“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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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")

- Two top managers (1 HR)
- White-collar middle manager
- Focus group
  - 3-5 white-collar fathers in work group
- Blue-collar middle manager
- Focus group
  - 3-5 blue-collar fathers in work group

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Strategies for Work and Father Support</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accommodation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Trust individual to give advance notice, develop plan for how work will be done</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Company needs dictate length and timing of leave</td>
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<tr>
<td>• WC work - postpone, delegate, do at home, come in</td>
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<td>• BC work – replace, delegate</td>
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<tr>
<th>Employer attitude</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Elaboration</th>
<th>Transformation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reluctant compliance</td>
<td>Neutral acceptance</td>
<td>&quot;Problems&quot; to solve</td>
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<td>Request as random event</td>
<td>Some experimentation and learning</td>
<td>Note positive and negative outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on negative outcomes</td>
<td>Positive support</td>
<td>Experimentation &amp; institutionalization of learning</td>
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<th>Employer rationale</th>
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<tr>
<td>Retain star performers</td>
<td>Short-term business needs</td>
<td>&quot;Guys should be at home with children if they want to&quot;</td>
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<td>Obey law</td>
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<td>Long-term business needs</td>
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<th>Outcomes</th>
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<td><strong>Negative – threaten profits:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lost competence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work undone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makes teamwork difficult</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overburdens co-workers</td>
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<td>Requires too much collaboration</td>
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| **Positive – enhance profits:** |
| Attractive workplace |
| Shows employee care (*retention, productivity) |
| "New blood" in teams |
| Company learns flexibility |
| New opportunities for co-workers |
| "New powers" for fathers |
### Barriers to transformation

**Economic**
- Assume policy is enough

**Cultural:**
- 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**
- High commitment to employees

**Cultural:**
- 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