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## **Fathers in focus: Two discursive analyses on addressing men, work and care**

### **Abstract**

We introduce in this chapter discourse analysis as a methodological tool for studying work-family issues, particularly those of men and fathers in work and care. Work and family involve complex processes and dynamics, where reconciling different interpretations of events are temporally and contextually changing. Current discourses on involved fatherhood raise many questions about men's work and family relationships and the role of care in their life. Here we present two empirical examples using discourse analysis to study work-family issues from a male gender perspective in the Finnish context. Finally, we discuss the (dis)advantages of using discursive analytical perspectives in work-family research.

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, we explore discourse analysis as a methodological tool for studying work-family issues, particularly those of men and fathers in work and care. Despite a proliferation of work-family literature over the past three decades, research employing quantitative methodologies significantly outweighs qualitative approaches (Casper et al., 2007; Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2017). Many recent reviews make visible the fact that work-family research has been dominated by a positivistic paradigm (e.g. Byron, 2005; Bochantin & Cowan, 2016; Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2017; Allen et al., 2018), with focus on the antecedents and consequences of family and work, treating them as separate life domains and most often as being in conflict. Work-family literature has most often dealt with women's (white, middle class, married and with professional careers) problematic aspects of maintaining a healthy relationship between work, care and family (Blair-Loy, 2003). However, recent debates have also brought forward the rise of men's family involvement, and the question of work-family interface for men (Heikkinen & Lämsä, 2017; Kangas et al., 2019). It is common also that the family as a unit is understood in a narrow way – mostly as a nuclear, heterosexual family with one or more children. A typical type of study in this field is a cross-sectional, survey-based assessment that gathers single-source data on the perceived effects of one

domain on another (Poppleton et al., 2008). This type of methodological approach then highlights the characteristics of individuals, their families or their work, and their work–family conflict.

To complement positivistic quantitative research tradition (see for reviews Bochantin & Cowan, 2016; Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2017; Shockley et al., 2017), a stream of qualitative work–family researchers has striven to understand how people interpret their experiences and what kinds of meanings they attribute to those experiences (Merriam, 2009). However, the everyday reality of people who try to manage work and family involves complex processes and dynamics, where reconciling different demands intersect, and where interpretations of events are temporally and contextually changing. To better capture this complexity, work-family researchers have turned to more phenomenological methods to understand the processes that underpin how people manage work and family domains in different contexts and societies (Smithson & Tokoe, 2005).

The emphasis on the meaning of a phenomenon enables qualitative studies to ‘provide insights that are difficult to produce with quantitative research’, such as detailed descriptions of actions taken in real–life contexts that recover and preserve the actual meanings that actors ascribe to those actions and settings (Rynes & Gephart, 2004, p. 455). Thus, the qualitative research strategy has the potential also to re–humanise research and theory by highlighting the human interactions and meanings that underlie the phenomena and relationships impacting the actual work–life and the challenges that people encounter (ibid.). In addition to generating theory, producing new concepts and inducing researchable propositions from data (Lee et al., 1999), qualitative research can elaborate on or assess and scrutinise relationships that have been subject to prior theorising.

Discourse analysis focuses on the organisation of talk and texts as social practices, and on the resources that are drawn upon to enable such practices (Potter, 1996). Discourse analysis may involve studying language in the context of society and culture, and power and all the other forms that language helps us to create and make language meaningful and even to accomplish certain purposes (see Gee & Handford, 2012). As such, discourse analysis is both a branch of linguistics and contributes to the social sciences, although the field of studying discourses is not unitary and cannot be referred to as a singular method (ibid.).

Here, our understanding of onto-epistemological assumptions resides in social constructionism. The key understanding of social constructionism, as presented already by Berger and Luckmann (1966), is that human beings together create and sustain all social phenomena through social practices.

Societies and working life are socially constructed through the interactions of people, but, at the same time, they are experienced by people as if the nature of their world is pre-given and fixed; we are all born into a social world that pre-dates us, and therefore, the context may seem natural. Discourses can be understood as socially constructed as well as socially conditioned; thus, a discourse can consist of situations, objects of knowledge and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people (Wodak, 2011). Locke (2004, p. 5) describes discourse as a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning. Thus, the everyday or mundane use of language can also be a site of political struggle. The value of using discourse analysis in work and family research lies in revealing the hidden motivations embedded in the texts as well as raising ontological and epistemological questions in work and family research (Bochantin & Cowan, 2016; Cowan & Bochantin, 2011). From post-modern perspectives, discourses live their own lives, but they can be important for societies and organisations at meta, meso and micro levels (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000).

Discourses in work and family research address the language of the ordinary and the everyday use of terms and takes into account the local context influencing linguistic terms (Moi, 1999). Our discourse analytical approaches were inspired by Foucauldian emphasis on power as a central element in studying different levels of discourses. Another key aspect as stated above was the social constructivist understanding of discourses both as (re)constituting the reality of the working life and men's care, and as representing and reflecting the earlier and current realities. To contribute to the field of men, work and care, we present two empirical examples using discourse analysis to study work–family issues from a male gender perspective in Finnish context. Further, we discuss the advantages of using discursive analytical perspectives in work–family research as well what kinds of omissions this approach might entail. In the first analysis we applied Carla Willig's (2013) apparatus of six analytical stages to reveal the historically specific phases of fatherhood discourses. In the second analysis we applied a synthesis approach that combines both Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis and discourse psychology, which addresses in particular the social acts employed during individual discussions (i.e. here, interviews with fathers) and how individuals are engaging in such acts (Budds et al., 2014).

Finland levels high in gender equality rankings, and women are working full-time at labour markets. However, women still carry the main responsibility for housework and childcare and they have problems in career advancement. In fact, parental leave is used almost exclusively by mothers in Finland; one-fifth of fathers do not use any of the available family leave (The Social Insurance

Institution of Finland, 2017). In a Nordic comparison, Finnish men are at the bottom of the list for using parental leaves (Cederström, 2019). Thus, a paradox exists: Finland has advanced policies, but fathers' readiness to use parental leave is lower than in other Nordic countries (The Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2017). According to Närvi (2018) one reason for fathers' unwillingness to use longer parental leaves is the lack of organisational practices and it is often the case that companies do not take substitutes for fathers who are on parental leave.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: first, we present an overview of studies on men and fathers in work and care; secondly, we present our two case examples; in the last section, we discuss the examples and the implications of using discourse analysis in work–family research.

### **Looking at men and fathers in work and care**

Fathers' work–family relationship is often unacknowledged in research and in practice, especially in comparison with that of mothers (Holter, 2007; Halrynjo, 2009; Tracy & Rivera, 2010; Burnett et al., 2013). Previous research contains examples of the generally negative workplace responses to men's attempts to be better fathers, and, for instance, make use of parental leave or flexible work schedules (Gatrell & Cooper, 2016; Holter, 2007; Halrynjo, 2009). Fathers who try to reduce their working hours to be more involved with their children and families often face a poor response at work (Gatrell & Cooper, 2016). Marsiglio and Roy (2012) note that men's involvement in work is the main cause of their emotional distance from their families. Hence, employed fathers have tended consistently to 'fall back' into the gendered roles expected of them (Miller, 2011; Gatrell & Cooper, 2016). These studies support the understanding that employers or societies do not see men as caregivers. This type of strong breadwinning discourse in many societies appears to remain a prevailing issue for many fathers and shapes their reality at work and with respect to family issues, while bearing in mind there have been some recent developments towards prioritising caregiving and involved fatherhood (Kangas et al., 2017; Heikkinen & Lämsä, 2017).

Care, caring work and unpaid care at home and work and in other sectors of life is still strongly gendered (Bowlby et al., 2010; Tronto, 1992). The gendered nature of care impacts the segregation of care, making it a 'woman's work area' and also an innate part of a woman's (and man's) private life, impacting decisions about how to spend the time and energy, and affecting career prospects. However, increasingly an 'involved fatherhood' phenomenon has been emerging (Eräranta & Moisander, 2011), which challenges the traditional role of a man as a breadwinner. Involved

fatherhood is described as a role wherein the man takes responsibility for care and nurturing. It depicts men as capable of co-parenting and engaging in active interaction with their spouses and children. Involved fatherhood also portrays fathers as spending more time with and being present for their children and being available to them on a daily basis (Wall & Arnold, 2007; Eräranta & Moisander, 2011). Often the traditional care roles exclude men from intimacy and caring. Discourses have begun to focus on men's care only quite recently – even though some men have cared for their children for ages and various societies have recognised different types of caring masculinities (Elliot, 2016). The involved fatherhood phenomenon offers a different portrayal of male care, one where the spouses are equal in working life as well; both careers are taken seriously and both parties 'do' care work within the family (Heikkinen & Lämsä, 2017). This phenomenon reforms the traditional role of a spouse and, for example, challenge the assumptions of many male professionals or managers regarding home and care by suggesting that there is no longer a (female) homemaker staying at home to take care of domestic responsibilities (Heikkinen, 2014). Therefore, the involved fatherhood phenomenon offers spouses an opportunity to share in the domestic work participate in the work–family relationship on an equal footing, thus diminishing gender differences and fostering different modes of family involvement for women and men (ibid.).

Not only mothers, but also fathers, appear to be affected by intensified workplace cultures and the strains of family life. For example, men with a newborn infant usually work longer hours than at any other point in their careers. Yet, despite apparent pressures on men with families to work more intensively and for longer hours during such phases of increased costs and often during early or mid-career stages, fathers often fade into the background in work–family discussions as well as in research (Burnett et al., 2013). While studies dealing with discourses on men's work, family and care have grown in number (Holter, 2007; Thébaud & Pedulla, 2016), it is important to evaluate what this body of knowledge can offer to theory and practice. We emphasise that a methodology with the ability to capture the intersections of and dynamics between men, work and care are of outmost importance, as such a focus allows for an analysis of important and often neglected issues that are raised on a daily basis from a male gender perspective. The advantage of using discourse analysis brings out the complexity of such issues and, as Locke and Yarwood (2017) note, calls attention to the fact that even fathers themselves state that they want to be more involved with the care of their children (Miller, 2011; Dermott & Miller, 2015). Thus, this kind of focus and method may reveal, for instance, differences between acceptable fatherhood practices and the level of father's actual involvement in parenting practices and care (Johansson & Klinth, 2008; Dermott & Miller, 2015). The value of using discourse analysis lies in addressing fathers' experiences: many fathers can

find themselves marginalised, enduring gender disparity and negative peer relations with respect to work-family issues (Burnett et al., 2013). To study work-family interface through discourse analytical approaches can reveal the dominant discourses on men, masculinities and fathers' roles in care. This can enable challenging the current dominant discourses on fatherhood and masculinity in working life contexts (see Burr, 2015) and reformulating understanding of work-life 'balance' and its demands and power structures behind them.

To summarise, discourse analysis offers an opportunity for further exploration of societal, organisational and individual factors that might hide the positive and negative reactions that men with domestic interests encounter; it is significant to explore these reactions to better understand the challenges impacting men's participation in family life and women's advancement in organisations. The societal or national culture and contexts shaping individuals' experiences of the work-family interface have often been unacknowledged in theories and research done on work-family balance (Powell et al., 2009). Importantly, this methodological approach may offer positive understandings of the prejudice against male employees using parental leave and suggest that traditional gender stereotypes still affect relationships, even if gender relations have become more complex. In the following section, we introduce two empirical research examples using discourse analysis in work-family research. The examples offer an opportunity to delve into the ways men invoke different aspects of fatherhood and masculinities within their talk about work-family concerns. With these examples, we aim to highlight how men define their fatherhood amidst competing discourses on work and family.

### **The first case example: Discourse analysis in media texts on fatherhood**

The first example has to do with how media discourses on fatherhood have developed during the last two and half decades in Finland. The original study was based on data gathered from business magazines and the most widely read daily newspaper in Finland (Kangas et al., 2019). According to the social constructivist epistemological premise of the study, the writers emphasised how the mass media importantly reflects social reality while at the same time (re)producing and modifying it. Thus, the media representations reflect people's values and understandings of, for instance, fatherhood and work-life 'balance', giving it an active role in shaping and challenging how fatherhood or the work-life interface are valued, understood and (re/de)constructed (Fairclough, 1998; McCullagh & Campling, 2002).

The writers collected the data systematically from three different Finnish media sources – the largest mainstream newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, which regularly publishes articles on work and family issues, and the two leading business publications, *Kauppalehti* and *Talouselämä*. These reach a wide general audience in Finland, and they are also followed carefully by working professionals on a daily basis. The sample was gathered for the original study through the publications' electronic databases using particular keywords: FATHER, FATHERHOOD, FAMILY, WORKLIFE and MANAGER. The search resulted in a total of 531 articles. After careful readings, the writers chose 67 articles for further analysis. The main criteria for the in-depth reading and analysis was that the article discussed fatherhood from the viewpoint of male professionals or managers in the context of working life or organisations. The reason for choosing the years 1990–2015 was that during these years, many remarkable changes took place in the Finnish parental leave system that increased opportunities for fathers to participate in family life. In 1991, fathers were given the possibility of six days' paternity leave; in 2003, a one month paternity leave was introduced, which still today is the only non-transferable leave for fathers; finally, in early 2013 paternity leave and the father's quota were amalgamated, giving fathers the right to nine weeks of paternity leave (Kangas et al., 2019).

Researchers have begun applying a discourse analytic approach because it reveals the contradictions within and between discourses (Jäger & Maier, 2009) on fatherhood in the context of work life. In other words, by using discourse analytic approach researchers can also unmask contradictory societal and/or organisational discourses on fatherhood. As such, the writers came to the conclusion that discourse analysis would be an appropriate method for studying media texts to better understand how fatherhood is represented and how this relates to men's work–family interface in a specific context. This study focused on media discourses pertaining to managers and professionals as fathers, men often viewed as role models within their own organisations and wider society (Weaver et al., 2005). They are in influential positions as regards changes in organisational cultures, such as the choice of whether to increase fathers' willingness to take family leave. Thus, it was interesting to analyse how the media represented the choices and behaviours of men in the role of managers and fathers. It was also intriguing to study discourses pertaining to this group of men because the assumptions and ideas on leadership and organising are still often masculine or masculinist in nature (Grint, 2011; Klenke, 2011; Katila & Eriksson, 2013; Powell, 2014).

The voices in the analysis were those of journalists and the experts and practitioners they interviewed or quoted as a means of constructing discourses on what takes place in organisations and how it relates to work–life balance. As discourse analysis is not a clear method and implies many



epistemological and ontological viewpoints, the various approaches employed by, for instance organisation and management studies, differed in their criteria and level of discourse analysis (see Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). Thus, it was crucial to decide upon the measures by which to apply discourse analysis. The present study was inspired by Carla Willig's (2013) approach to (Foucauldian) discourse analysis, with separate stages that address discursive constructions, discourses, action orientation, positionings, practice and subjectivity. Therefore, the actual analysis followed those six stages which was conducted manually; however, the analytical process was iterative, and the different phases overlapped with each other.

In the first phase, the texts were carefully read and notes were made about the various ways in which the articles discussed managerial and professional men's work–family relationship (Willig, 2013, p. 131). We then placed the various constructions of the topic within wider contexts (ibid., p. 132), such as organisational and societal contexts. We also paid attention to potential topics and issues not discussed in the data. For instance, texts written in the 1990s largely failed to discuss the role of organisations in supporting work–family balance. When we reflected together on the preliminary observations, it was noticed that the data contained two recurring ways of talking about and constructing men's work–family interphase: one had to do with the demands of work not being reconcilable with involved fatherhood, which refers to a father who has a close and caring relationship with his children (Wall & Arnold, 2007); the other talking point constructed involved fatherhood as a modern ideal that should be followed. As the result of the first phase of the readings of the data, two different discourses emerged. The first one implied that no change in gender relationships or the role of fathers is needed, which we named the '*working fathers – no time for caring*' discourse. The second discourse recognised from the data was that change takes place gradually and over a long period of time, which we named the '*fatherhood in flux*' discourse (Kangas et al., 2019).

In the next phase, the action orientations were investigated in the texts. We asked what could possibly be achieved by constructing men's work–family relationship in this particular way through this particular discourse (Willig, 2013, p. 132). 'Working fathers - no time for caring' discourse seeks to maintain the idea that men's work is incompatible with fatherhood while 'fatherhood in flux' discourse aspire to advance involved fatherhood in context of organisations. This was the moment to take a closer look at the subject positions that the discourses offered for the men – they were relatively narrow even in the 'fatherhood in flux' discourse. The roles offered were very much based on a model of the white heterosexual male as exemplified by many business leaders and even politicians, such as the former Prime Minister of Finland. The analysis was continued by exploring the relationship

between the two identified discourses and established practice within Finnish society and organisations. This was done by evaluating the opportunities and/or constraints for action produced by the discourses. Especially, ‘working fathers - no time for caring’ discourse produces traditional gender roles in organisational life and thus silence men’s family concerns and responsibilities. In the final stage of the analysis, we concentrated on the subjectivities created by the discourses and addressed the question of what could be felt or experienced from the ‘man’s position’ in the discourse (ibid., p. 133). For example, in ‘fatherhood in flux’ discourse in 2010’s young men feel that they are good fathers when they decide to be and are able to dedicate themselves to their children. The entire analytical process was iterative, wherein the different phases overlapped with each other (Kangas et al., 2019). Through discussions in the research group, we noted that the selected texts repeatedly addressed issues that either denied the need for fathers’ involvement in family life because of the demands of working life or, contradictorily, hinted that men also have the right to care (see Bowlby et al., 2010).

In the analysis, the two major discourses differed from each other timewise and in continuity as well as in terms of how they addressed gender aspects. The stasis discourse, ‘working fathers – no time for caring’, was constructed around traditional notions of masculinity, or perhaps masculinist management and fatherhood roles. This discourse brought out how organisations are often reluctant to change and how many men in managerial positions have adapted such a perspective. For instance, despite the fact that 82% of Finnish women work fulltime, often the spouses of top managers are housewives – which is exceptional in Finland – or else only work part time (Hearn et al., 2008). The female spouses often carry the main responsibility for care at home.

The second identified discourse, ‘fatherhood in flux’, did not focus so much on ‘wartime stories’, traumatised masculinity and non-absent fathers, all of which are often present in traditional Finnish notions of masculinity (see Kivimäki, 2013; Näre, 2008). Instead, it constructed fatherhood in a more modern way, such as by discussing the notion of involved fatherhood (Wall & Arnold, 2007). This discourse was, however, present only in the later years of the analysis, namely after the year 2000. There has been a remarkable change in focus, which to a certain extent began with the prime minister, who at that time took paternal leave – even if for only for two weeks – which was big news in Finland as well as internationally. All in all, it seems that the change towards acceptance of involved fatherhood is slow and requires many more role models in different sectors of society as well as top managers. This supports Kvande’s insights (2005), in which she proposes that the increased focus on paternity leave in the Nordic countries that has taken place during the last few decades can be seen

as an important process of gendering and embodying men as fathers. Table 1 presents the analytical layers/phases and how they informed the two discourses.

**Table 1. The time span of the discourses and the analytical layers**

Discourses over time	‘Working fathers - no time for caring’ 1990–2015	‘Fatherhood in flux’		
		1990–1999	2000–2009	2010–2015
Action orientation: What is achieved from the discourse?	Maintains the idea that men’s work is incompatible with fatherhood	Shows that working men can participate in involved fatherhood	Highlights the idea of sharing parenting  Demands that organisations develop their work–family policies and practices to pay attention to men’s viewpoints on work–family balance	Argues for the advantages of involved fatherhood for fathers themselves and for forward-looking organisations
Subject positions: How is the man positioned in relation to other actors in the discourse?	The man is a victim of the organisational culture, which ignores work–family balance  The man is a distant father to his children  The man is not responsible for the home - this is his spouse’s (wife’s) responsibility	Young men are signifiers of involved fatherhood before older male managers in organisations take it up  A famous male politician (the prime minister) sets an example of involved fatherhood for other men in society	Young men are trail-blazers in organisations in combining work and family. They do it sooner than other men in organisational life  Visible politicians are examples of family men more often than other men in society  Women are more active agents than men in promoting involved fatherhood	Successful young working men are role models for combining work and family in practice sooner than other men in organisations  Forward-looking organisations promote men’s work–family integration more than do other organisations  Young successful men share parental responsibilities with their spouses (wives)
Discourse and practice: What kinds of opportunities or constraints	Produces traditional gender roles in organisational life that silence men’s family concerns and responsibilities	Produces exceptions to traditional gender roles in society	Produces the idea of sharing parenting and increases the opportunity for	Produces acceptance of shared parenting in forward-looking organisations and

for action does the discourse produce?		and opens a door to public discussion of men's work–family issues	men to have a work–family balance, but this is demanded by women	strengthens men's aspirations to and possibilities for involved fatherhood
Subjectivities: What is felt and experienced from within the man's position?	Men feel a sense of powerlessness in work–family issues.	Involved fatherhood is an encouraging possibility for some men; involved fatherhood is resisted by older male managers.	Young men come to participate in shared parenting, pushed by women.	Young men feel that they are good fathers when they decide to be and are able to dedicate themselves to their children.

Original source: Kangas et al., 2019

As explained above, the present study has based its discursive analysis on social constructionism and an analysis of national media sources that at least indirectly impact workplaces and their leadership. The analysis highlighted how the discourses have changed over time. Overall, this discursive research on fatherhood discourses in the media brought out those organisational and societal discourses that might hinder men's opportunities or willingness to participate as more involved parents in the work-life context. Hence, discursive analysis also captures what can be said and how it is said in certain discourse (Jäger & Maier, 2009), and it can be used as tool to challenge social understandings of the studied topic. By using discourse analysis, we point out that ideas can be interpreted in another way, that our common ways of categorising and ordering phenomena are reified and driven by personal interest rather than simply being reflections of 'reality' (Willig, 1999, p. 2).

### **The second case example: Studying male employees' emotion talk in work–family interplay**

The second case example is a study of the emotion talk of male employees (who are also fathers) with respect to work-family interplay. The study focused on the discursive ways in which male employees make sense of emotions in their daily experiences of work and family life. The research aim was therefore to broaden the understanding of the emotions that men construct around work-family interplay in their talk. Hence, the interest was in the social construction of emotions – the meanings behind the emotions constructed around men's talk of work-family interplay.

In this study, we used a critical discursive psychology approach (see Wetherell, 1998; Edley, 2001; Budds et al., 2014), which represents a synthesis of two discourse analysis approaches: Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) and discursive psychology (DP). FDA is concerned with the ways in which discourse constitutes versions of social life (Willig, 2013; see also Budds et al., 2014). The DP approach, in turn, treats language as performative – it holds a function for individuals in addition to having certain effects (Budds et al., 2014). Hence, FDA's interest is in available discourses, particularly the social context and the implications such discourses may have for individuals (Willig, 2013), whereas DP is interested in the social acts employed during individual discussions and how individuals are engaging in such acts (Budds et al., 2014). A synthesis approach that combines both FDA and DP focuses specifically on the dual role of discourse. Discourse is both constitutive, as it shapes, enables and constrains possibilities for identity and social activity, and it is also constructive, meaning that it can be a tool used by individuals within social interactions to achieve certain effects (Budds et al., 2014). Discourses have a great deal of power over individuals, but similarly individuals also draw from specific discourses and shape discourses for their own purposes. For instance, the emotions that men are employing in their talk concerning work-family interplay not only reflect their individual emotions, but also take part in shaping and challenging social understandings of men's emotions in relation to work-family interplay. Hence, discourses constructed as a result of men's emotion talk regarding work-family interplay constrain and create identities and social activities for men, but they may also enable men to absorb or partly abuse these identities for their own benefits.

We collected the data used in the original study in the years 2016–2017. The data included 23 interviews in which we recruited male employees in their mid- and late career who are fathers from five organisations in different fields. The criteria were designed to keep the group of research participants broad in order to reflect and make visible the diverse perspectives and experiences of male employees. The age of the interviewed men ranged from 29 to 61 years old. The men worked in various tasks and at various hierarchical levels, from the shop floor to top management. We conducted all of the interviews in an identical manner, with the interviews touching on a range of different issues pertinent to men's work and working styles, their family life and life outside the organization and organizational habits and culture. The interviews lasted between 45 and 80 minutes; they were tape-recorded and later transcribed.

In this research, we utilised Edley's (2001, p. 189) analysis model of critical discursive psychology, which includes three key concepts: interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions. Interpretative repertoires are different ways of talking about/constructing objects and

events in the world (ibid.). According to Edley (ibid., p. 203), lived ideologies are not at all coherent; rather, they are often inconsistent, fragmentary and contradictory. Hence, interpretative repertoires or discourses do not always include only one ideology. They may include several lived, conflicting ideologies – creating ideological dilemmas. A subject position is a ‘location’ within conversation identity that is made relevant within discourse (ibid., p. 210).

In analysis stage of this study, we first made notes about the various ways men discussed the work-family relationship in the data. Then, we located the emotion talk regarding men’s work-family interplay in the data. In other words, we explored what kinds of emotions men chose to talk about in connection to their work-family interplay. The value of using interview setting offers the possibility to describe complex and asymmetric emotions, not just positive or negative, but emotions that are socially constructed and are limitless as they depend on new emerging social situations and their labelling. We also paid attention to any potential topics and emotions not addressed. As a result of this first round of analysis, we defined different interpretative repertoires of emotion talk, i.e. emotion discourses regarding men’s work-family relationship. They included discourses of adequacy, empowerment and autonomy. In a second analysis round, we looked for ideological tensions, i.e. ideological dilemmas inside the interpreted discourses. Two of the interpreted discourses were rather fragmented, contradictory and included an ideological dilemma (ibid.), while a third emotion discourse appeared essentially coherent. In the third round of analysis, we took a closer look at the subject positions that the discourses offered by analysing the ‘ways of being’ that were made available for participants within the discourses (Budds et al., 2014).

The first discourse was characterised by talk about adequacy in work-family interplay. The men reported that as fathers, they experience emotions related to being both adequate and inadequate; however, most often the sense of adequacy was not related to work. In particular, such emotions had to do with being present for their children, but the men also mentioned a lack of time, thus including both negative and positive talk about a sense of adequacy. Hence, *the discourse of adequacy* invokes two contradictory subject positions: a successful father who manages to arrange enough time for his children, and an insufficient father who cannot give enough time to his children.

With the second discourse, *the discourse of empowerment*, the male employees reflected on both a sense of empowerment and powerlessness with respect to work-family interplay. The key difference from the first discourse is the fact that the men’s emotion talk was related to working life. The ideological dilemma in this discourse is that even though the men described fatherhood as a source

of social capital, motivation and even skills, such feelings of empowerment with respect to work-family interplay are not valued in working life. Thus, this discourse also includes two conflicting subject positions. On the one hand, the discourse creates a subject position for the fathers as mature workers who are motivated by and proud of their roles as fathers, while on the other it constructs men as victims, operating under the pressures and demands of a workplace that stresses the importance of work over family and does not value their development as fathers.

The third discourse consisted of emotion talk regarding fathers' autonomy in relation to work-family interplay. In this *discourse of autonomy in work-life interplay*, the men described how they have themselves defined the boundaries or boundlessness of work-family interplay. Their emotion talk included talk of their own authority in constructing the boundaries or maintaining a sense of boundlessness between work and family. Many of the men mentioned the emotion of self-control when talking about either preferring work and family as separate spheres or deliberately constructing them as a seamless whole. Hence, the discourse helps construct the subject position of a person in self-control. Even though some of the men told about having strict boundaries between work and family and others that they maintain a sense of boundlessness in their work-family relationship, both practices are described as being of their own choice. Table 2 summarises the content of the discourses, the ideological dilemmas and the subject positions.

**Table 2. Emotion discourses and analytical layers**

Emotion discourses	Emotion talk	Ideological dilemma	Subject position
Discourse of adequacy in work-family interplay	Men told about having feelings of being both adequate and inadequate  They talked about a sense of guilt due to working during family time, but also about the importance of giving time for family and children	Discourse is constructed from social understanding, where work and family appear as contradictory spheres of life.	Insufficient father  Successful father

Discourse of empowerment in work-family interplay	Men described both how they feel empowered due to assuming care duties with the children and how they are powerless in relating to the high demands of work	The men described fatherhood as a source of mental capital, motivation and even skills. However, such emotions of empowerment are not valued in working life.	Mature workers Victims of working life demands
Discourse of autonomy in work-family interplay	Men described how they have themselves defined the boundaries or boundlessness of work-family interplay.	No dilemma. Even though some of the men told about how they have strict boundaries between work and family and other parts of life, they also experience a boundlessness in their work-family relationship. They described both practices as their own choice.	Exhibiting self-control

Taken together, the emotion discourses constructed in our original study are not unitary or straightforward, and the discourses embody conflicting emotion talk, and consequently, bidirectional subject positions. Hence, the discourse analysis utilised here makes visible the fact that the work-family domain divide seems to be problematic also for male employees, as it may cause mixed emotions and identities, with men feeling oppressed by the current conditions of working life. The advantage of using discourse analysis in this study brings out the experiences of male employees in the context of their daily lives by showing the interconnected nature of work, organisation, working life and society. Yet, this study also highlights individual differences and complexities, with some male employees having the autonomy to either maintain strict boundaries or else no boundaries at all. This seems to be advantageous for their work-family interplay, suggesting that there are now straightforward solutions, for example when male employees' work-family relationship and work-family policies are designed within the company organisations themselves or at the societal level.

**Discussion and implications**

We suggest that the discourse analysis tool can offer a non-traditional and even more in-depth scrutiny of the intersections between work and family as a complex bundle of, and standing in relation to, societal policies, working life conditions, organisational norms and gender. In particular, discourse analysis makes it possible to explore how the language, values, assumptions and ideas surrounding



work and family create and situate male employees within working life and the existing gendered ordering of family life from a male gender perspective. We claim that one advantage of using discourse analysis in work-family research is that it offers tools to systematically explore often opaque relationships between discursive practices, texts, events and broader social and cultural structures, relations and processes. When studying language use in work and family dynamics, it can offer representations of speakers' attitudes, beliefs, positions and ideas in terms of texts (Smithson & Tokoe, 2005). These texts may then convey meanings that often remain unexplored. Analysis of underlying meanings can assist in interpreting issues regarding the conditions and events of working life and family life from a male standpoint (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000).

The two exemplar cases discussed above highlighted the historical nature of discourses on men and family care; secondly, they emphasised the discourse surrounding men as fathers and how it relates to their working life and experiences of fatherhood, their day-to-day activities and perceptions of their attempts to achieve a satisfactory work-family relationship in society. Our interest was to make the fathers and men more visible with respect to the paradoxical issues inherent to work and family care. We chose to approach this topic through two examples in which we (with colleagues) used discourse analysis as a method. We encountered challenges in the discourse analysis, such as in the first example, the agency of the text: with respect to the media texts, it would be beneficial to ask and analyse the questions, whose voices are we dealing with, and what power does the media have in this particular society? On the other hand, we were not interested in single articles, but focused instead on the discourses that started to emerge from the data. Hence, discourse analysis suited this approach quite well – to analyse the texts on their own and their possible position(s) within society instead of in terms of single meanings or articles. The second example in the data could obviously be analysed, for instance, through thematic content analysis. But, as shown above, the discourse analysis applied brings out the multiple layers of meanings and the extent to which the voices can vary. The focus of the exemplary studies was on different levels of work-family balance: while the first example indicated the development of fatherhood in media texts during the past few decades (meta-level discourses), the second example focused on the individual level in daily life. This latter example brings to the forefront the complexity of combining fatherhood with work and organisational life (the meso/micro-level focuses).

Of particular note is the fact that men reportedly also feel compelled to care and work just like women, and they would also benefit from challenging the underlying assumptions and binaries at home and in the workplace, as was highlighted in the discourses in both of our examples. The case examples

presented here show how men are positioned within and respond to the discursive power of combining fatherhood and work and what it can tell us about the power of discourse to sustain gender inequalities in the spheres of paid labour and the private domain. However, if we focus only on individual differences and choices, we would gain an imperfect understanding of the norms and values related to the cultural meanings and enactments of work and family that have influenced the nature and strength of the relationship and attitudes as well as power relations in these two domains (Thébaud & Pedulla, 2016). Therefore, we suggest that discourse analysis may offer a fruitful point of departure for investigating mutually dependent individuals (i.e. superior-subordinate, spouse-spouse, parent-child relations) who are in positions of systemic and structural power imbalances, or studies where emotional responses are reified as the ‘appropriate’ or ‘expected’ responses in certain existing power relationships (Bochantin & Cowan, 2016). The value of using discourse analysis is in its ability to connect language to broader social relations of power and inequality, particularly in terms of gender (Sunderland, 2004).

The use of discourse analysis in work-family research also has the advantage of offering a temporal and space-specific framework. Allen et al. (2018) claim that time is a critical element in work-family research, since the experience can be inherently dynamic – occurring and reoccurring, likely differently on different days and across one’s life span. Discourses are dynamic and tend to reflect shifting contexts (Fleetwood, 2007; Tatli et al., 2012), and therefore, they offer the possibility to adopt a contextual approach to research on work and family. Discourses shape the concepts used to frame work-family discussions in organisations and the assumptions embedded therein (Lewis et al., 2017). This is important because discourses not only reflect, but can also shape, organisational practices by what they emphasise (explicit messages) and what they de-emphasise or obscure (implicit messages) (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998; Lewis et al., 2017). The use of words can also direct, assist and constrain men in work and family domains; a focus on language use and changing the discourses around work-family issues and gendered binaries may enhance the move towards a lasting cultural shift (Rapoport et al., 2002).

Based on our empirical examples, we outline three main lessons learnt from using discourse analysis in work and family research:

- 1) Given the complexity of work-family research, we claim that discourse analysis can offer time and space-specific understandings of work-family discussions from a historical perspective.

- 2) Discourse analysis offers a means to investigate different layers and meanings from macro, meso and micro perspectives. To advance equality in the workplace and care at home, we need research from all these perspectives, but particularly meso-level investigations offer a tool for change in working life.
- 3) Discourse analysis in work-family research is a powerful way of challenging norms and underlying assumptions in families, organisations and societies, and ultimately it can be a tool for societal change.

Taken together, our empirical examples demonstrate the multiplicity of roles assigned to men with respect to work and family and challenge the portrayal of men as solely being focused on work and achievement. The discourses used in our examples are interwoven by many different contextual details, relationships and digressions from a focus solely on career and hierarchical career advancement. These type of data sets may offer a range of themes that can be addressed with different participants, which may in turn capture people's everyday language use and reflect societal change; thus, it is valuable to bear in mind that the data gathering process also brought to light practices that might have an effect on what occurs during the interviews and may lead to preventing the interactions from being swamped by the interviewer's own categories and constructions. Likewise, when media texts are being analysed of the purpose for work-family research, it would be beneficial to ask, whose voice are we dealing with and what is the power of the media in this particular society? (McCullagh & Campling, 2002).

To conclude, there is too little knowledge about men and fathers, their spouses (Heikkinen, 2015) and the circumstances wherein men make decisions about working life and family, i.e. if they will take family leave. We know that the organisational policies and practices – meso-level decisions and policies – are crucial for family-friendly policies. It is important to encourage such measures. We also want to emphasise that it would be important in future research to tackle the omissions in current studies, such as the changing forms of families, multiple genders being involved in parenting, same-sex families, families with children from current and former relationships, and single-parent families. The national-level surveys do not necessarily reach the groups and individuals whose lives differ from that of the nuclear family ideology present in many Western countries. Thus, it would be important to gather qualitative data on men, women, other genders and children with respect to each of these issues.

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