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Factors Explaining the Interest of Adult Offspring in Succeeding Their Parents as Forest Owners

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Received: 20 August 2018; Accepted: 23 October 2018; Published: 25 October 2018

Abstract: In the past, Swedish ownership of the forest estate was predominantly passed on by parents to their descendants. However, a general societal change has given successors a larger say in decisions on such matters. Their willingness to become forest owners has, therefore, become an important factor for who will own the forest in the future. To study what factors explain adult descendants' interest in taking over as forest owners, this study determined how adult children, who expressed a willingness to take over their parents' forest estate, were different from those who were not willing. Members of the Northern Forest Owner Association in Sweden were asked to provide contact addresses of their children, in the age group 30 to 50 years old. The logistic regression analysis of the 249 participating offspring respondents revealed several significant factors. Offspring who helped their parents with the management of the estate were more likely to be willing to take it over, showing that developing into a forest owner remains a socialization process that starts with practical work. Values, such as the respondents' attitude towards maintaining a forest ownership tradition, as well as the interest in forest income, hunting, and fishing, were also found to be factors affecting the willingness to take over. The results also indicate that the socialization process is still gender-biased, and that the distance between a descendants' present home and the forest estate is a factor that mattered.

Keywords: intergenerational transfer; succession; forest values; gender; self-identity

1. Introduction

In Europe (not including Russia, Belarus and Ukraine), more than half of the forest land is owned and managed by non-industrial private forest (NIPF) owners [1]. These owners play a key role in the management of Europe's forests by providing essential ecosystem services for urban and rural communities, as well as important resources to the forest industry in this region. In Sweden, for example, more than half the timber supplied to the Swedish forest industry comes from privately owned forest land [2]. In many European countries, a significant proportion of owners are more than 60 years old [1], indicating that a considerable number of forest estates in Europe may soon change owners. In Sweden, 42% of forest owners are 65 or older, according to the Swedish Forest Agency [3]. Families were, in the past, anxious to keep the land in the family because of its contribution to the family's wealth and the important social and cultural meaning for the family's legacy [4]. Yet, research among forest owners in the Western world suggest that ownership motives are diverse [5] and a strong motivation to be a forest owner is the lifestyle it may provide [6–9]. As preferred lifestyles can change between generations, such a motivation may give rise to changes in who will own the forest in the future and what they would like to do with the estate. These changes will likely affect the developments of the forests owned by private forest owners, as well as the type of services that the coming owners will demand. The information is therefore of use for both forest policy makers as well as the forest industry.

There has been a good deal of international research into succession in agriculture and family owned businesses, but very little involving forest owners. In Sweden, forest ownership has its roots in agriculture as forest land traditionally belonged to a farm [10]. Its cultural heritage in how to transfer ownership is, therefore, based in the farm culture. According to Lidestav and Nordfjell [11], 79% of present forest owners in Sweden either inherited or purchased their forest estate from relatives. Two principles have been used for transferring forest estates to the next generation in Sweden. The principle of primogeniture, which gives the firstborn child the right to inherit the entire property, was, in the past, the dominant principle. According to Fiebranz [12], it was common in the 18th century to sell the estate (often a farm including forest land) to the eldest son while the parents were still alive, and compensate the other children with a monetary sum. This customary practice is still applied regularly; more than half of present forest owners who have succeeded their parents as forest owners, have bought the forest from their parents, while the rest have inherited the estate [11]. In the old days, according to Fiebranz [12], it was clear that the son(s) was obliged to continue the farm while the daughter(s) were expected to leave the farm and contribute with their dowry to their husband's household. The second principle, the principle of real estate, was practiced in Swedish regions with diversified economies, and implied that all children were entitled to a share of the estate [13]. The property could either be divided up according to the share, or the children owned the estate together and shared the income of the property.

As the economic importance of forest ownership for the family has decreased [4] changes in the intergenerational transfer process also seemed to have occurred. It has, for example, become more common to adopt the principle of real estate in Sweden, which has increased the proportion of multi-owned properties [14]. Perhaps the most important change affecting the transfer process is a general societal change in Europe and North America allowing stronger influence of the offspring in such processes. According to van den Akker et al. [15] offspring in these regions are nowadays seen as individuals with a right to develop their own lives. They are not necessarily obliged to follow the wishes of their parents for the future. This has clearly influenced their willingness to succeed their parents as owners of farms. According to Breustedt and Glauben [16], the most common reason that farmers leave farming is their offspring's lack of interest in succession. Villa [17] found that, in the opinion of Norwegian farmers, the choice of continuing farming lay currently with their offspring while they often had not been given such a choice themselves by their parents. Uncertainty over their farm's future is causing anxiety among the current farmers. Similar anxieties have been expressed by forest owners in Sweden [18].

Knowledge about forest owners' offspring and their perspectives on forestry and forest ownership is very limited. According to Schmithüsen and Hirsch [1], there is a tendency among forest owners' offspring in Sweden to be less interested in managing the family forest as they do not tend to live near the forest estate, earning an income from sources outside the forest instead. However, management and potential ownership are not quite the same thing. Absentee ownership is increasing in many countries [19]. The Pinchot Institute for Conservation [20] interviewed 300 offspring of forest owners across the USA and found that most of them expected to inherit the family forests as this is what they expected to be their parents' wish. Their own interest in becoming the owners was, however, low. Most of them had not been involved in the management of the property and many had no intention of doing so, even as owners [20]. Most of them did not live near to the estate and had no intention to move there if they became owners [20]. Women often saw ownership as part of a family legacy while men were more focused on the income the land could provide, according to the Pinchot Institute for Conservation [20]. Leahy et al. [21] investigated succession planning activities of forest owners in Maine, USA, and found that very few owners had taken any actions related to this. Those forest owners who had done something had mainly taken legal action by writing a will, rather than talking with their offspring about the management of the forest [21].

Karppinen [22] analyzed the values of the offspring to current forest owners in Finland and found that their forest values and objectives were quite similar to those of the current owners. However,

Karppinen [22] also suggested that the current forest owners might consider leaving the estate to grandchildren as their immediate descendants were often already over 50 years old. This may, according to Karppinen [22], result in a drastic change in forest owners' objectives. Kronholm and Staal Wästerlund [23] found that young people in the age group 18 to 30 years old had, in many cases, not considered the possibility of owning a forest, even among those that were offspring of forest owners.

As descendants seem to have more influence in the intergenerational transfer process, their willingness to become forest owners is an important factor for the development of forest ownership in Europe. To identify what factors influence offspring's interest in the intergenerational transfer process, the objective of this study was therefore to investigate how adult offspring who are willing to take over differ from those who are not willing. The succession studies in agriculture identified a number of factors that seem to affect the succession process. According to Hennessy and Rehman [24], potential heirs of farms in Ireland make their choice of succeeding their parents when choosing their education level and that the choice often is correlated to the profitability of the farm. Cavicchioli et al. [25] identified, besides socio-economic aspects, that gender and the existence of siblings influenced who in the family may take over. Gender was also identified by Lidestav [13] as an influencing factor in Swedish forestry succession processes. Conway et al. [26] discussed the effect of retirement age of the parent on the willingness of the offspring to take over. The parent's influence on the childhood was identified by Chan and Elder [27] as a factor influencing the offspring's interest in farming activities. Becker [28] and Asztalos Morell [29] also discussed the socialization process during childhood as being crucial for the choices that the child makes in later life and based their discussions on Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. Together with Karppinen's [22] argument that the objectives of forest owners might change when a new generation takes over, this study is therefore focusing on the impact of demographic characteristics on the willingness to take over, the impact of offspring's attitudes to benefits that owning a forest offer, as well as the impact of aspects in their childhood as a member of a forest owning family. As most forest owners succeed their parents at a mature age, this study focused on offspring that were between 30 and 50 years old.

2. Materials and Methods

As there is no register of offspring of forest owners, a temporary register solely for this study was established by contacting forest owners and asking them to provide the names, addresses and telephone numbers of their offspring. The data were collected in 2008 from members of the forest owner association Norra Skogsägarna in the northern part of Sweden. The association had, at that time, 15,906 members who owned 1.2 million ha of forest [14]. As the average age in Sweden for becoming a parent for the first time was found to be between 25 and 29 years old [30,31], a random sample of 800 members in the age range 55 to 70 years old was taken. The margin of sample error for a 95% confidence interval was calculated as $0.98/\sqrt{800} = 0.0346$ or 3.5%. The maximum age of 70 was chosen based on the assumption that, above this age, family discussions about the transfer may have already started influencing their offspring's opinions.

A letter was sent to the members in the sample with information about the study. A few days later, the members were contacted by telephone and asked for contact information for all their offspring in the age range 30 to 50 years old. Of the member sample, 385 (48%) members provided contact information for their offspring, 235 (29%) said that they did not have children in this age range, 87 (11%) did not want to participate and 93 (12%) could not be reached. A non-response bias analysis was made with regards to region, gender, age and estate size. No distinctive differences between the members who provided information about their offspring and those who did not were found, except for age. There were distinctly fewer young members (33%) who had provided contact information about their offspring than young members who had not provided information (67%), while distinctly more old members (61%) provided information compared to old members who had not (39%).

The members who provided contact information for their offspring gave a total of 658 names, addresses and telephone numbers belonging to their offspring, of which 298 were women and 360

were men. Three children living abroad were not included on the register, which implied that offspring of 383 members were contacted. All remaining 655 children were contacted by letter, informing them of the purpose of the study, how their contact information had been acquired, the existence of the temporary register and its use and how to be removed from the register if so desired.

Of the 385 members that provided information, 260 gave contact information for more than one offspring. In order to obtain only one answer for each family, while at the same time limiting the non-response rate, the offspring in each family were assigned a random order. If the first offspring on the list could not be reached after five attempts, the second offspring on the list was approached, and so on. If the offspring who was reached refused to participate in the study, no attempt was made to contact any of the other offspring of the family.

A few days after sending the letter, a telephone enquiry was made among the offspring. The offspring that responded to the questions were 299 (78%), 76 (20%) could not be reached, and 8 (2%) either did not want or could not respond to the questions. Another non-response bias analysis was made at a family level (that is, which members were represented in the sample who had offspring who answered compared to members who did not answer themselves or had offspring who did not answer), and a similar result was found as in the previous non-response analysis. No distinctive differences were found except for age of the members, implying that the younger members were underrepresented among the responding families.

The telephone enquiry consisted of multiple-choice questions. To measure the willingness of the respondents to succeed their parents as forest owners, they were asked the following question: "Do you at present have the ambition to take over your parent's forest in the future", with two response options: (a) Yes, I would like to take over the forest property, either alone or together with my siblings; and (b) no, I do not have such ambitions. For testing opinions, a scale of 1 to 4 was used, 1 meaning not important and 4 meaning important. A preliminary version of the questions was tested on four adult offspring in the targeted age group before the actual study was made.

A preliminary analysis of the data showed that, of the 299 respondents, 40 were already forest owners and 4 were already members of the forest owners' association. Furthermore, six had not answered whether they were interested or not in taking over their parent's estate. These answers were omitted from the final analysis that, therefore, consisted of 249 respondents. Table 1 summarizes the variables used in the analysis with the basic responses.

The relationship between the place where the respondents grew up and the place where they currently live is shown in Table 2.

The statistical analyses were carried out using stepwise logistic regression for the interest to take over or not in three stages. A significance level of 0.3 was required to allow a variable into the model and a significance level of 0.35 was required to stay into the model. In the first stage, the demographic variables specified in Table 1 were tested in the basic model. The variables gender, education level, the parents' age and siblings had been identified in earlier studies on succession in farming. The present residence of the respondent in relation to the forest estate was added because absentee ownership is increasing in Sweden. The age of the respondent was added as a variable to investigate if succession decisions matures with age. The estate size was included in the analysis as Eggers et al. [32] found that the size affects the management style. In the second stage, the offspring's attitudes towards forest benefits were added to the demographic variables that were found significant (with $p < 0.05$) in the model with only demographic variables. Based on the studies of Lidestav and Nordfjell [33] and Berlin et al. [34], the respondents were asked to rate the importance of forest income, hunting and fishing, berries and mushrooms, firewood and timber, the possibility to reside on the estate, recreation and outdoor life, to be in contact with the childhood environment and the conservation of tradition as a family forest owner, all on a scale from one to four. In the third stage, variables that described the respondents' childhood were added into a third model with the variables found significant in the second model. These variables that were tested for their eligibility were whether or not the respondent helped their parents with the management of the estate and whether or not they grew up on the estate.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to assess, on a scale from one to four, how they perceived the economic and social importance of the estate for their parents, in an attempt to understand how the parents' attitude towards ownership might have affected their offspring. Relations between variables in model III were determined using the Chi-square test.

Table 1. Variables used in the binary logistic regression.

Demographic Variables, Number of Answers (Percentage)				
Gender	Men: 144 (57.8%)		Women: 105 (42.2%)	
Present residence in relation to the forest property	Same municipality: 101 (40.5%)	Northern Sweden: 86 (34.5%)	Southern Sweden: 61 (24.5)	Missing: 1 (0.5%)
Age	30–34 years old: 134 (53.8%)	35–39 years old: 73 (29.3%)	40 years and older: 42 (16.9%)	
Education level	University degree: 141 (57.3%)	Non-univ degree: 102 (41.5%)	Missing: 3 (1.2%)	
Siblings	Yes: 215 (86.3%)	No: 33 (13.2%)	Missing: 1 (0.5%)	
Age of the parent	Mean: 62.7		SD [1]: 3.8	
Estate size	Mean: 122.5 ha	SD [1]: 200.5	Range: 4–2549 ha	

Forest Benefits, Number of Answers (Percentage)					
	Not Important	**Less Important**	**Quite Important**	**Important**	**Missing**
Forest income	42 (17.1%)	78 (31.3%)	81 (32.9%)	48 (19.3%)	0
Hunting and fishing	49 (19.7%)	62 (24.9%)	64 (25.7%)	74 (29.7%)	0
Berries and mushrooms	50 (20.2%)	61 (24.7%)	80 (32.4%)	56 (22.7%9	2
Firewood and timber	18 (7.3%)	47 (18.9%)	81 (32.5%)	101 (40.6%)	2
Residence on forest estate	50 (20.1%)	67 (26.9%)	75 (30.1%)	53 (21.3%)	4
Recreation and outdoor life	4 (1.6%)	24 (9.6%)	87 (34.9%)	132 (53.0%)	2
Contact with childhood environment	8 (3.2%)	31 (12.4%)	105 (42.2%)	103 (41.4%)	2
Forest ownership tradition	14 (5.6%)	48 (19.3%)	115 (46.2%)	69 (27.7%)	3

Childhood Characteristics, Number of Answers (Percentage)					
	Not Important	**Less Important**	**Quite Important**	**Important**	**Missing**
Economic importance of forest ownership to the parents	23 (9.2%)	70 (28.1%)	90 (36.1%)	52 (20.9%)	14
Social importance of forest ownership to the parents	15 (6.0%)	46 (18.5%)	108 (43.4%)	72 (28.1%)	8
Helped the parents	Yes: 164 (65.9%)		No: 83 (33.3%)	Missing: 2 (0.8%)	
Grown up on estate	Yes: 127 (51.0%)		No: 121 (48.5%)	Missing: 1 (0.5%)	

[1] SD: standard deviation.

Table 2. The relationship between the place where the respondents grew up and the place where they currently live, number (percentage).

	Current Place of Residence		
	Same Municipality	**Northern Sweden**	**Southern Sweden**
Grew up on forest estate	69 (68.3%)	32 (37.2%)	26 (42.6%)
Did not grew up on the forest estate	32 (31.7%)	54 (62.8%)	35 (57.4%)

3. Results

A large majority of the respondents (190 or 76.3%) expressed their interest in taking over the forest estate, while 59 (or 23.7%) were not interested in taking over the forest estate. The logistic regression model with only demographic variables (model I) was statistically significant (Table 3), indicating that the demographic predictors, as a set, significantly differentiate between those respondents who are willing to take over and those respondents who are not willing. The variance accounted for by model I was, according to Somers' D, 0.440. The model predicted 95.1% of the respondents willing to take over correctly, but only 8.6% of those who were not willing to take over, resulting in an overall success rate of 74.5%. The predictors that were added to model I in the stepwise process were gender, the present

place of residence in respect to the location of the estate, the age of the respondents and the age of the parents.

Table 3. Logistic regression analysis of the interest to take over as a function of demographic variables, benefits and aspects of respondents' childhood.

	Model I (Demographic) Log-Likelihood = 241.941 AIC = 255.944			**Model II (Demographic and Forest Values) Log-Likelihood = 206.835 AIC = 224.835**			**Model III (Demographic and Benefits and Childhood) Log-Likelihood = 187.696 AIC = 205.691**		
	Chi-Square	**df**	***p*-Value**	**Chi-Square**	**df**	***p*-Value**	**Chi-Square**	**df**	***p*-Value**
Likelihood ratio	27.44	6	**0.0001**	57.37	8	**<0.0001**	57.15	8	**<0.0001**
Gender	9.76	1	**0.0018**	4.63	1	**0.0315**	1.46	1	0.2265
Present residence	10.21	2	**0.0061**	6.94	2	**0.0312**	4.40	2	0.1106
Age	5.00	2	0.0819		2				
Age parent	1.83	1	0.176		1				
Forest income				7.54	1	**0.0060**	4.77	1	**0.0288**
Hunting and fishing				7.71	1	**0.0082**	7.50	1	**0.0062**
Berries and mushrooms				2.91	1	0.0882	2.16	1	0.1417
Recreation				1.22	1	0.2686			
Tradition				6.25	1	**0.0124**	5.84	1	**0.0157**
Help							7.61	1	**0.0058**

AIC: Akaike Information Criterion; Chi-Square score: degrees of freedom; *p*-value: *p*-values less than 0.05 are considered significant and marked in bold.

Adding the respondents attitudes to benefits that owning a forest estate might offer (model II) resulted in a significantly improved model. The variance accounted for by this model was, according to Somers' D, 0.616. Model II predicted 92.7% of the respondents willing to take over correctly and 31.4% of those not willing to take over, giving an overall success rate of 78.9%. The respondents' interest for income of the forest and hunting and fishing had a significant impact on the willingness to take over or not. Moreover, the attitude towards a forest owners' tradition was found to be significant while the age of the respondent or the age of the age of the parent were no longer eligible to enter the model. The interest in berries and recreation and outdoor activities were found eligible to be added to model II and taken along for analysis in the third model.

Of the childhood variables available for the analysis, only the aspect if the respondent helped the parents was included into model III while recreation was found not to be eligible for the model. A further improvement in the variance was accounted for by this model (0.642 according to Somers' D). This model predicted also 92.7% of the respondents willing to take over correctly while 31.4% of those not willing to take over were predicted correctly, resulting in an overall success rate of 78.9%.

Table 4 shows the odds ratios and the 95% confidence intervals for the variables in model III. According to the Wald criteria, it is three times more likely for respondents that helped their parents with the management of the forest to be willing to take over than those that did not. Respondents who valued a forest ownership tradition and/or hunting and fishing high were 1.7 more likely to be willing to take over the forest compared to those that valued these benefits low, while respondents who valued income from the forest high were 1.5 more likely to be willing to take over the forest. Respondents living in the same municipality as the estate is located were almost three times more likely to be willing to take over than respondents who have moved to the southern part of Sweden, while respondents living in the northern part of Sweden were 1.5 times more likely to be willing to take over compared to those who moved to the south. Male respondents were 1.7 more likely to be willing to take over the property than female respondents.

The Chi-square tests revealed that women helped their parents significantly less with the management of the forest compared to men (47.1% compared to 80.4%, $p < 0.0001$). Table 5 shows the activities that female and male respondents helped with.

Table 4. Odds ratio estimates for the logistic regression model on the interest to take over.

Effect	Estimate	95% Wald Confidence Limits	
Men vs. women	1.680	0.725	3.898
Present residence (north vs. south)	1.566	0.658	3.730
Present residence (same vs. south)	2.788	1.069	7.268
Forest income	1.551	1.046	2.300
Hunting and fishing	1.660	1.155	2.386
Berries and mushrooms	0.735	0.488	1.108
Tradition	1.768	1.114	2.807
Help (no vs. yes)	0.331	0.151	0.727

Table 5. The number and proportion of men and women who helped their parents with the management of the estate according to their activities.

Activities	Women Number (%)	Men Number (%)
Harvesting	11 (10.5)	81 (56.3)
Timber transport	2 (1.9)	27 (10.8)
Planting	32 (30.5)	85 (59.0)
Cleaning	24 (22.9)	95 (66.0)
Planning	1 (1.0)	21 (14.6)
Administration	2 (1.9)	4 (2.8)

Gender and the present residence in relation to the property also showed to be related ($p < 0.0014$) with 36.2% of the women presently living in Southern Sweden, compared to 16.1% of the men. This is also reflected in the relation between the present residence and help ($p < 0.0001$). Women were also significantly less interested in hunting ($p = 0.0194$), but more interested in berries and mushrooms ($p < 0.0001$). Those respondents that valued income high, valued also the forest ownership tradition as high ($p < 0.0001$) and helped their parents to a larger extent ($p = 0.0133$). Similar relations were found for respondents that valued hunting high ($p = 0.0481$ respectively $p = 0.0140$). Respondents that valued forest income high also perceived that their parents valued the economic importance of forest ownership as high ($p = 0.0012$).

In Table 6 the reasons for having no ambitions to take over the estate are shown according to gender. For men, the main reasons were disinterest/lack of knowledge and their present place of residence in relation to the location of the estate. For women with a lack of ambition to take over, the main reasons were their present place of residence, and time—as well as their perceived need to help with the management of the estate.

Table 6. Reasons for having no ambition to take over the forest estate according to gender.

Reason	Men (%)	Women (%)
I do not have the interest or knowledge	13.6	2.7
Living too far away	27.3	32.4
Do not have the time	9.1	24.3
My parents do not need my help	9.1	27.0
My parents have somebody else to help	9.1	10.8

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that explain the interest of adult offspring in taking over their parents' forest estate by differentiating between the characteristics of those who are willing to take over and those who are not. Looking at the differences between the three models, it appears that the respondents' values contributed most to explaining the difference in willingness to take over the forest in this study. Model II and III clearly improved in the variance that was accounted for compared to model I and were much better in predicting the percentage of respondents that were

not willing to take over. Research in the succession difficulties in farming has predominantly focused on the effect of demographic variables. This may be caused by the fact that farming is still seen as a profession, for which structural adjustments in society might be needed to sustain its existence. Although forest ownership can be described in entrepreneurial terms, becoming a forest owner is today not seen as a professional choice, which seems to be reflected in the factors that were found to be significant.

Helping the parents with work around the forest estate was found to be the most significant factor. These results suggest that the socialization of offspring to the concept of forest ownership by helping their parents is crucial for their willingness to take over. Bliss and Martin [35], as well as Lähdesmäki and Matilainen [36], found that working with the forest contributes to the identity of being the owner of the forest. Häggqvist et al. [37] found a strong relationship between self-activity and forest knowledge among forest owners. Furthermore, in farming this process of creating a self-identity as a farmer through work has been acknowledged. Keating and Munro [38] described the transfer of the family farm as a process that starts with the introduction of the offspring to practical farm work. Grubbström et al. [39] found that helping their farming parents as a child was important for building a sense of responsibility for the farm, as well as gaining knowledge. Grubbström et al. [39] also pointed out that such practices are disappearing, which may lead to fewer offspring with ambitions to succeed their parents. Kronholm and Staal Wästerlund [23] found that Swedish children often have recreational activities in the forest during their early childhood but, as they grew older, their activities related to forestry became rarer. Currently, offspring of forest owners rarely help their parents with forestry activities according to Kronholm and Staal Wästerlund [23]. Brandth and Overrein [40] found that the parental practices on farms in Norway have changed considerably. Previously, children would follow their parents, often their father, into the parent's work. As youngsters, they would play around their working parents, and, as the children grew older, they would help. Work stress, as well as safety precautions, do now prevent parents from looking after the children while working, so children do not follow them anymore, according to Brandth and Overrein [40]. Moreover, Fisher and Burton [41] argued that the breakdown in early childhood socialization, due to changes in agricultural practices has led to less interest among children to succeed their parents. Similar risks are apparently possible for private forest owners as the self-activity level is decreasing [37]. Brandth and Overrein [40] also argued that there has been a change in perception of what good parental practices should be (especially for fathers). It has changed from the "apprenticeship model of fathering" to "intensive parenting", where there is a significant involvement of the parent in the life of the child. Modern farmers acknowledge societies' expectation that parents dedicate themselves to the optimalization of their child's future life chances, according to Brandth and Overrein [40]. At present, parents join their children in their leisure activities, not the other way around, which seems to agree with what van den Akker et al. [15] argued. As farmers want their children to have similar chances as children in cities, fathers follow to soccer practices (or similar activities) rather than taking their children out on the farm or into the forest [40]. This new way of looking at parenting may well affect children's willingness to take over their parents' forest in the future. If helping their parents with forest work is decreasing as research seem to suggest, the willingness to take over the forest ownership is therefore likely to decrease in the future.

Hunting and fishing were also found to explain the respondents' interest in taking over the forest estate. This can be explained by the Swedish regulations that give access to these activities. In Sweden, hunting is a common leisure activity: According to Danell et al. [42], approximately 300,000 persons take out hunting permits each year. The most important hunting activity in the northern part of Sweden is moose hunting [43]. In Sweden, hunting rights on the estate for cloven hoofed game, such as moose, belong to the owner of the estate, so owning a forest estate facilitates access to such hunting activities. Hunting, especially moose hunting, is often carried out by a hunting team in Sweden, and is therefore a very important social event. Forest estate owners and close relatives (often the males) gather for the start of the hunting season. According to Gunnarsdotter [44], for a majority of estate owners, hunting is a form of land management that strengthens the relationship with the estate and

the countryside, including the people that live there, which is probably why no relation was found between the present residence and hunting and fishing. The right to fish is, to some extent, regulated in a similar way [45].

Additional value factors that explained the willingness to take over the forest estate were the interest in forest income, as well as the importance given to maintaining a forest owners' tradition. Moreover, these factors seem to be a result of the socialization process of the respondents into the concept of forest ownership. Eggers et al. [32], found that present forest owners with a high interest in income from the forest also had a management strategy focused on forest productivity for future harvest opportunities. Ni Dhubhain et al. [46] argued that forest owners with production goals tend to have an active forest management. This view seems to be transferred to their offspring as respondents that perceived a high economic importance in the attitude of the parents towards forest ownership also expressed a high interest in forest income. They also helped their parents to a larger extent than respondents that did not perceive that their parents had an economic perspective on their forest ownership. Eggers et al. [32] did not find a relation to a specific management strategy for forest owners that valued a forest ownership tradition. Respondents that value this tradition high in this study perceived a high social importance of forest ownership among their parents, which seems to contribute to their attitude in becoming a forest owner themselves. It should be kept in mind that the offspring participating in this study were children to members of a forest owners' association. Lidestav and Nordfjell [33], as well as Berlin et al. [34], found that members of a forest owners' association value forest income, as well as forest ownership tradition, higher than other forest owners. The background of the respondents may therefore play an important for the values of the respondents and their willingness to take over the forest estate.

Gender was found to be a significant factor in models I and II, but not in model III when childhood experiences were added. The results also showed that women helped their parents significantly less compared to men, which may partly explain why gender no longer was significant in model III. These results indicate that the socialization process towards forest ownership currently still is biased by gender norms. Gender socialization is described by Follo et al. [47] as the process by which men and women learn the expectations associated with their gender. These socio-culturally established understandings and norms function, according to Follo et al. [47], as a structuralizing category. As private forest ownership has its roots in the farming culture, the norms can still be deduced from this culture. According to Brandth [48], farmers' children are socialized into the concept that the family's prime interest is the continuation of the farm in the family and that patrilineal inheritance is preferred, hence women are not expected to be interested in taking over. This is also reflected in the upbringing of the children. Riley [49] found that there was a gendered way of socialization into farming that starts at a young age. Girls are expected to help when needed and see their efforts as transitory, while boys are often involved in the farm on a regular basis, socialized into the expectation of taking over one day [49]. This is also reflected in Table 6, showing that women not willing to take over to a much larger extent than men, argue that their parents do not expect them to help. Lidestav [13] discussed under what circumstances women can become forest owners in competition with their brothers, and found that women either had to show more or at least as much interest/commitment to the estate, or that the brother(s) showed a lack of interest. According to Lidestav [13], brothers are seldom outrivaled in these situations. Joint ownership was often seen as a solution to the equity problem, giving all offspring an equal share, often because of the high costs involved in compensating siblings who otherwise would not take over the estate. Häggqvist et al. [37] found a significant difference between the self-activity of male and female forest owners, similar to the results presented in Table 5, indicating that there is a lack of female role models that challenge this cultural script and allow young women to develop their identity towards forest ownership. The gendered cultural aspects seem to suppress current forest owners' female offspring in getting interesting in becoming forest owners, which is, without extra mitigation efforts, likely to reinforce the male-dominated ownership.

Another factor identified as significant for the willingness to take over in model I and II, but not in model III, is the present residence in relation to the forest estate. Here, a significant relationship was found between the present residence and help showing that respondents living close to the forest estate also helped their parents to a larger extent than respondents living further away. Table 2 shows that a majority of those not living in the same municipality as the forest estate, did not grow up on the estate. They are, therefore, most likely the offspring of absentee forest owners. No significant differences were found in the valuation of income, hunting and fishing or forest ownership tradition between those presently living in the same municipality and those living in another municipality. Self-activity among Swedish absentee owners is lower than resident owners [37], and similar results were found by Petrzelka et al. [19] in the USA. As working with the estate seems such an important factor for the building of a self-identity, parents that are absentee owners might give their offspring less opportunity to familiarize themselves with the concept of being a forest owner and develop a forest owner identity. Another explanation might be that the respondents living far from the location of the forest estate do not anticipate moving to it at some future date and, at the same time, do not see absentee ownership as a desirable feature. Rickenbach and Kittredge [50] found that distance to the estate had a significant impact on the motivation of being a forest owner, and may therefore also be a significant factor in the decision to becoming a forest owner. Yet it does not explain why the odds are twice as high for a respondent living in the south of Sweden to say no than a respondent living in Northern Sweden.

In this study, potential respondents within one family were randomly ordered, so the unwillingness of the adult offspring to take over the forest estate cannot be interpreted as an estate with no willing successors. Cassidy and McGrath [51] interviewed young Irish adults with a farm background and who were siblings to the designated successors of their family farm. These siblings expressed a deep attachment to the family farm, as well as an adherence to the cultural scripts surrounding succession. The fact that a sibling would take over gave still them access to the farm as their home and identity marker. The attachment to the forest estate as being a part of the family history and tradition does not, therefore, necessarily have to be a driving force for succession if there is somebody else that is seen as a suitable future manager of the estate and if the person is given access to an emotional attachment to the estate by the designated successor.

Two aspects that, surprisingly, did not materialize as factors affecting the succession process were the size of the property and whether or not the respondent had grown up on the property. In this study, the average size of the forest estate (122.5 ha) was large compared to the average forest estate size in the area where respondents' family forest was situated (72 ha according to [3]). Eggers et al. [32] found that owners of large properties often have a management strategy focused on forest production. The average size of a forest estate owned by a member of a forest owners' association is also larger than the average size of an estate owned by a non-member [11]. The non-significance of estate size in this study may therefore be the result of the sample used. Why growing up on the estate did not appear as a significant factor may be explained by what the family uses the estate for. According to Jansson and Müller [52], Sweden has 500,000–700,000 second homes that are used by families for recreation. These second homes are, to a large extent, former farms, the permanent homes for previous generations that have now been transformed into second homes or houses that were specifically built as such on an estate. According to Jansson and Müller [52], the main purpose for these homes is to have contact with nature, a place to relax and to keep in contact with native districts. Respondents who did not grow up on the estate may have links to it through these second homes. This is where they may have spent (part of) their summer vacations during their childhood and, therefore, value the place as important to them.

Previous research on farm succession identified a number of factors that were not included in this study, such as the profitability of the farm or the assets available. Potter and Lobley [53] found that uncertainty in succession of a farm often leads to under-investment in the farm, making it less attractive for a potential successor to take over. This study did not include questions that assessed the respondents' opinion of the prevailing condition of the forest, so we do not know if this is a factor

that adult offspring might consider in the succession process. When Lönnstedt [54] interviewed forest owners twenty years ago, he found that forest owners often planned their management strategy with a generational perspective, saving mature stands in the final face of the intergenerational transfer as an economic resource for the next owner to draw upon to cover costs occurring at the takeover. To what extent forest owners still have this generational perspective in their management strategy, especially if the succession of the property by the offspring is undecided for, is an interesting question to be investigated further.

Other aspects that were identified affecting succession and not included in this study are financial aspects, such as death duties, estate tax, and the market value of the estate. At the time of the study, Sweden had no death duties, neither were forest owners required to pay estate tax. Market value may however be an important aspect in the succession process, especially if the choice of transfer process involves selling the property to one or several offspring to obtain resources for compensating other offspring not taking over the property. According to Nai Svefa [55], the average market value in our study area varied between 20,000 and 30,000 SEK/ha, depending on where the estate is situated. As the average size of an estate varies between 104 and 232 ha in the study area [55], it is a substantial economic investment offspring are often required to make. It should, however, be mentioned that the market value in other parts of the country is even higher. It may be one of the major reasons why taking over the estate by several offspring together has gained in popularity. Another influencing aspect that is difficult to cover in a questionnaire study is family relationships. The personal relationships between family members may have a large impact on the willingness to maintain the family heritage as forest owners. It is also assumed to be a very important aspect influencing the way offspring want to take over the estate: A disagreement between siblings may make the willingness to take over together less attractive.

The results of this study do not indicate an increase of estate sales due to lack of interest among the offspring of the present owners. However, it is important to keep in mind that this study was carried out among offspring of members of a forest owner association. Members have a higher level of self-activity [37] and have acquired their estate to a larger extent through purchase from their parents or relatives [11]. It may therefore be assumed that forest ownership is more important for their self-identity than it is for non-members, which they may have transferred subconsciously or consciously to their offspring. Brandth [48] pointed out that continuity of the farm land as part of the family is still the prime interest that farmers' offspring have to adhere to, despite new societal norms, and this may be stronger among members of forest owner associations compared to non-members. The indirect way used to reach our study population resulted in a skewed response rate where offspring in the age group 30 to 34 dominated. As the common age to succeed is often higher, the question whether or not to take over was still a hypothetical one to be considered in the future for a large proportion of the respondents. Therefore, these results cannot be interpreted as a prediction of what will happen in the future. Further studies that include offspring to non-members are needed to determine if the expected increase of estate sale will materialize or not.

The parents provided us with contact information on 298 (45%) women and 360 (55%) men. According to Statistics Sweden [31], the Swedish population in the age group 30–50 years old around the time of the study consisted of 49% women and 51% men. Although we asked the parents to give us all the names of all offspring in this age group, it may be possible that some parents may have given us names that they considered relevant in the succession process and excluded others (mainly women) that they judged were less relevant. The offspring in one family were contacted in a random order as their age was not known at that stage. Traditionally, the oldest child (often the son) had priority [12], and to what extent this custom still prevails in the succession process is unknown. This is, again, a reason why the percentage on those willing to take over or not should be treated with great care when used as a prognosis of how the estate market may develop in the future. No question on what decisions already had been made within the family concerning the future ownership of the property was included in the telephone enquiry as this was considered too intimate. The data for

this study were collected in 2008, which is 10 years before this article was finalized. Changes among the demographic compilation and forests management objectives since 2008 were however minor. The only demographic variable changing according to the recent structural analysis made by the Swedish Forest Agency [3] is an increase of forest owners over 65 years of age. This seems to indicate that for many forest owners the intergenerational transfer process has been delayed, which support the need for better understanding of the factors that affect these processes.

This study was carried out as a telephone enquiry, which resulted in a relatively good response rate (48% of parents who provided information on their offspring and 78% among the offspring contacted). Yet, enquiries of the type used in this study have limitations, as discussed by Bliss and Martin [35]. Most of the questions were multiple-choice questions where the number of possible answers to choose between was limited as the respondents neither had the questions nor the possible answers in front of them. Bliss and Martin [35] pointed out that limitation in the response options often leads to vague categories that might be interpreted differently by respondents, especially when it concerns questions related to attitudes and beliefs. The questionnaire was tested before the study started to gather input on the answer options to be included, as well as their formulation, yet the set-up may have limited the respondents' ability to balance the choices put in front of them, and may have limited their potential to express their views. Although the option "other, please specify" was included in most questions, this option was chosen only on very few occasions, something that according to Bliss and Martin [35] may distort the actual results, as respondents would rather choose from the offered responses than formulate their own answers. Bliss and Martin [35] also pointed out the difficulty in evaluating the data quality. In this study for example, the activity of an offspring helping their parents was found to be a significant factor. Yet the respondents were not asked how much they helped, so it might have been occasionally or on a very regular basis. Respondents may, however, have thought about the frequency when answering this question and interpreted it differently.

This study was carried out among forest owners in the northern part of Sweden, where private forest ownership is less common compared to the southern part of Sweden. The southern part of Sweden is also more populated than the northern part, which may affect the factor distance to the forest estate. It is relatively more common for people from the north to move to the south than vice versa. Distance to the forest estate may, therefore, have another impact on offspring's interest in taking over forest estates in Southern Sweden.

5. Conclusions

Socialization during childhood is an important factor in the development of an interest to take over the forest estate in the future among the offspring of forest owners. The current trend of forest owners becoming less active themselves and the modern paradigm on parenting may impede the possible development of a self-identity towards forest ownership among their descendants. Organizations that offer support to forest owners can help limiting these impediments by including activities of interest for the offspring in the events they organize for forest owners and incorporate them in their meetings with forest owners. The accompanying hunting and fishing rights in the forest estate are coveted benefits for adult offspring who are willing to take over as owners of the estate. Further studies into what factors that seem to affect the willingness of offspring to succeed their parents as forest owners are needed to determine if the factors found here are common among offspring of all type of forest owners in the whole of Sweden.

Funding: This study was made possible with support of the forest owners' association Norra Skogsägarna who covered the costs for the telephone enquiry.

Acknowledgments: Assistant Professor Janet Chaseling provided invaluable help in discussing the analysis of the data. I also want to thank Associate Professor Gun Lidestav and the three anonymous reviewers for their comments on the manuscript and all the respondents for their valuable input.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest. The founding sponsor had no role in the design of the study, the interpretation of the data, writing of the manuscript and the decision to publish the results.

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