

**“Taking pappa leave?
Great!**

**How will your
job get
done??”**



Companies' gradual accommodation of caregiving fathers in Sweden

Update on research by:

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Research funded by the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research

Fathers' leave use

- Fathers use only 24% of days available to couples
- 91 days for fathers vs 342 days for mothers
- Only 12% of couples share equitably (60/40)

Why a gender gap?

- Family finances
- Parents' preferences
- Lack of political support for equality
- Lack of workplace support (especially private sector)



Previous survey research (2006)

- In only 15% of companies did majority (60%+) of fathers take 2 pappa months
- Increasing formal and informal support for fathers' leavetaking, but majority of companies not supportive

Case study research goals

- to discover what policies and practices embedded in corporate culture and structure facilitate or hinder fathers' leavetaking
- to explore transition from corporate "accommodation" to "transformation"

Companies studied

- 5 large, male-dominated companies with a range of father leave use (in 2006 survey)
- Blue-collar & white-collar workers
- Manufacturing (3), service (1), retail (1) in core industries
- Swedish-owned & headquartered

Companies in the Swedish context

- Equality policy & leave legislation
- Cultural discourse on fatherhood
- Concern about public image
- Value retention & productivity
- Well-trained personnel with job security
- Co-determination law
- Strong sense of worker solidarity

Study participants in 5 companies

56 informants ("chain")

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graph LR
    A[Two top managers (1 HR)] --> B[White-collar middle manager]
    A --> C[Blue-collar middle manager]
    B --> D[Focus group 3-5 white-collar fathers in work group]
    C --> E[Focus group 3-5 blue-collar fathers in work group]
  
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Methods

- Workplace interviews - 1-1.5 hours
- 6 hypothetical vignettes + 9 questions
- Taped, transcribed (179 pages)
- Respondents interested in discussing topic
- Hybrid thematic analysis

Reactions to interviews

- People almost never talk about parental leave, not like this. It's more like we congratulate new fathers and check out the child if they come and visit, but discussing different problems or what would be good? No. (WC Manager in FF co.)
- This is so interesting! I didn't really think that it would be fun to answer questions about this, but I notice that I have become quite engaged in our discussion - it is of course about our children! (BC father in NF co.)

Theoretical frameworks

Gender theory – to understand resistance

Workplace is a gendered social institution ~

- organized around a "male model of work"
- discounts men's caregiving responsibilities
- rewards visible time at work

Theoretical frameworks

Organizational learning theory – to understand change

Organizations respond to challenges through

- Gaining knowledge and developing skills
- Balancing established routines with exploring new opportunities
- Recognizing short-term *and* long-term benefits to individuals and companies

Research topics explored

- Employer attitude/mode of learning
- Rationales for support
- Strategies for handling work, supporting fathers
- Negative and positive outcomes
- Barriers and facilitators
- Change drivers

I am careful not to sigh, while thinking, God, how difficult! You want to be at home now, too?!

No, I am careful and say instead, "Cool, we will see how we can solve this. Have you some suggestions?"

I usually try to encourage them to come up with solutions about who we should bring in or move around.

They know each other so well so that they know who functions best together.

– Blue-collar manager, FF co.

Organizational learning paradigms concerning fathers' leavetaking

	Accommodation	Elaboration	Transformation
Employer attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reluctant compliance • Request as random event • Focus on negative outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral acceptance • "Problems" to solve • Some experimentation and learning • Note positive and negative outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive support • Experimentation & institutionalization of learning • Focus on positive outcomes for entire company
Employer rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain star performers • Obey law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term business needs • "Guys should be at home with children if they want to" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term business needs • Societal goals

Company Strategies for Work and Father Support

Accommodation	Transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust individual to give advance notice, develop plan for how work will be done • Company needs dictate length and timing of leave • WC work - postpone, delegate, do at home, come in • BC work - replace, delegate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager training • Manager, individual, work group develops plan • Preferences honored • Replacements • Delegated work compensated • Mixed-age work groups formed • Leavetakers' raises protected • Leavetakers kept informed • Evaluation and followup

Outcomes

<p>Negative – threaten profits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lost competence Work undone Makes teamwork difficult Overburdens co-workers Requires too much collaboration 	<p>Positive – enhance profits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attractive workplace Shows employee care (>retention, productivity) "New blood" in teams Company learns flexibility New opportunities for co-workers "New powers" for fathers
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Barriers to transformation

Economic

Cultural:

- Assume policy is enough
- Lack of leadership
- Lack of managerial role models
- Lack of cultural discourse
- Gendered beliefs & norms

Work practices:

- Structural indispensability
- High job interdependence
- No age mix on teams
- Rapid work pace/demanding jobs
- Lack of managerial training, incentives

Facilitators of transformation

Economic

Cultural:

- High commitment to employees
- Strong approval for active fatherhood
- Solution-focused
- Atmosphere of solidarity & trust
- Highly adaptive to change
- Worker flexibility
- Managerial role models

Work practices:

- Results-focused
- High managerial discretion
- Self-managed work-teams
- Cross-training in place

Change drivers

- Changing demographics of workers, managers
- Cultural discourse about fatherhood
- Recognition of economic benefits of more flexible ways of working

What government could do

- Encourage companies' auditing and monitoring of progress
- Offer companies training and guidance on implementation
- Provide financial support for within-company training and implementation
- Certify and award best company practices
- Tackle prevailing societal gender norms regarding employment and caregiving