitment that the employee eventually will return to work full time, or, if impossible, that the employee will return on a temporary basis until a replacement can be hired. Employees sign a parenting leave agreement when arranging for leave, so that we can document that they have been fully informed of the terms of the leave. The agreement becomes a part of the employees' personnel file.

**SCOPE**

Exempt and non-exempt Lotus employees working 20 hours or more are eligible. Excluded from the policy are regular employees working less than 20 hours a week, agency temps, Lotus temps, contract employees, students, and interns working on a temporary basis at Lotus.

**DEFINITIONS**

**Adoption**

The placement of a child in a home by a licensed adoption agency.

**Benefits**

Included in the benefits addressed in this policy are vacation leave, illness and personal days, health and life insurance, the vesting of stock options and the Futures Program.

**Flexible work schedule**

A mutually agreed upon arrangement where the employee works a schedule that is different than the usual, permanent schedule. A flexible work schedule is not a possibility in every case, and may be used only when the manager determines that the schedule is compatible with the department goals and the employee's job demands. Variations may include fewer hours or days per week, work at home, or longer hours and fewer days per week. This type of schedule may be used for a maximum period of twelve weeks and is not available in addition to an unpaid personal leave of absence. Benefit accrual ceases if the scheduled arrangement amounts to less than 20 hours per week.

**Long -Term Disability**

A leave of absence for medical reasons that is documented by a physician's statement, and approved by the long-term disability carrier. The employee receives 67% of her base pay while on long term disability. A doctor's statement that the employee is able to return to work is required before the employee can begin working again. Life insurance coverage continues during this time. Health insurance coverage continues under the current option for two years, until becoming Medicare eligible at which time coverage may be extended through COBRA. Lotus will use its best efforts to find the employee a comparable position upon return.

**Parenting Leave**

Up to four weeks of paid leave are available to care for the child. To be eligible for parenting leave, the employee must have been with the company for at least one year. A full-time employee accrues 2.5 days for every month between the one year anniversary date and the anticipated commencement of leave, to a
maximum of 20 days. Part-time employees will accrue parenting leave on a pro-rated basis determined by the number of hours scheduled to work. (Reference H.R. 8.0). Benefits will continue during this time and the employee is guaranteed her/his job upon return. Upon return from parenting leave, the accrual process is reactivated. Time taken for parenting leave does not count toward Sabbatical eligibility.

Employees who are rehired must satisfy the one year eligibility waiting period before parenting leave accrual may commence.

**Personal Leave of Absence**

An unpaid leave that is arranged in advance and may not exceed four weeks. A personal leave is possible only when the manager determines that the leave is compatible with department goals and the employee's job demands. Personal leave is not available in addition to a flexible work schedule. Benefits are effected by a personal leave. (See policy.) Lotus will use its best efforts to find the employee a comparable job at the end of leave.

**Short Term Disability**

A leave of absence of up to 90 days for medical reasons, documented by a physician's statement on or before leave onset. Six weeks after the birth is the usual length of leave for childbirth. Two additional weeks is considered usual for caesarean section delivery.

The employee is paid her full salary or wage during the first four weeks of short term disability; she is paid 67% of her salary or wage for the duration of the leave. Benefits continue in the usual manner.

The physician must verify in writing that the employee is able to return to work. The employee is guaranteed the same or a similar job upon return. If the employee is still unable to return to work after short term disability expires, she may apply for long-term disability benefits.

**Application of Policy**

Any leave arrangement (other than short and long term disability) must be mutually agreed upon in advance with the employee's manager and the Human Resources Department. The decision will take into account the employee's needs as a parent, the work demands of the employee's job, and whether the department can spare the employee for the amount of time being discussed.

The employee is expected to give two weeks notice of the anticipated commencement of leave, if possible, so that the Human Resources Department and the employee's manager can process the paperwork and make arrangements for a temporary replacement if necessary.

To document the leave arrangements, the following paperwork must be completed:

**Leave Agreement**

Employees taking parenting leave must sign an agreement with the Human Resources Department detailing the leave arrangements and outlining the responsibilities of both Lotus and the employee. A copy is forwarded to Payroll with a Disability Payroll Authorization Form attached if applicable.

**Proof of Adoption**

An employee adopting a child will submit proof that the child has been placed in the home with the approval of a licensed adoption agency.

Once the employee returns to work, any merit increases are pro-rated to take into account the amount of time during the merit review period that the employee was not working.
REFERENCES

* Benefits Specialist in the Human Resources Department

* For more details on short and long term disability leaves, personal leave of absence, illness days, and vacation leave, refer to the full policies on each subject.

Lotus is one of only two corporations in the entire state of Massachusetts with paid parental leave. It is one of only a handful of corporations in the United States with the policy. Having been a participant, you are therefore in a small minority of working Americans who have been able to experience the affects it may have on children, the family unit, and the workplace.

Through this survey and also follow-up interviews with those of you who will agree to it, I would like to learn directly from you how important the policy of paid parental leave can be. Please be as specific and as candid as possible when answering the following questions, and feel free to add any additional comments. Your identity will be kept completely confidential. I have included a self-addressed envelope with which you may mail your responses directly to me by November 25.

If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview (to be scheduled at your convenience), please put down your work number here so that I can contact you in the future:

1. Please list your age:

2. Are you: Male Female

3. What is your ethnic background?
   African-American
   Asian-American
   Caucasian
   Hispanic
   Native-American
   Other

4. What is your current marital status?
   Married
   Divorced
   Separated
   Remarried
   Widowed
   Living with someone
I would like to thank all of you who have agreed to participate in this survey for your time and input. My name is Karen Park and I am a researcher at Harvard University. I am performing an empirical study, the central component of which is on the policy of paid parental leave. Lotus is one of only two corporations in the entire state of Massachusetts with paid parental leave. It is one of only a handful of corporations in the United States with the policy. Having been a participant, you are therefore in a small minority of working Americans who have been able to experience the effects the policy may have on children, the family unit, and the workplace. Through this survey and also through follow-up interviews with those of you who will agree to it, I would like to learn directly from you how important the policy of paid parental leave can be, Please be as specific and as candid as possible when answering the following questions. I will be kept completely confidential. I have included a self-addressed stamped envelope with which you may mail your responses directly to me. If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview, please put down your work number here so that I can contact you in the future.

1. Please list your age:

2. Are you:
   - Male ______
   - Female ______

3. What is your ethnic background?
   - African-American ______
   - Asian-American ______
   - Caucasian ______
   - Hispanic ______
   - Native-American ______
   - Other ______

4. What is your current marital status?
   - Married ______
   - Separated ______
   - Divorced ______
   - Widowed ______
   - Remarried ______
   - Living with someone ______

5. What is your current marital status?
   - Single ______
   - Living with someone ______

APPENDIX B
5. Please list the current ages of all your children and place a check by those for whom you used the parental leave program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Used Parental Leave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. What is your educational background?
- High school or less _____
- Some college _____
- Finished college _____
- Some graduate school _____
- Completed graduate school _____

7. Please list your current function at Lotus:

Are you:
- Exempt _____
- Non-exempt _____
- Managerial _____
- Non-managerial _____

8. Do you view your work as:
- A job _____
- A career _____

9. Are you working towards promotional opportunities at Lotus in the near future? (Check one)
- Yes (on a fast-track of promotion) _____
- Yes (moderately paced advancement) _____
- No (expecting little change) _____

10. What is your spouse’s or partner’s educational background?
- High school or less _____
- Some college _____
- Finished college _____
- Some graduate school _____
- Completed graduate school _____

11. Does your spouse or partner work? If yes, please list his or her profession.

[Please answer the following questions accordingly.]
Our experiences from growing up often have a major influence on how we now lead our lives. In this next section I therefore inquire about your family background and your views on gender roles.

12. What kind of household did you grow up in?
   two parent
   one parent, father
   one parent, mother
   other (please explain)

[Please answer the following questions accordingly.]

13. Did your mother work outside the home?
   Yes _______ No _______
   a. Prior to her marriage _______ _______
   b. After her marriage _______ _______
   c. After having children _______ _______

14. If yes to any part, would you say your mother considered her work:
   A job _______
   A career _______

15. Did your father work full time?
   Yes _______ No _______

16. Did he consider his work:
   A job _______
   A career _______

17. What was the educational background of your parent(s)?
   High school or less
   Father _______ Mother _______
   Some college
   Father _______ Mother _______
   Some graduate school
   Father _______ Mother _______
   Finished graduate school
   Father _______ Mother _______

18. Did you model your own career after your:
   mother _______
   father _______
   neither _______
   both _______
   other; please explain:
19. Who was most active in raising you?
   mother _______
   father _______
   neither _______
   both _______
   other; please explain:

20. Did you model your own parenting behavior after:
   neither parent _______
   both parents equally _______
   more after my mother _______
   more after my father _______

The paid parental leave program gives parents more freedom in pursuing an active parenting role while still maintaining a career. This section asks about potential conflicts between parenting and career demands.

21. How often do you experience significant conflicts between yourself as a parent and also as a working professional?
   Seldom (once a week or less) _______
   Occasionally (several times a week) _______
   Often (daily) _______
   Comments:

22. Did Lotus' paid parental leave program help to establish any long term co-parenting behavior in your family?
23. Do you think that **women** are discouraged from being a mother **and** a working woman at the same time by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Associates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. Do you think that **men** are discouraged from being an active father **and** a successful professional at the same time by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Associates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. To what degree, if any, would you say **women** who plan to have a career like yours have to sacrifice some aspects of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Minor</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of children to parent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of time spent with family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A good marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The smooth running of a household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. To what degree, if any, would you say **men** who plan to have a career like yours have to sacrifice some aspects of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Minor</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of children to parent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of time spent with family</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The smooth running of a household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. Has paid parental leave affected your opinion on differences in amounts of responsibility between men and women at home and at comparable work levels? Please explain.
28. Do you believe that women today have equal job opportunities compared with men?
   Completely equal _____
   Somewhat equal _____
   Not at all equal _____

29. Do you believe that the paid parental leave program fosters equality in the workplace by supporting active parenting by both genders? Please explain.

In this last section, please tell me how you personally have utilized Lotus' paid parental leave program and your subsequent views of the policy.

30. How long did you or your partner take for maternity leave? Please check the appropriate spaces according to length of leave taken for each child under a disability program (if applicable).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child #1</th>
<th>#2</th>
<th>#3</th>
<th>#4</th>
<th>#5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Six weeks or less</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six weeks or more</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If more than six weeks, how many weeks?</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31. How much time in total and in what segments have you taken off through the paid parental leave program (after maternity leave)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child #1</th>
<th>Time in total</th>
<th>Continuous Days</th>
<th>Non-continuous Days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child #2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child #3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child #4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child #5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
32. Did the maternity leave arrangement for any given child affect how you took parental leave? Please explain.

33. How important was the paid aspect of parental leave in your decision to take advantage of the program:
   I would not have taken any otherwise ______
   I would have taken less time ______
   no effect ______
   Comments:

34. With respect to child care, would you say you have:
   Primary responsibility ______
   Caregiving responsibilities equally shared ______
   Secondary responsibility ______

35. Has the paid parental leave program affected how you and your partner have since patterned the division of child care responsibilities? Please explain.
36. Do you feel that you are encouraged to take advantage of the paid parental leave program by your corporate culture? Has Lotus become more (or less) supportive of both men and women using the program over the past several years? Please explain.
   
37. How is the program perceived by non-participants?
   - positive support
   - indifference
   - negative feelings
   Comments:

38. Do you feel that your company’s paid parental leave program shows that your company has a strong commitment to meeting the needs of its workers?
   - yes
   - no
   Comments: paid leave for large corporations only

39. If yes, do you feel a stronger commitment to the company as a result?
   - yes
   - no
   Comments:
40. Do you feel that any of your decisions related to taking advantage of your corporation's paid parental leave policy have impeded or delayed you in your professional growth?
   Very much ______
   Slightly ______
   Not at all ______
   Comments:

41. If you could change anything about your company's paid parental leave program, what would it be? Please explain.

42. Do you think that there should be a nationally mandated policy for parental leave?
   yes for paid leave ______
   yes for unpaid leave ______
   yes for paid leave for large corporations only ______
   yes for unpaid leave for large corporations only ______
   no ______
   Comments:

If you did not do so earlier, please reconsider giving me your telephone number so that I may talk with you further (see front page). Once again, I thank you for your time and input.
APPENDIX C

I framed each interview according to four basic themes:

THE FACTORS SURROUNDING THE USAGE OF LEAVE:
Why did you choose your particular leave pattern (length; continuous or non-continuous)? What was your workload at the time? Were there any problems in obtaining managerial approval? How significant was the paid aspect of leave?

WHAT EFFECTS THE LEAVE HAD ON CHILD CARE:
Did paid parental leave influence the way in which child care is divided in your family? How is household work divided?

WHAT EFFECTS THE LEAVE HAD ON CAREER/JOB PERFORMANCE:
Did taking paid parental leave affect your career in any way? your productivity/on-the-job performance?

WHAT EFFECTS THE LEAVE HAS ON THE WORKPLACE:
How might Lotus benefit from having offered you this policy? If more men took paid parental leave and were consequently more active in childrearing, would it affect achievement and promotional opportunities for women at work?


Capozzi, Marla. Personal interview. 11/6/92.


Duval, Diane. Personal interview. 9/29/92.


"Family-Leave Bill Passes the Senate and Nears Signing." *The New York Times*


