

# EMPLOYEE AWARENESS OF FAMILY LEAVE BENEFITS: The Effects of Family, Work, and Gender

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The 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was intended to help employees meet short-term family demands, such as caring for children and elderly parents, without losing their jobs. However, recent evidence suggests that few women and even fewer men employees avail themselves of family leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act. This paper examines the organizational, worker status, and salience/need factors associated with knowledge of family leave benefits. We study employees covered by the FMLA using the 1996 panel of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth to ascertain what work and family factors influence knowledge of leave benefits. Overall, 91 percent of employed FMLA-eligible women report they have access to unpaid family leave, compared to 72 percent of men. Logistic regression analyses demonstrate that work situations more than family situations affect knowledge of family leave benefits and that gender shapes the impact of some work and family factors on awareness. Furthermore, work and family situations do not explain away the considerable gender difference in knowledge of family leave.

How do working families balance the demands of home life and paid work? Families of all types are more pressured than ever to make choices between work and home (Jacobs and Gerson 2001). For example, the *New York Times* recently reported that “for the first time since the Census Bureau began tracking the numbers, families in which both parents are working have become the majority even among the most traditional families: married couples with children” (Lewin 2000; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2002). In addition to more adult family members working, there is some evidence to suggest that employees are working more hours in a day or week (Schor 1991; Presser 1999; cf. Jacobs and Gerson 2001). Given these trends, it is no surprise that families in the United States are finding it increasingly difficult to successfully balance home and workplace demands (Hochschild 1989, 1997; Galinsky, Bond, and Friedman 1993; Bond, Galinsky, and Swanberg 1998; Milkie and Peltola 1999).

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Attempts to balance work and family demands are likely to be especially challenging for women who are working more in the paid economy than ever before and yet still perform the bulk of unpaid household labor. At the close of the twentieth century, women made up 46 percent of the total civilian labor force and 41 percent of full-time, year-round employees (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999a, table 652; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999b, table 7, 28–29). At the same time, men have been slow to make commensurate increases in their contributions to household work and childcare. Women spend fewer hours on housework today (Bianchi, Milkie, and Sayer 2000), but they still do more than men regardless of how many hours they work for pay (Burden and Googins 1987; Shelton 1992; Gerson 1993; South and Spitze 1994; Heath, Ciscel, and Sharp 1998).

Taking care of children and elderly parents is perhaps the most pressing family-related demand for working families, and the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA; United States Public Law 103-03) represents a legislative attempt to help workers respond to these demands without being penalized at work. The FMLA mandates that employers with 50 or more workers must offer their employees job-protected, unpaid leave of up to 12 weeks to take care of a newborn, a sick or newly adopted child, or a spouse or parent or to tend to the employee's personal serious medical condition. Employees exempted from FMLA coverage include workers who have worked less than 1,250 hours for their current employer and "essential" workers who are defined as those in the top 10 percent of the payroll. The law passed in 1993 covers only 55 percent of the U.S. workforce and just 10 percent of private sector workplaces (Commission on Family and Medical Leave 1996). Many thought the FMLA policy would make a difference in the lives of working women and men. A reason for this optimism is that the law intentionally extended coverage for family and emergency medical needs to men workers, not only women workers, as in the past (Elving 1995).

In reality, little evidence shows that the FMLA has had a major impact on workers' lives (Waldfogel 1999). A congressionally appointed commission found that a small percentage of working women and practically no working men availed themselves of unpaid leave for family or medical emergencies. Only 3.6 percent of employees in covered workplaces took leave under the FMLA between January 1994 and June 1995 (Commission on Family and Medical Leave 1996). More recent evidence shows that less than 1 percent of U.S. workers take family leave (Steve Hipple, pers. comm.). It is also unlikely that the FMLA has affected the division of unpaid labor in the home, given that women continue to do most domestic labor and are also more likely than men to use family leave (Gerstel and McGonagle 1999; Judiesch and Lyness 1999; Sandberg 1999).

This article addresses one reason why few women and men avail themselves of the FMLA and why the gender gap in leave-taking continues: awareness of eligibility for unpaid family leave. The importance of knowledge of family leave benefits is accentuated when the use of available unpaid family leave is conceived as the final event in a chain of processes and decisions. So, how do workers know about FMLA and its provisions? This knowledge may result from employer efforts to make them aware and individual efforts to learn about their rights. The Department of Labor flyer (shown in Figure 1) is displayed in some workplaces, although how widely we do not know.

Research on organizations shows that knowledge is not always transmitted by employers to all employees accurately or comprehensively. The Commission on Leave's Survey of Employers found that around 15 percent of employers in 1995 were unaware that their work organizations were covered by the FMLA (Commission on Family and

# Your Rights

Under The

## Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993

FMLA requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to "eligible" employees for certain family and medical reasons.

Employees are eligible if they have worked for a covered employer for at least one year, and for 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months, and if there are at least 50 employees within 75 miles.

### Reasons For Taking Leave:

Unpaid leave must be granted for *any* of the following reasons:

- to care for the employee's child after birth, or placement for adoption or foster care;
- to care for the employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent, who has a serious health condition; or
- for a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee's job.

At the employee's or employer's option, certain kinds of *paid* leave may be substituted for unpaid leave.

### Advance Notice and Medical Certification:

The employee may be required to provide advance leave notice and medical certification. Taking of leave may be denied if requirements are not met.

- The employee ordinarily must provide 30 days advance notice when the leave is "foreseeable."
- An employer may require medical certification to support a request for leave because of a serious health condition, and may require second or third opinions (at the employer's expense) and a fitness for duty report to return to work.

### Job Benefits and Protection:

- For the duration of FMLA leave, the employer must maintain the employee's health coverage under any "group health plan."

- Upon return from FMLA leave, most employees must be restored to their original or equivalent positions with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms.
- The use of FMLA leave cannot result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of an employee's leave.

### Unlawful Acts By Employers:

FMLA makes it unlawful for any employer to:

- interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right provided under FMLA;
- discharge or discriminate against any person for opposing any practice made unlawful by FMLA or for involvement in any proceeding under or relating to FMLA.

### Enforcement:

- The U.S. Department of Labor is authorized to investigate and resolve complaints of violations.
- An eligible employee may bring a civil action against an employer for violations.

FMLA does not affect any Federal or State law prohibiting discrimination, or supersede any State or local law or collective bargaining agreement which provides greater family or medical leave rights.

### For Additional Information:

Contact the nearest office of the Wage and Hour Division, listed in most telephone directories under U.S. Government, Department of Labor.



U.S. Department of Labor  
Employment Standards Administration  
Wage and Hour Division  
Washington, D.C. 20210

WH Publication 1420  
June 1993

FIGURE 1. FMLA WORKPLACE NOTICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Medical Leave 1996). Even when employers are aware, they may not communicate full details of the FMLA to all workers. As of 1995, only 58 percent of employees at these businesses knew of the Family and Medical Leave Act (Commission on Family and Medical Leave 1996), thus suggesting that awareness is far from complete. Moreover, employees vary in the extent to which they are receptive to or seek out this information about the FMLA. For example, the right to family leave may be more salient to workers who care for young children or elderly parents, as well as workers who plan to have children. In short, workers with responsibilities that are addressed by FMLA policy may be more aware due to self-interest.

Structural factors affect workers' awareness of FMLA benefits also. For example, some workers experience pressure from organizational culture, job demands, and/or financial constraints that prevent them from even considering unpaid leave although they have legal access to it (Fried 1998; Gerstel and McGonagle 1999; Judiesch and Lyness 1999; Sandberg 1999). Many workers fear being passed over for promotions or promising work assignments if they take family or medical leave (Hardin 1995; Shellenbarger 1996), a fear that is often warranted (Hochschild 1997; Dorman 2002). In one case study of managers at a national financial services firm, women *and* men who took family or medical leaves of absence subsequently had lower salary increases and fewer promotions (Judiesch and Lyness 1999).

We study the factors that predict whether a national sample of middle-aged workers know about their family leave rights due to being employed in jobs and firms covered by the FMLA. Organizational compliance with the FMLA is the first step in a chain of processes that leads to employee awareness and use of benefits. In this paper we focus on workers in organizations that are required to adopt family leave under the FMLA in order to maximize the possibility that they will be aware of their right to right-to-leave benefits. Factors that may affect workers' awareness of family leave benefits include organizational structure (firm size, percent female, and union protection), employment conditions (rank, tenure, and wages in the organization), and family situations (presence of dependents, marital status, employment of spouse, and number of expected additional children). We also take workers' gender into account. As this study shows, awareness of leave benefits is unevenly distributed across work organizations and their employees.

Workers who are unaware of opportunities afforded to them by federal social policies such as the FMLA are unlikely to challenge existing distributions of responsibility and rewards. Thus their ignorance of policies intended to improve social welfare can actually reinforce social inequalities (Orloff 1993). The impetus behind the FMLA was to provide workers with family and medical leave without serious harm to their careers. However, limitations of the legislation and pressures on workers to sacrifice family time for work time may reinforce gender and class inequality by rendering the FMLA a "social right" that few people use. Although the United States now has joined other nations by adopting a federal policy on family leave rights (Kamerman and Kahn 1995), tensions associated with workplace and family demands and the disproportionate burden of home and family on working women may undermine its intended positive effects.

The paper is organized as follows. The next section summarizes research on family-friendly benefits and the distributions of benefits and knowledge within work organizations, and identifies the individual, organizational, and family-related factors that may influence workers' awareness of their eligibility for unpaid family and medical leave.

The third section introduces the data and the analytic methods we use to model the probability that workers know they are eligible for unpaid family leave. The analysis focuses on a cohort of workers from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth that is likely to need family or medical leave to care for children and/or aging parents. The fourth section presents the results from the logit model of benefit awareness among men and women workers in 1996, showing support for the bulk of our hypotheses. The final section considers the implications of our findings and concludes that work situations more than family situations affect knowledge of family leave benefits and that gender shapes the impact of some work and family factors on awareness of FMLA within organizations.

## PAST RESEARCH ON BENEFITS AND ORGANIZATIONS

### Family-Friendly Work Organizations

We claim that organizations with more family-friendly policies generally are more likely to ensure that their employees are aware of the availability of FMLA benefits or rights. There are many reasons why this should be true. Family-friendly organizations are likely to offer family leave to all employees, irrespective of whether they are covered by the FMLA; they may have adopted family leave policies before passage of the FMLA; and these organizations may depend upon family-friendly benefits to retain hard-to-replace workers. So why is any employer family friendly? What conditions prompt them to adopt or embrace a policy that, on its surface, is costly to the organization? One answer is that large organizations have sufficient slack resources to sustain short-term absences even by valued employees. Another is that larger organizations are more susceptible to public opinion and legal pressures. A third is that organizations with a larger proportion of women workers may find it in their interest to help these women balance their work and family lives. A fourth is that unions may fight for or disseminate information about the availability of family-friendly benefits.

Although our data cannot adjudicate between them, two rival theories offer explanations for why larger organizations, organizations with more women employees, and unionized workplaces are apt to be more family friendly. Rational choice theory emphasizes the importance of profits for organizational decision-making (Auerbach 1990; Nelson and Couch 1990; Goodstein 1994; Glass and Fujimoto 1995; Osterman 1995; Seyler, Monroe, and Garand 1995; MacDermid and Williams 1997; Witkowski 1999). Organizational decision-makers adopt family-friendly policies on the belief that family-friendly policies increase productivity, reduce turnover, and thereby boost company profits. Neoinstitutional theory emphasizes the dynamics that prompt organizations to comply with the standards of their institutional environment (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Baron, Dobbin, and Jennings 1986; Glass and Fujimoto 1995; Guthrie and Roth 1999). Organizational decision-makers observe how similarly situated organizations deal with demands such as governmental regulatory changes and basically follow suit. In this perspective, organizations adopt family-friendly policies because of pressures from press attention, litigation, constituents, the government, and public opinion and because similar organizations in their organizational field do likewise (Kelly and Dobbin 1999; Wooten 2001). Even without pressure to comply with regulatory demands or fashionable practices, organizations may adopt family-friendly policies because public ideology and/or professional discourse touts their efficiency or because admired organizations

in their institutional environment are doing so (called mimetic processes; DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

Both perspectives predict that large firms, firms with disproportionately female workforces, and unionized workforces are more likely to adopt family-friendly benefits. According to rational choice theory, larger firms can take advantage of economies of scale, making adoption of family-friendly policies more affordable. They have more employees who need help juggling family and work responsibilities, and they also have more employees to cover the absence of employees who make use of flexible scheduling or family leave. According to institutional theory, larger firms are more likely to adopt family-friendly policies because they are more vulnerable to, and therefore more sensitive to, state regulatory demands. Larger firms are also more likely to have professional personnel management who may encourage innovation and diffusion of family-friendly benefits and policies due to its popularity in their environment. There is ample evidence that firm size is positively related to the number of formal family-friendly policies an organization offers (Glass and Fujimoto 1995; Osterman 1995; Seyler, Monroe, and Garand 1995) and the comprehensiveness of those policies (Goodstein 1994). Firm size is also positively associated with the likelihood that firms adopt maternity leave (Kelly and Dobbin 1999), although some argue that the association is really due to the threat of lawsuits or press attention rather than firm size per se (Guthrie and Roth 1999).

Rational choice theory suggests that organizations with female-dominated workforces are more likely to adopt family-friendly policies because women are more likely to need them. As a result of women's responsibility for the domestic sphere, employers view absenteeism and turnover as costs that organizations with many female employees must bear. In contrast, institutional theory emphasizes the role of public and professional discourse on adoption of family-friendly policies (Glass and Fujimoto 1995).

In line with both perspectives, research shows that organizations with more women workers offer more family-friendly benefits to employees and also more comprehensive family benefits (Goodstein 1994; Osterman 1995; Seyler, Monroe, and Garand 1995, and Witkowski 1999). In terms of specific benefits, organizations with many women workers have been found to offer more sick leave (Guthrie and Roth 1999), and more shift benefits (Glass and Fujimoto 1995), although not greater access to maternity leave (Glass and Fujimoto 1995; Guthrie and Roth 1999; Kelly and Dobbin 1999). In short, women's greater presence as employees does affect some actions by employers relative to workers' work-family needs.

Historically, labor unions have acted as advocates for workers' fringe benefit packages and guarantees of job security (Freeman 1981; Freeman and Kleiner 1990; Kalleberg and Van Buren 1996) and unions with substantial numbers of women, such as the United Electrical Workers and the United Automobile Workers, have fought for policies that benefit them (Schatz 1983; Milkman 1987). Glass and Fujimoto (1995) find that unionized workplaces are more likely to provide a range of family benefits, including family-friendly policies in male-dominated workplaces. Unions have also been successful in increasing the length of men's family leaves (Gerstel and McGonagle 1999). Although unions have not always made women's needs or family-friendly benefits a priority (Osterman 1995; Guthrie and Roth 1999; Kelly and Dobbin 1999), they have been active in communicating to workers about their rights and benefits (Hartley et al. 1991; Gerstel and Clawson 2001).

Based on the foregoing review, we propose three hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 1a:* Employees in larger firms will have a greater awareness of family leave benefits than that of employees in smaller firms.

*Hypothesis 1b:* Employees in female-dominated industries will have a greater awareness of family leave benefits than that of employees in male-dominated industries.

*Hypothesis 1c:* Unionized employees will have a greater awareness of family leave benefits than that of other employees.

### **Worker's Status in the Organization: Authority, Tenure, and Hourly Wages**

Even when organizations formally offer unpaid family leave and display the Department of Labor's poster announcing and describing "Your Rights Under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993," their workers may remain unaware that the benefit exists. Within a single organization, furthermore, some workers may be more aware than others. Specifically, we expect workers with more authority, longer tenure, and higher wages to be more aware, for reasons noted below.

High-level employees may be more eligible for family-friendly policies due to the perks of their positions (Glass and Fujimoto 1995; Glass and Estes 1997; Hochschild 1997; Jacobs and Gerson 1997). They may also need these benefits more because they work long hours with no guaranteed limit to the time demands that employers can make of them (Kanter 1977; Schor 1991; Hochschild 1997; Fried 1998; Blair-Loy and Wharton 2002). Furthermore, employees with more workplace authority may know more about FMLA benefits because their job is, in part, to tell others about their job benefits and monitor employees' use of them (Hochschild 1997). Thus we argue that employees who are higher in the organizational authority hierarchy are more likely to be aware of organizational policies, including FMLA family leave rights.

Longer-tenured employees should also know more about family benefits. Employees with more tenure will have had longer to tap into informal communication "loops" that communicate news about rights and benefits. Also, they will have had more opportunity to struggle and watch others struggle with work-family balance. Finally, higher-paid employees should be more aware of FMLA policies and rights because employers may use family leave benefits in addition to salary as a tactic to retain valued workers (Galinsky and Stein 1990). That is, they may go to more trouble to inform higher-paid employees about their rights to FMLA leave.

*Hypothesis 2a:* Employees with more supervisory authority will have a greater awareness of family leave benefits.

*Hypothesis 2b:* Employees with longer job tenure will have a greater awareness of family leave benefits.

*Hypothesis 2c:* Employees who are paid higher wages will have a greater awareness of family leave benefits.

Some of these claims may not apply to women, however, a possibility we explore.

Women employees with greater authority may constitute a subgroup for whom salience about leave benefits is low because of conflicting demands associated with job and family obligations. According to gendered organization theory, expectations for being a "good" woman and a "good" administrator contradict each other (Acker 1990,

1998; Martin 1991, 1996, 2003; Collinson and Hearn 1996; Ridgeway and Correll 2000). A "good" member of upper management is supposed to be competent, work long hours, ignore domestic responsibilities, be aggressive, and act rationally. A "good" woman is supposed to stay at home, discharge domestic duties, be passive, and act emotionally. Women who have made it to higher levels of the authority hierarchy may have already sacrificed their family lives by remaining childless or unmarried (Hochschild 1997). As a result of conflicting pressures, women with more authority may be more similar to men at a comparable rank because they have already sacrificed family for work, and therefore policies that help balance the demands of family and work are not salient to them. Thus, we propose hypothesis 2d.

*Hypothesis 2d:* Authority level will have a smaller impact on the awareness of family leave for women than that of men due to women's more precarious status at higher levels of organizational hierarchies.

### **Situational Factors Related to Salience and Need**

The salience of family-related benefits is apt to vary depending on employees' family circumstances. Social psychologists have long noted that individuals filter input from the environment according to the salience of the topic and the authority of the medium (Burke and Bolf 1986; Gronhaug and Falkenberg 1998). In workplaces, employees may filter out information on leave policies if they perceive no immediate need for them. Single workers without dependents may be less likely to heed information, whereas employees with extensive family obligations may attend more to this information.

Balancing work and family demands are a challenge for both women and men (LaRossa 1988; Hochschild 1989, 1997; Crosby 1991; Moen 1992; Greif, DeMaris, and Hood 1993; Barnett 1997; Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmidt 2001). Employees with families, regardless of gender, find that they must make adjustments at work, at home, or in both places (Bond, Galinsky, and Swanberg 1998; Milkie and Peltola 1999; Keene-Reid 2001; Keene and Reynolds 2004). Married parents consider scheduling flexibility and time demands when deciding which jobs to accept (Deutsch 1999). In fact, 90 percent of parents say they look for compressed work weeks, flextime, job-sharing, and/or part-time work when applying for jobs (Hewlett and West 1998).

Having young children or elderly relatives in the home, being married, having a full-time-employed spouse, and expecting to have more children are examples of family situations that may affect employees' receptivity to information about family leave. Children under the age of six need significant time and care as do elderly parents who cannot care for themselves (Goldsmith and Goldsmith 1995). Married people with an employed spouse may have no one at home full time to perform domestic tasks. Planning to have more children may also affect attention to family leave benefits. We thus propose three hypotheses related to family circumstances and the odds an employee will know about FMLA benefits.

*Hypothesis 3a:* Employees with young children and/or elderly dependents at home will have greater awareness of family leave benefits than other employees.

*Hypothesis 3b:* Employees who expect to have more children will have greater awareness of family leave benefits.



*Hypothesis 3c:* Married employees whose spouses work full time will have greater awareness of family leave benefits.

Due to issues associated with gender, women's awareness of family leave benefits should be affected more than men's by family circumstances. Although there is convergence in the concerns of women and men about work and family matters (Barnett and Rivers 1996; Eagle, Miles, and Icenogle 1997; Levine and Pittinsky 1997; Barnett and Hyde 2001), they continue to differ in the types of adjustments each makes. Although younger men hold more liberal views of gender (Brewster and Padavic 2000), women still do more adjusting than men where family is concerned, e.g., taking time off work for family obligations or working part time (Becker and Moen 1999). Men still prioritize paid work over family (Bielby and Bielby 1989; Voydanoff 1989; Milkie and Peltola 1999; but see Mennino and Brayfield 2002). Furthermore, women and men have been socialized to be responsible for different aspects of health management (White and Brinkerhoff 1981; Baker 1984; Hochschild 1989; Blair and Lichter 1991). In fact, research finds that married men's health suffers when they lose a wife's health-management services through divorce or long hours of paid employment. In contrast, married women's health improves as their husbands' work hours outside the home increase (Stolzenberg 2001). Thus, married women may be especially attentive to workplace policies that affect their ability to provide family health care. Women with young children, with dependent elderly relatives, who plan to have more children, or with spouses who work full time are predicted to be more aware of family leave benefits because they are primarily responsible for the domestic sphere (Rollins 1985; Hochschild 1989, 1997; Chang and White-Means 1991; Schor 1991; Sanchez and Thomson 1997), elderly caregiving responsibilities (Horowitz 1985; Chang and White-Means 1991; Mui 1992; Allen 1994; Stoller 1994), and the health management of family members (White and Brinkerhoff 1982; Hochschild 1983; Baker 1984; Blair and Lichter 1991).

*Hypothesis 3d:* Women employees' awareness of family leave will be affected more by their family circumstances than will men's. That is, women with dependent children, elderly parents, or full-time-employed spouses or who expect to have more children will be more aware than men with these same characteristics.

## DATA AND METHODS

### Sample

The analyses use data from the young women's and young men's cohorts of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY), a nationally representative sample of 12,686 young men and women who were 14 to 22 years of age in 1979. The NLSY is well suited for this study because it was designed to survey the labor-market experiences of women and men at multiple points in time and because it asks workers a wide range of work-related questions, including availability of family leave. We use the 1996 panel of the NLSY to test the hypothesized effects of organizational culture and individual need on awareness of family leave benefits under the FMLA. In 1996 the respondents were 31 to 39, a time at which many workers have potential need for family leave policies due to pregnancy (or spouse's pregnancy), young children at home, or elderly dependent parents.

The sample is limited to employees who should be covered under the FMLA according

to Public Law 103-03 (1993). Because the NLSY provides detailed information on the last five jobs the respondent held since the last interview (1994), we restrict our analysis to their primary job. We define primary job as the job the respondent held for the most hours per week and for the longest period of time. For respondents with more than one full-time job since the date of last interview, we use the job they worked in for the most years and the most hours per week. The sample excludes the self-employed ( $n = 556$ ), farmers ( $n = 170$ ), consultants ( $n = 307$ ), those employed in firms with 50 employees or less ( $n = 2,561$ ), and those who worked less than 1,250 hours in the last year. The final sample consists of 1,333 women and 1,441 men for a total sample size of 2,774.

### Measurement

#### *Awareness of Family Leave*

The dependent variable is a dichotomous measure of knowledge of maternity leave for women or paternity leave for men with a guarantee of returning to the same job. The question is: "Does your employer make available to you maternity/paternity leave that will allow you to go back to your old job or one that pays the same as your old one?" "Yes" answers are coded 1. "No" and "don't know" are coded 0.<sup>1</sup> Although we cannot be certain that a response of "no" represents a lack of awareness on the employee's part or a failure of compliance with the FMLA on the firm's part, there is good reason to believe it is not likely to be employer noncompliance. For example, a 1996 national study of employer leave practices reported that 95 to 99 percent of covered firms provide family and medical leave with a job guarantee (Cantor et al. 1995; Commission on Family and Medical Leave 1996). We discuss the limitations of the dependent variable and other measurement issues, as well as their possible influence on the results, in the concluding section of this paper.

#### *Predictors of Family-Friendly Organizations: Firm Size, Percent Women, and Union Membership*

We use the natural log of firm size to capture the positive and diminishing effects of firm size. Percent female equals the percentage female of employees in the industry, measured at the three-digit industry level.<sup>2</sup> We derived the measure of the gender composition of labor force using pooled CPS data from 1995 to 1997 (Hirsch and Macpherson 1998). In 1996, for example, around three-quarters (76 percent) of hospital employees were women; in construction, only 10 percent were. Ideally, we would include a measure indicating whether the respondent's workplace was unionized, however no such data exist in the NLSY. Instead, we have information on the respondent's union status. Union membership is measured with a dichotomous dummy variable where 1 represents union membership or being covered by a union contract and 0 represents other.

#### *Worker's Status in the Organization: Authority, Tenure, and Hourly Wages*

Organizational authority is defined by job supervisory status and extent of supervisory duties. Authority on the job is measured with a dichotomous variable, based on responses to the survey item asking, "Do you supervise the work of other employees?" Extent of

workplace authority is measured by the number of people supervised by the respondent and is coded 0 for those who do not supervise. We use the log transformation of this measure in the multivariate analyses, given its highly skewed distribution and evidence of nonlinearity in its effects on knowledge of leave benefits.<sup>3</sup> Coefficients associated with the measure of extent of workplace authority apply just to those who report they supervise others, that is, those who have a value greater than 0 on extent of supervisory duties and a value of 1 on the dummy variable for authority (see Hardy and Reynolds 2004). Job tenure is measured in years for the respondent's primary job. Hourly wages are measured in the log of hourly rate of pay at the primary job.

*Family Situational Factors: Presence of Dependents, Marital Status, Spouse's Employment, and Family Expectations*

We examine whether respondents have children under the age of 5 and/or elderly relatives living in the home (coded 1 if either is present). Marital status is a dummy variable where 1 equals married and 0 equals not married. Spouse's employment is a dummy variable measuring whether they have a spouse who works full time (coded 1). Number of children expected is a continuous measure of the number of (additional) children the respondent expects to have in the future.

*Control Variables*

We control for industry sector, age, race/ethnicity, education level, county unemployment rate, and region. Industry sector is divided into six groups using the typology of Myles, Picot, and Wannell (1988) and the three-digit census industry codes in the NLSY. The six industry groups are goods-producing (the reference category), distributive, consumer, business, health/education/welfare, and public administration sectors. Age is measured by age at the date of interview. We use race/ethnic dummy variables to compare Blacks, Hispanics, and non-Black, non-Hispanics. Non-Black, non-Hispanics are the reference category. Education level is a continuous variable of the highest grade completed. County unemployment rate is an ordinal level measure for the respondent's county of residence, ranging from less than 3 percent (coded 1) to 15 percent or higher (coded 6). Region is divided into the following four categories: West, Northeast, North central, and South. The southern region is the reference category.

Means and standard deviations or percentages for all measures used in the analysis are reported in Appendix A.<sup>4</sup>

## Analysis

The multivariate analyses use binary logistic regression to estimate the effects of organizational characteristics, worker statuses, and situational factors on employee awareness of maternity and paternity leave. The logistic regression analyses account for the sampling design of the NLSY by using the SVYLOGIT procedure in Stata (StataCorp 2001). The first model includes all regressors and assumes the effects are constant for women and men. The second model adds gender interaction terms as predicted by hypotheses 2d and 3d. To determine if the influences of work-related characteristics and family factors account for women's greater awareness of family leave, we also present

predicted probabilities for women and men that incrementally account for the predictors of knowledge about benefits.

There is good cause to be concerned about the possibility of sample-selection bias in these analyses. Sample selection bias results when the probability of being included in the sample is associated with the dependent variable of interest (Heckman 1979; Winship and Mare 1992; Breen 1996). In the present case selection bias may result if certain types of potential employees forego work because they are unaware of benefits that would provide workers' job protection if they needed to take time off for family or medical purposes. To correct for sample selection bias, all logistic regression analyses include a hazard function that represents the conditional odds of being included in the sample, derived from a probit analysis of sample inclusion (see Appendix B).

## RESULTS

Table 1 presents the weighted descriptive statistics for the NLSY respondents by gender. The left side of the table provides information on men, the right side, women, and the far right column reports whether these characteristics differ significantly between men and women.

Most of the NLSY respondents say they have access to family leave, women significantly more so than men. Seventy-two percent of men and 90 percent of women report they can take job-protected maternity or paternity leave. Women and men are differentially distributed across organizations, as indicated by the significant differences in firm size

**TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS BY GENDER, ADJUSTED BY SAMPLING WEIGHTS; NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF YOUTH, 1996**

Measures	Men (n = 1,441)		Women (n = 1,333)		Sex Diff. Signif.
	Mean	Percent	Mean	Percent	
Employer makes leave available		71.7		90.1	***
Predictors of family-friendly organizations					
Firm size	1,322		953		*
Percent of industry workers who are female	38.97		52.61		***
Union member or covered by union contract		23.9		17.7	***
Worker's status in the organization					
Supervises other workers		43.7		34.6	***
Number of workers supervised (supervisors only)	34.33		15.61		$p < .10$
Hourly wage in dollars	\$17.18		\$13.21		***
Years of job tenure	7.29		6.90		
Family situational factors related to need					
Number of children in household	1.28		1.30		
Expected number of (additional) children	.48		.34		***
Currently married		67.9		57.9	***
Elderly relative living in household		4.2		3.7	
Spouse employed full time		24.8		38.9	***

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

and percent women in the industry. Men tend to work in larger firms than women and, not surprisingly, in industries that employ relatively fewer women than the industries in which women in the NLSY work. Furthermore, men are more likely than women to be union members (24 percent versus 18 percent, respectively).

There are significant gender differences in worker authority and average wages as well. Employed women are concentrated in subordinate organizational positions relative to men. Nearly half (43.7 percent) of the men workers have supervisory duties, compared to just over one-third of women workers. Among those who report they have organizational authority, men oversee 34 workers on average, and women report less than half that number at around 16, on average. The considerable gender difference in extent of workplace authority is only marginally significant due to skewness in the distribution of this measure. Comparing women and men on the log transformation of number of employees supervised yields a sex difference that is significant at  $p < .001$ . Women earn approximately 75 percent of what men make on average, a difference in wages of about \$4 per hour. In terms of job tenure, both men and women have been employed in their current jobs for an average of seven years.

As past research finds, women and men workers have different family situations. Men expect to have more children than women, and a higher percentage of working men are married than are working women (68 versus 58 percent, respectively). In addition, more women than men have spouses who work full time. On average, men and women are similar in the number of children living in the household and the percentage who have elderly relatives living in the home.

Table 2 shows the results of two models predicting whether or not men and women know that paternity/maternity leave is available to them. Model 1 estimates the influences of work and workplace characteristics and family factors on the probability of reporting access to family leave, based on the assumption that these positional and contextual factors affect women and men similarly. Model 2 adds gender interactions that test hypotheses 2d and 3d about the gendered nature of work and family responsibilities. The coefficients are estimated net of the influences of race/ethnicity, education, region, industry, and the county unemployment rate (the complete set of results are reported in Appendix C). In addition, Table 2 reports odds ratios instead of unstandardized logistic regression slopes to facilitate their interpretation. One implication of reporting odds ratios is that the gender interaction effects must be interpreted consistent with the algebraic properties of natural log transformations. Specifically, the combined effect of two coefficients expressed in the metric of odds ratios is determined by taking their product, not their sum (e.g., see interpretation below of the interaction between gender and level of workplace authority). In addition, when interpreting the coefficients for measures transformed by the natural log, we present the percent change in the odds associated with a unit change in the *logged* variable and translate the unit change back into original units of the measure at its sample median (cf. Long 1997).

In support of hypotheses 1a and 1b, employees in larger firms and in industries with a larger presence of women workers have a greater awareness of family leave benefits than that of other employees. In contrast, union members are no more likely than non-union members to report access to family leave benefits. Firm size significantly affects knowledge about leave for both men and women, where a one-unit increase in log of firm size (e.g., from 250 to 680 employees; median firm size = 250,  $\ln[250] = 5.52$ , and  $e^{(5.52+1)} = 680$ ) is associated with a 16 percent increase in the odds of reporting access to

**TABLE 2. LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF AWARENESS OF PARENTAL LEAVE; ADJUSTED BY SAMPLING WEIGHTS; NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF YOUTH, 1996 (N = 2,774)**

Independent Variables	Odds Ratios <sup>a</sup>	
	Model 1	Model 2
Female	4.754***	2.330***
Predictors of family-friendly organizations		
Natural log of firm size	1.166**	1.158**
Percent of industry workers who are female	1.008*	1.008*
Union member or covered by union contract	1.157	1.116
Worker's status in the organization		
Supervises other workers	.980	.698
Log of number of workers supervised <sup>b</sup>	1.039	1.168*
Female × supervises	—	5.444***
Female × log of number supervised <sup>b</sup>	—	.556***
Natural log of hourly wages	1.913***	1.947***
Years of job tenure	1.054***	1.049***
Family situational factors related to need		
Children/elderly parent present	1.012	.942
Expected number of (additional) children	1.161*	1.073
Currently married	.825	.675*
Spouse employed full time	1.083	1.045
Female × children/elderly parent present <sup>c</sup>	—	1.482
Female × expected number of children <sup>c</sup>	—	1.648*
Female × currently married <sup>c</sup>	—	1.959*
Female × spouse employed full time <sup>c</sup>	—	.896
Inverse Mills Ratio <sup>d</sup>	5.911***	9.257***

<sup>a</sup> Controlling for differences due to region, industry, race/ethnicity, county unemployment rate, and education (full results in Appendix C).

<sup>b</sup> Coefficient applies only to those who supervise (see text).

<sup>c</sup> Joint effects equal to the product of two exponentiated slopes (see text).

<sup>d</sup> Hazard of being included in the analysis (see Appendix B).

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

family leave. The gender composition of the labor force also has a positive effect on the likelihood of being aware of family leave. A one-unit increase in the percent of workers who are women is associated with approximately a 1 percent increase in the odds of reporting access to family leave benefits.

Workers' authority in the organization also influences awareness of leave benefits, though in support of hypothesis 2d the association operates very differently for women and men employees. Among men authority has no effect on knowledge of leave benefits, while level of workplace authority among men who supervise other workers has a positive influence. A one-unit increase in logged number of workers supervised (e.g., an increase from 6 to 16 workers) leads to a predicted 16.8 percent increase in the odds that men report access to family leave. Among women those with authority are 3.8 times more likely to be aware of leave benefits, on average, than other workers ( $.698 \times 5.444 = 3.800$ ). However, level of workplace authority is negatively associated with knowledge among

women who supervise other workers ( $1.168 \times .556 = .649$ ), whereby a one-unit increase in the logged number of supervised workers reduces the odds of reporting access to family leave by 35 percent ( $1 - .649 = .351$ ).<sup>5</sup> These results provide support for hypothesis 2d.

Wages and job tenure are positively associated with awareness of leave benefits, as predicted by hypotheses 2b and 2c. A one-unit increase in logged hourly wages (e.g., from \$12.50 to \$34.00 per hour) is associated with a 95 percent increase in the odds of awareness, and each additional year of job tenure leads to a 5 percent increase in the odds of knowing about family leave benefits, on average.

We find limited support for hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c, which predicted greater awareness among employees with more demanding family situations. Neither having dependents at home nor having a spouse who works full time is associated with awareness of family leave. This is true for both women and men employees. In contrast, awareness of leave is influenced by plans to have children in the future and marital status, and these effects are conditioned by gender. According to Model 2, men who expect to have (additional) children in the future are no more or less aware of family leave benefits than men who plan to have no children (odds ratio = 1.073). For women each additional expected child is associated with a 77 percent increase in the odds of awareness about family leave ( $1.073 \times 1.648 = 1.768$ ). This finding is particularly important given that taking time off for the birth of a child is one of the primary intended uses of the benefits guaranteed by the FMLA (Elving 1995).

Differences in awareness by marital status depend on gender as well. The results in Model 2 show that married men are significantly *less* likely to know about family leave than men who are not married, a difference in odds of about 32 percent ( $1 - .675 = .325$ ). Among women marital status has no impact on awareness of leave benefits ( $.675 \times 1.959 = 1.322$ ;  $p > .10$ ). We are unsure whether this finding means that married men in the NLSY are especially beholden to their employers or their identities as breadwinners or financial providers. It may also mean that *gender* differences in workplace perceptions are greater among married employees—that is, the considerable gender gap in awareness of leave benefits is more pronounced among married women and men. In general, the fact that gender conditions the influences of marital status and expectations about having children gives partial support to hypothesis 3d.

Overall, we find that many organizational characteristics, worker statuses, and family factors predict awareness of family leave benefits among workers who should all qualify for unpaid family leave under the provisions of the FMLA. Some of these influences also vary by gender, reinforcing the notion that family and workplace responsibilities and rewards are gendered. These associations are net of the influences of region, race/ethnicity, education, and industry, and importantly they control for the tendency to be in the sample. The significant coefficient for the Inverse Mill's Ratio suggests that the analyses otherwise would be biased by the unmeasured residual association between the odds of being in the sample and the odds of knowing about family leave (Heckman 1979; Winship and Mare 1992; Breen 1996).

Do workplace and family factors account for the considerable gender difference in awareness of leave benefits? In addition to identifying the correlates of awareness, this article seeks to determine if these correlates explain why women are more likely to report knowledge of access to family leave, and by extension might provide part of the explanation for gender differences in the actual use of family leave benefits. Table 3 presents predicted probabilities of awareness of family leave for women and men from

**TABLE 3. PREDICTED GENDER DIFFERENCES IN AWARENESS OF PARENTAL LEAVE; ADJUSTED BY SAMPLING WEIGHTS; NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF YOUTH, 1996 (N = 2,774)**

Controlling for	Predicted Probability		Odds Ratio
	Men	Women	
0 Observed difference, controlling for selection	.716	.908	3.93
1 Sociodemographic controls (race/ethnicity, education, region)	.717	.911	4.04
2 Sociodemographic controls + family factors (children/elderly relative, expect to have children, marital status, full-time spouse)	.715	.912	4.12
3 Sociodemographic controls + family factors + job and workplace characteristics (firm size, percent female in industry, union, authority level, tenure, wages, industry, county unemployment)	.724	.926	4.75
4 Sociodemographic controls + family factors + job and workplace characteristics + gender interactions in Table 2, Model 2 (gender × family, gender × work)	.738	.933	4.95
Assigning other group's means			
		.739	
		.937	
		5.22	

five different logistic regression models. The five models incrementally add predictors including sociodemographic controls, family factors, job and workplace characteristics, and finally gender differences in the effects of family and workplace factors. All covariates other than gender are held constant at their mean values for the sample overall, such that the assessed gender gap reflects the difference between men's and women's probability of awareness with all other factors held equal. The top portion of Table 3 demonstrates that the addition of predictors widens the gender gap rather than narrows it. The gender gap with no predictors shows that women are four times more likely than men to be aware of family leave policies. After adding all the predictors in our model to mirror Table 2, Model 2, women are five times as likely as men to know about their companies' leave policies. The effect of gender persists and increases with the addition of factors that should account for the gender difference in awareness. In addition, Table 3 reports the predicted probabilities for women and men assuming they had the other gender's mean characteristics on the independent variables. In other words, the bottom portion of Table 3 shows that the gender difference in awareness of leave benefits would not change if men workers "looked like" women workers and vice versa. If women had



family situations and work situations like those of men, they would still be over five times more likely than men to know about leave benefits. The resilience of the gender gap in benefit awareness may reflect several possibilities about contemporary gender relations at work, and we speculate on these possibilities in the next section.

To explore the contingent effects of gender, marital status, plans to have children, and workplace authority, we calculated a series of predicted probabilities of reporting access to family leave. For each combination of statuses, Table 4 provides the predicted probabilities for women and men as well as the odds ratio contrasting women's to men's odds of family leave awareness. The gender difference is smallest among workers who are least likely, on average, to need family leave. For example, the top rows compare women and men with varying supervisory duties who are not married and have no imminent plans to have children. At the highest and lowest levels of workplace authority, the difference between women's and men's predicted probability of reporting family leave is "only" a factor of 2—admittedly still a large gender gap, but one that is half the size of the gap between women and men in general (Table 3, first row). The gender gap in awareness is most acute among married mid-level employees who supervise a small number of employees, and who expect to have more children in the future. This group of women is most likely to be aware of their leave benefits (.977). The men in this group have a lower level of awareness, primarily due to the suppressive effects of marriage on awareness for men. Finally, Table 4 demonstrates that organizational authority places constraints on women's, but not men's, awareness of leave options. For women increases

**TABLE 4. PREDICTED PROBABILITIES OF AWARENESS OF PARENTAL LEAVE ACROSS GENDER, MARITAL STATUS, PLANS TO HAVE CHILDREN, AND SUPERVISORY DUTIES; ADJUSTED FOR SAMPLING WEIGHTS; NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF YOUTH, 1996 (N = 2,774)**

	Not a Supervisor	Supervises 2 Workers	Supervises 10 Workers	Supervises 20 Workers
Not married, expect no (more) children				
Men	.784 <sup>a</sup>	.747	.778	.792
Women	.889	.948	.912	.886
Odds ratio	2.212	6.225	2.961	2.045
Not married, expects one more child				
Men	.795	.759	.789	.803
Women	.934	.970	.948	.932
Odds ratio	3.629	10.212	4.857	3.355
Married, expect no (more) children				
Men	.709	.665	.701	.719
Women	.914	.960	.932	.911
Odds ratio	4.349	12.239	5.821	4.021
Married, expects one more child				
Men	.723	.680	.715	.732
Women	.949	.977	.960	.948
Odds ratio	7.135	20.078	9.549	6.597

<sup>a</sup> Predicted probabilities derived on basis of coefficients from Model 2, Table 2; all other covariates held constant at sample means.

in workplace authority diminishes their odds of reporting access to family leave. Men's odds of reporting access to family leave increase with their workplace authority.

### DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

Rational choice and neoinstitutional theories postulate that organizational decision-makers adopt leave policies in order to maximize profits (Auerbach 1990; Nelson and Couch 1990; Goodstein 1994; Glass and Fujimoto 1995; Osterman 1995; Seyler, Monroe, and Garand 1995; MacDermid and Williams 1997; Witkowski 1999) or to "keep up with" similar organizations in their organizational field (Kelly and Dobbin 1999; Wooten 2001). We reason that processes that result in the adoption of family-friendly policies may lead to the disclosure of information about these policies to covered employees. Organizations inclined to adopt policies are also prone to inform their employees of those policies. For example, employees who work in larger firms and in industries with more female employees are more likely to be aware of their leave benefits. However, we are unable to determine if the processes underlying organizational decisions to adopt or spread information are the result of intent to maximize profits or the result of legal pressures. In order to adjudicate between rational choice and neoinstitutional theories, future studies are needed to assess employers' decision-making processes. One limitation of each of these theories is that they fail to anticipate gender effects. Our analyses show that the effects of gender are complex and resilient in work organizations.

Among workers covered by the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act, work conditions matter more than family contexts in shaping knowledge of family leave benefits, though gender is, arguably, the most important determinant of awareness of all. Our findings show that workers employed in the types of organizations that typically exhibit greater "family friendliness," specifically larger firms in industries that employ a substantial female labor force, are more likely to be aware of access to family leave. Furthermore, workers with higher wages and more job experience demonstrate greater awareness of family leave. Family situations that index the potential need for taking time off work for family are not as consequential for workers' knowledge of family leave benefits. Neither the presence of a dependent child or elderly relative nor spouse's employment status affects knowledge of leave. The family situational factors that do influence awareness of family leave among the NLSY respondents are gender specific. For example, women who expect to have children in the future are more aware of leave benefits than women who do not anticipate a future childbirth, but future expectations about having children have no bearing on men's awareness.

The preeminence of workplace factors over family factors in influencing *awareness* of family leave benefits runs counter to past research showing that employees' family situations, more than work situations, explain *usage* of family-friendly benefits (Blair-Loy and Wharton 2002). It certainly may be the case that processes leading to usage of family leave benefits are somewhat different from the processes of becoming aware of eligibility for benefits. Awareness may be shaped primarily by what transpires in a work organization. If employers want to create a formal family-friendly organizational culture in order to attract and retain good employees, then perhaps they "dangle" family-friendly policies to entice applicants to join and remain in their workforce. However, the informal organizational culture and experiences of past leave-takers may communicate the opposite: that taking family leave will result in negative consequences, such as losing

seniority (Dorman 2002), not being promoted, receiving smaller salary increases (Judiesch and Lyness 1999), and not being viewed as committed to the organization (Hochschild 1997). When it comes to actually using family leave benefits, employees may only do so when demanding family situations force them to despite the potential fallout at work.

It is encouraging to find that overall levels of awareness among covered employees are high. Ninety percent of women and almost three-quarters of men are aware of their right to family leave. Such broad awareness is a positive sign that employers have successfully disseminated at least nominal information about the FMLA's job protection provisions. Despite the apparent broad awareness among covered employees, workers remain unlikely to actually use the leave guaranteed them under the FMLA (Commission on Family and Medical Leave 1996; Waldfogel 1999; Steve Hipple 2000). For example, the Commission on Family and Medical Leave (1996) study of covered employers found that less than 1 in 20 of their employees took leave designated as FMLA leave. What might explain the discrepancy between the high levels of awareness and extremely low levels of usage? Perhaps many workers have no need for family leave. The Commission on Family and Medical Leave's study of employees revealed that in the past year, only 16.8 percent reported taking leave for reasons that fall under the provisions of the FMLA, and another 3.4 percent reported needing leave but not taking it. Thus, among the 20 percent of workers that needed leave, roughly 17 percent ( $3.4/[3.4 + 16.8]$ ) could not or decided not to use family leave benefits. Of the workers whose need for family leave was unmet, 65.6 percent said they did not take leave from a fear of repercussions,<sup>6</sup> and 10 percent reported that their employers denied their request for leave. Unmet need for family demand, then, is low but still problematic, and could reflect a lack of awareness of leave eligibility, a level of supervisory duties that designates one as an essential employee, a condition of not being able to afford taking unpaid leave, or employer noncompliance with the FMLA. Further research is warranted to investigate the role of organizational culture in creating the disjunction between awareness and usage of family leave.

Despite the overall high level of awareness among employees covered by the FMLA, there is a wide gender gap in benefit awareness that actually increases when organizational, work status, and family situations are taken into account (see Table 3). This resilient gap in awareness may signify a stable, gender-based noncompliance with the FMLA on the part of work organizations and their employees. Due to workplace norms or normative beliefs about gender, men may simply see themselves as ineligible for family leave regardless of federal mandates. They may believe that their role in the family is to provide financial stability, not caregiving (Stolzenberg 2001). This reasoning follows from prior research showing that men prioritize paid work over their family (Bielby and Bielby 1989; Voydanoff 1989; Milkie and Peltola 1999), that women are more likely to make adjustments at home (Becker and Moen 1999; Keene 2001; Keene-Reid and Reynolds 2004), and that women do most of the caregiving work in the home (Nathanson 1977; Harris and Guten 1979; Waldron 1988; Ross and Bird 1994).

Another plausible explanation for the gender gap in awareness is that women with workplace authority fall under the "essential employees" provision of the FMLA that states that the top 10 percent of income earners in a firm are exempt from the FMLA provisions. If this were the case, we would expect men and women who supervise more workers to be equally unaware of their rights to family leave. However, our findings demonstrate that there is a positive relationship between authority and awareness for men and that men are more likely to occupy the most highly paid positions in U.S. workplaces. Perhaps

the gender difference in the effects of workplace authority on awareness has its source in the unique types of businesses that employ the men and women with organizational authority. In the NLSY, men with authority are more likely to be employed in the goods-producing sector, while women with workplace authority are more likely to be employed in the professional sector (health, education, and welfare). In the end, without direct empirical evidence, we are unable to test these alternative interpretations of the resilient gender gap in awareness or the gender differences in the influence of workplace authority.

Our findings suggest the relevance of gendered organization theory that addresses differences in women's and men's experiences at work and at home (Acker 1990, 1998; Martin 1991, 2001; Leidner 1993; Pierce 1995; Collinson and Hearn 1996; Kleinman 1996). As gender scholars argue, theories of work and family must not assume that these contexts entail the same meanings or experiences for women and men and that theories of organizations must question organizations' alleged means-end rationality and neutrality on gender (Bologh 1990; Martin and Knopoff 1997). Women with the most organizational authority know less about family leave benefits than women with less authority do, while men's knowledge increases with their authority. Women administrators appear to face a bind between being "good" women and "good" wielders of workplace authority, meaning they must make sacrifices to prove their commitment to their paid work.

To the extent employers' hiring and promotion practices and workers' preferences select married or childbearing women out of the authority hierarchy, family leave policies may have less salience for women who have more authority. Descriptive evidence from our sample supports this idea. Level of workplace authority is negatively associated with women's odds of being married and expecting to have (additional) children, but for men the odds of marriage and expectations about having children increase with authority (results not shown). Furthermore, Table 4 shows that the lowest levels of awareness for women are for those with the most authority and who are not married and not expecting any more children. However, we emphasize the inability of our analyses to account for the gender gap in terms of marriage and expecting to have children, since we control for family situations in Model 1 and Model 2. In brief, our results urge attention to theories of gender relations including gender's intersections with other institutional spheres (Lorber 1994; Risman 1998; Martin 2004).

One limitation of our research is the measure of knowledge of family-leave benefits. Our measure reflects both knowledge on the employee's part and compliance with the FMLA on the firm's part. This measure would be strengthened if we were able to match organization-level information with employee information. However, matching organization-level and employee-level information could bias the results because larger firms may be more likely to have imperfect information. Another limitation of this measure is that the FMLA provides family and medical leave, but the NLSY question asks about maternity or paternity leave, which may lead respondents to answer about company-sponsored leave rather than government-sponsored leave. Nonetheless, the overall percent of covered workers who were aware of having family leave in the NLSY was similar to the rate for covered employers found by the congressional study of FMLA compliance (Commission on Family and Medical Leave 1996). Finally, the NLSY contains no measures that may be used to tap organizational culture, which has been shown to be important for employees' work-role strain, turnover rates, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction (Allen 2001). Supervisor and coworker support for taking leave may mediate many of the observed relationships in our analyses.

The FMLA was intended to provide workers with family and medical leave without fear of losing their jobs. Nonetheless, awareness of its provisions is incomplete among covered workers, and a considerable gender difference in awareness exists, at least among middle-aged workers in 1996. The gender gap in usage may be reduced through raising men's awareness of their eligibility, though resistance to such change is likely given society's deeply rooted normative beliefs about gender roles. Since men predominate in the positions that relegate rewards and punishments related to work/family issues, it may be one way to reduce the repercussions of taking leave found in prior research. Otherwise, women will continue to make up the vast majority of those who actually use family leave and thereby place themselves at risk of being penalized in the workplace.

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#### APPENDIX A. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON ALL MEASURES; NLSY 1996 (N = 2,774)

Measures	Mean	Std. Dev.	Percent
Employer makes leave available			79.9
Female			44.5
Log of firm size	5.82	1.58	
Percent of industry workers who are female	45.04	24.96	
Union member or covered by union contract			21.2
Supervises other workers			39.7
Log of workers supervised (supervisors only)	2.15	1.33	
Log of hourly wage	2.60	.61	
Years of job tenure	7.12	5.94	
Children/elderly relative in household			36.6
Expected number of (additional) children	.41	.94	
Currently married			63.4
Spouse employed full time			35.1
Hispanic			6.5
Black			15.5
Non-Black, non-Hispanic			78.0
Education	13.68	2.92	
Northeast			19.0
North Central			30.8
West			13.3
South			37.0
Goods			34.1
Distribution			10.7
Consumer			12.1
Business			12.1
Professional			22.8
Administrative			8.2
County unemployment rate	2.61	.98	

**APPENDIX B. PROBIT MODEL ESTIMATING PROBABILITY  
OF BEING IN SAMPLE; NLSY 1996**

Independent Variables	b/(s.e. b)
Female	.272 (.051)***
Children/elderly relative in HH	-.012 (.045)
Female × child/elderly parent in HH	-.044 (.064)
Expected number of children	-.021 (.024)
Female × expected (additional) children	.002 (.039)
Married	.114 (.046)*
Female × married	-.275 (.066)***
Family income – personal earnings	.006 (.002)***
Female × (family income – personal earnings)	-.012 (.003)***
Age	-.006 (.007)
Education	.038 (.006)***
Weeks worked in 1995	.023 (.001)***
West <sup>a</sup>	-.234 (.041)***
Northeast <sup>a</sup>	-.040 (.043)
North Central <sup>a</sup>	-.001 (.038)
Intercept	-1.803 (.250)***
Model log-likelihood	-4,901.5
Model chi-square, df = 15	951.7***
n	8,523

<sup>a</sup> Compared to South.

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001.

**APPENDIX C. LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF AWARENESS OF  
PARENTAL LEAVE; SLOPE ESTIMATES AND STANDARD  
ERRORS FOR COMPLETE MODELS; NLSY 1996 (N = 2,774)**

Independent Variables	Model 1 b/(s.e. b)	Model 2 b/(s.e. b)
Female	1.559 (.135)***	.846 (.235)***
Natural log of firm size	.154 (.050)**	.152 (.050)**
Percent of industry workers who are female	.008 (.004)*	.009 (.004)*
Union member or covered by union contract	.146 (.166)	.139 (.167)
Supervises other workers	-.020 (.209)	-.360 (.249)
Log of number of workers supervised <sup>a</sup>	.038 (.078)	.155 (.087)*
Female × supervises	—	1.694 (.531)***
Female × log of number supervised <sup>a</sup>	—	-.587 (.186)***
Natural log of hourly wages	.649 (.153)***	.666 (.153)***
Years of job tenure	.053 (.014)***	.048 (.014)***
Children/elderly parent present	.012 (.131)	-.060 (.156)
Expected number of (additional) children	.149 (.083)*	.071 (.091)
Currently married	-.192 (.142)	-.393 (.180)*
Spouse employed full time	.080 (.142)	.044 (.171)
Female × children/elderly parent present	—	.394 (.293)
Female × expected number of children	—	.500 (.249)*
Female × currently married	—	.672 (.330)*
Female × spouse employed full time	—	-.110 (.312)
Hispanic <sup>b</sup>	-.110 (.173)	-.137 (.175)
African American <sup>b</sup>	-.323 (.135)*	-.277 (.135)*
Education	-.060 (.035)	-.071 (.037)
West <sup>c</sup>	.049 (.232)	.095 (.233)
Northeast <sup>c</sup>	-.349 (.182)	-.350 (.184)
North Central <sup>c</sup>	-.134 (.158)	-.123 (.159)
Distributive sector <sup>d</sup>	.315 (.217)	.324 (.215)
Consumer sector <sup>d</sup>	-.124 (.215)	-.154 (.214)
Business sector <sup>d</sup>	-.194 (.223)	-.225 (.223)
Health/education/welfare sector <sup>d</sup>	-.039 (.246)	-.086 (.244)
Public administration sector <sup>d</sup>	.694 (.265)*	.680 (.267)*
County unemployment rate	.096 (.078)	.097 (.078)
Inverse Mills Ratio (lambda)	1.777 (.463)***	2.225 (.506)***
Intercept	-2.844 (.538)	-2.792 (.545)

<sup>a</sup> Coefficient applies only to those who supervise other workers (see text).

<sup>b</sup> Compared to non-Black, non-Hispanic.

<sup>c</sup> Compared to the South.

<sup>d</sup> Compared to the goods-producing sector.

\* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001.

### NOTES

1. We performed a multinomial logit analysis to ascertain whether respondents answering “don’t know” were different from those answering “yes” or “no.” We found that only 69 people answered “don’t know,” that the differences between respondents answering “don’t know” and “yes” far outweighed the differences between respondents answering “don’t know” and “no,” and that the only significant differences between “don’t know” and “no” were that “don’t know’s” had fewer children and/or elderly relatives, more education, and were more likely to live in the Northeast.

2. We are more interested in firm differences than occupational differences by percentage female.

so we use the percentage female in industry to measure that difference. In analyses not shown, we included percentage female in occupation, but it had no significant effect on awareness of family leave.

3. Given that we use the log transformation of supervisory duties, our operationalization of this measure requires further explanation. For the respondents who did supervise others, we adjusted the range of employees supervised upward by 1 and took the natural log of the adjusted values, where the log-transformed values ranged from .405 to 8.294. Then for all respondents who reported they did not supervise others, we set their value on the measure of extent of supervisory duties to 0. Thus, we adjusted the range for supervisors to differentiate the 332 respondents who reported they supervised only 1 employee from respondents who do not have any supervisory duties. Simply using the number of employees supervised would have been a simpler approach but would not have captured the nonlinearity in the effect of supervisory duties on the log-odds of knowledge of family leave benefits.

4. The data used in this article may be obtained from the authors until January 2006.

5. We confirmed that the coefficients for "supervises other workers" and "expected number of children" were significant for women by rerunning Model 2 and changing the reference category for gender from men to women. This procedure also confirmed there is no significant difference between married women and unmarried women in their awareness of family leave.

6. "Fear of repercussions at work" was calculated by combining those who reported that taking leave might cause them to lose their job (29.2 percent), hurt their job advancement (22 percent), and lose seniority (14.1 percent).

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