

# Gender and Emotions in Family Care

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Understanding masculinity and gender equality in Sweden

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# Abstract

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This thesis addresses care responsibilities in families as an arena for gender reproduction and change, primarily in the Swedish context, which includes a long history of gender equality policies, and broad public support for ideals of gender equality. The overall aim is to contribute to understanding of how gender continues to be given relevance in family caregiving when caregivers, in their efforts to form liveable and emotionally sustainable lives, make themselves intelligible in relation to sometimes conflicting norms and ideals of care, work and gender equality. The analysis draws on interviews with working parents and middle-aged sons and daughters caring for their elderly parents in Sweden.

The theoretical framework outlines how gender is done, both in general terms and specifically for caregivers, to become intelligible in relation to gendered norms. As caregiving is a gendered practice with salient moral and emotional dimensions, negotiations of intelligibility in relation to caregiving also have emotional consequences. Emotions are understood as shaped by norms, while norms simultaneously gain influence through the emotions they evoke and prescribe, thereby connecting micro-level feelings with macro-level structures. The notion of liveability is used to link the concept of intelligibility to emotions. A liveable life is understood as a life supported by norms.

The thesis is based on three studies, designated Studies I-III. Study I focused on fathers' part-time work and negotiations of moral intelligibility in relation to gendered norms. In Study II, sons' involvement in the care for their aging parents was analysed with a focus on masculinities. In study III, working parents were studied to analyse how norms of parenthood, work, and gender equality were made relevant through emotions and how these norms could be negotiated through emotion work.

By examining how gender continues to be made relevant in family care arrangements, despite widely shared gender equality ideals, this thesis contributes to the understanding of stability and change in normative structures. Although ideals of gender equality are widely shared in Sweden, conflicting norms also remain. These norms continue to have impact through the emotions they evoke – even for those who want to liberate themselves from them. The interviewed caregivers had to manage ambivalence between emotionally powerful norms regarding work and caregiving. The ideals of gender equality did not always reduce this ambivalence, and could even amplify it. To cope with their everyday prioritizations the caregivers needed to manage emotions when failing to live up to some norms and ideals. Transgressions of norms had to be made intelligible

to make life liveable. The concept of empathic imagination was used to explore how caregivers, by managing their imaginations of the situations and emotions of those they cared for, could also manage their own emotions to make their care arrangements and lives feel liveable. Ideals of gender equality did not herald the end of gendered expectations. Instead gendered understandings of family care could be reproduced through the doing of gender equality. The notions of doing, re-doing, and undoing gender were useful for analysing the complexity of gender accomplishment and how reproduction and change sometimes occurred at the same time. Ideals of gender equality also included gendered emotion regimes which, in combination with ideals of individualization regarding child care and career, generated different emotional situations for mothers and fathers. Since ideals of gender equality are rooted in certain normative positions, they were not as available or as relevant in all positions or contexts.

**Keywords:** doing gender, re-doing gender, undoing gender, moral intelligibility, masculinities, emotion management, empathic imagination, fatherhood, parenthood, eldercare, sons' caregiving, gender equality, liveability, Sweden

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Paper I

Björk, Sofia (2013) Doing Morally Intelligible Fatherhood: Swedish Fathers' Accounts of their Parental Part-Time Work Choices. *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers*, 11(2), 221-237.

Paper II

Björk, Sofia (2015) Doing, Re-doing or Undoing Masculinity? Swedish Men in the Filial Care of Aging Parents. *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 23(1), 20-35.

Paper III

Björk, Sofia (forthcoming) Emotions and Empathic Imagination – Parents Relating to Norms of Work, Parenthood, and Gender Equality. *Families, Relationships and Societies*. Prepublished February, 2017.

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# Förord

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Mycket längre tid än jag kunde ana när jag började, har jag skrivit på den här avhandlingen. Det tog lång tid för att jag kämpat med just de slags prioriteringar som avhandlingen undersöker. Hur viktig är en avhandling och en tidsplan jämfört med det enda livet? Livet, som får en akutare tidräkning när det tar slut för en älskad gammelfaster, när min starka, självständiga mamma blir sjuk och behöver sin familj på nya sätt och när barn tar plats i livet och därmed fullständigt flyttar fokus. Och så känslorna, som gör vissa val svåra men möjliga, medan andra val vore helt outhärdliga. Så för mig har det varit levbart att skriva avhandling i nästan tio år. Men det beror också på att doktorandlivet för mig på många sätt har varit en fröjd, tack vare de personer som funnits runt mig.

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Göteborg i maj 2017

*Sofia Björk*

# 1

## Introduction

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*Photo: Melker Dabblstrand / imagebank.sveden.se (source: <https://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/>, downloaded 29/9/2016).*

On one of Sweden's official pages on the Internet, sweden.se, which advertises Sweden abroad, "Gender equality in Sweden" was presented. It was stated that: "Gender equality is one of the cornerstones of Swedish society". On the page we were greeted with a full screen picture of a father carrying his baby in a baby carrier. He is walking along a pedestrian street in a big city, the sun is shining and he is holding the child with his hands in a caring gesture. His gaze is lifted and he has a thoughtful smile on his lips. He looks proud and pleased. On sweden.se and in other contexts, the father on parental leave is a symbol of gender equality in Sweden. It would be possible to imagine that sweden.se could illustrate gender equality by portraying a woman as a chairperson in a boardroom, or a man caring for his elderly mother, or something else, but the father on parental leave has a distinct position as a symbol of "Swedish gender equality".

As illustrated by the above example, the gender equality narrative has a prominent position not only in the presentation of Sweden abroad, but also in

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Swedes' perceptions of themselves in relation to other nationalities (Magnusson, Rönnblom, & Silius, 2008). Most Swedes also endorse the ideal of gender equality (Björnberg, 2013; SOM-institutet, 2016). Gender equality policies have a long history in Sweden and are integrated in the welfare model, which includes an extensive welfare system, a generous parental leave scheme, and publicly financed child care and elderly care (Björnberg, 2013). Since the 1980s the gender equality policies have focused more than previously on divisions of responsibility for family caregiving, mainly through promoting fathers' involvement in the care for their children through parental leave (Højgaard, 1997). The parental leave scheme has been continuously expanded since the 1970s, and increasing proportions of paid parental leave have been individualized to encourage fathers to take more parental leave days.<sup>1</sup> However, men's involvement in other care relations has been less politicized. For example, no provisions to promote fathers' part-time work to care for children or adult sons' care for their aging parents have been included in family policies, and associated issues have been virtually ignored in discourses of gender equality in Sweden (Ulmanen, 2015b).

Moreover, despite the prominent narrative of Sweden as a gender-equal country and Sweden's relatively long history of policies intended to promote gender equality, in practice gender inequality persists in many arenas in Sweden. This applies, for instance, to the gendered division of labour in the household, the gender-divided labour market, male dominance on corporate boards, men's violence against women and gendered wage differences (see, for examples, Statistics Sweden, 2016). It also applies to caring relationships in the family and, not least, the symbolic issue of parental leave. Although gender equality and family policies have focused on increasing fathers' involvement in caring for their children, mothers continue to take more responsibility for the children. Swedish fathers only use 26 % of all the paid parental leave days and 38 % of all the temporary care leave days (Statistics Sweden, 2016), and they work part-time to a lesser extent than mothers (Larsson & Björk, 2017). Women are also more involved in the care of their aging parents (Ulmanen, 2015b). This raises questions about why gender continues to determine engagement in family caregiving.

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<sup>1</sup> Where there is joint custody, each parent has the right to paid parental leave for 240 days per child. At the time of the interviews used to acquire empirical data (see Chapter 3) up to 180 of these days could be transferred to the other parent. Since January 2016 it has only been possible to transfer 150 days to the other parent, leaving at least 90 days allocated to each parent. All parents with children aged eight or younger also have a right to unpaid part-time parental leave (working min. 75% of full-time hours) to facilitate their ability to combine work and child care. Parents also have a right to leave for temporary care for ill children who are less than 12 years old.

What is it that prevents men and women, who value gender equality, from sharing care responsibilities more equally?

### Normative narratives of gender equality

We might come closer to some answers to these questions by considering the picture described above more deeply. Why does the father in the picture seem so proud and pleased? Why is Sweden so proud of him? As a symbol of gender equality in Sweden, the picture of the father portrays an ideal that is not only about fatherhood *per se*. It also conveys other *norms*, that is, societal perceptions of what is “normal” and desirable. Previous research has shown that narratives of gender equality include other normative narratives about gender, heteronormativity, *cis*-normativity (norms of unequivocal genders which marginalise or negate trans-experiences), normative whiteness, nationalism and middle-class norms (Martinsson, Griffin, & Girtli Nygren, 2016). The image of the father situates gender equality in a modern, urban, white, middle class set of norms, and not only portrays male caregiving but also tells a story of parenthood as heteronormative by depicting a person who can be understood as “the mother” by the side of the father. The image conveys ideals of gender and how a gender-equal masculinity can be embodied. Since the picture is a symbol for Sweden it also says something about ideals of Swedishness. It is through all these narratives and ideals that the gender-equal father on parental leave becomes such a proud national symbol. When presenting this type of father as a normative ideal, the fathers who embody the ideal get access to feelings of pride. The father in the picture has reason to be proud and happy because he is doing and being the normative, that which is considered right and good. However, these normative narratives of the gender equality ideal also make it harder for other people to embody “gender equality”. Although policies and discourses of gender equality have contributed to more equal opportunities for men and women in many areas, the ideal is not unproblematic. Another problem with the narratives of gender equality is that they can render invisible the continuing inequalities. The image of the Swedish gender-equal father does not reflect the whole truth. As mentioned earlier, parental leave entitlements are far from equally used by men and women. Only 7.7% of parents share the paid parental leave equally (at least 40/60) and more than 18% of the fathers do not go on paid parental leave at all, compared to just 1.6% of the mothers (The Swedish Social Insurance Agency, 2011).

Previous research has sought to explain the inequalities in parents’ involvement in the care for their children through gendered factors associated with

economic conditions, organizational structures in workplaces, power resources in the families, fatherhood ideals and masculinity (e.g. Bach, 2015; Bekkengen, 2002; Björnberg & Kollind, 2005; Brandth & Kvande, 1998, 2015; Brannen & Nilsen, 2006; Doucet, 2006; Farstad & Stefansen, 2015; Haas, Allard, & Hwang, 2002; Haas & Hwang, 2008; Haas & Rostgaard, 2011; Johansson, 2011; Johansson & Klinth, 2008; Miller, 2011b; Plantin, 2007; Wall & Arnold, 2007). However, these studies generally assumed that gender equality was the goal, neglecting the criticism that has problematized the concept. In this thesis, I make the criticism a point of departure for exploration of how ideals of gender equality influence the continued relevance of gender in family care. A key question is *What is the significance of the normatively charged narratives of gender equality in caregivers' accounts of their care arrangements?*

Research, as well as policy, regarding gender equality and caregiving in the family in Sweden, has mainly addressed parents' care for their children, especially their use of parental leave entitlements. Less attention has been paid to caring relationships outside the nuclear family, such as adult children's care for their elderly parents, from a gender equality perspective (with the prominent exceptions of work by Szebehely and Ulmanen, see for example Szebehely & Ulmanen, 2012), although care for elderly relatives is also gendered (e.g. Johansson, Sundström, & Hassing 2003; Ulmanen, 2015b).

In Sweden, formal responsibility for care of the elderly rests on municipalities. However, in recent decades, downsizing of public care provisions (associated with changes in political ethos) and growing proportions of elderly people in the population have increased expectations for both family and private care providers to play greater roles in eldercare (Björk, Björnberg, & Ekbrand, 2013; Ulmanen, 2015b). Relatives also provide most of the care now (Johansson et al., 2003; Larsson, 2006; Szebehely & Trydegård, 2007), and when responsibilities to care for the elderly have been transferred to the family, they have mainly been shouldered by women, although men have also increased their care provision (Ulmanen, 2015b). Nevertheless, filial care (sons' and daughters' care for their parents) in Sweden is less gendered than in other European countries (Keck, 2008; Schmid, Brandt, & Haberkern, 2012). In this thesis, I examine both parents' care for their children and adult children's care for their parents, which provide interesting contrasts because while caring for children is a symbolic issue for gender equality, caring for the elderly has received much less attention in gender equality debate and research. Why have ideals of gender equality had so different roles in these two family care relations?

## Norms, gendered intelligibility and emotions

Although ideals of gender equality are sometimes prominent in presentations and marketing of Sweden, and shared by many Swedes, it is far from the only ideal that family caregivers in Sweden relate to. The ideals of gender equality are part of a web of norms associated with the relationship between care and work; there are gendered norms of caregiving, ideals of individualization (i.e. ideals of self-fulfilment through work, self-development, etc.), the ideal of involved parenthood, full-time work norms (or the “work strategy” as described by Junestav, 2004), norms to provide financially for oneself, etc. These norms may conflict; for example, the ideal of involved parenthood may collide with norms of full-time work. Norms regarding the importance of mothers’ time with their children may conflict with mothers’ need to work long hours to be able to provide for their children, or feminist and individualistic ideals that (like men) women should seek self-fulfilment through commitment to their work.

To cope with the conflicting expectations of work and care-giving, people must make choices and prioritizations, for example, choose to work part-time or flexible hours to reduce the time children spend in child care and thus meet ideals of good parenthood, or let the children spend more time in childcare in order to work full time and meet ideals of commitment to work and loyalty to colleagues. To cope with the choices, and become *intelligible*, one must be able to legitimize one’s prioritizations and commitments. *Intelligibility* is here understood as the ability to be recognized according to prevailing norms (Butler, 2004). For parents, intelligibility can be about trying to legitimize the time they spend at work by describing how involved they are with their children when they spend time together, or how other choices would have been impossible at the workplace. In these explanations gendered norms and understandings of masculinity and femininity can be important determinants of what can (and cannot) be made intelligible and legitimate. When understandings of gender are used to make care arrangements intelligible, gender is also *done* through the accounts. In the process meanings of gender are also defined. *Masculinities* and *femininities* are understood in this thesis as collections of changing understandings, practices and positions associated with gendered identities that men and women must relate to in order to make themselves intelligible in relation to the gendered norms (cf. Nordberg, 2005). Both men and women can practice, embody, and account for themselves through both masculinity and femininity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Halberstam, 2002; Nordberg, 2005). There are, however, limits to how much masculinity a person who wants to be understood as a woman can do without becoming unintelligible, and how much femininity

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someone who wants to be understood as a man can do. These limits also depend on other intersecting aspects such as class and racial hierarchies.

My point of departure is that norms, ideals and frictions between them become relevant and imperative through *emotions*. *Emotions* are feelings, and play crucial roles in our experience of life. Norms are embodied when they are perceived through emotions, while norms also affect and shape emotions. When people's deviations from social expectations are made visible, shame is often evoked, while those who live up to the expectations can feel comfortable or even proud (Ahmed, 2014; Jonsson, 2009). There are also norms regarding emotions, *emotion regimes* with expectations that prescribe which feelings are appropriate for different people in different situations (Reddy, 2001; Wettergren and Jansson, 2013). These may include, for example, cultural expectations about the emotions a mother should feel about being with her children, or a son is expected to feel about caring for his elderly mother. To be able to live up to these expectations, or manage conflicting expectations, caregivers may have to perform *emotion work*, that is shape and manage their feelings to make their lives feel emotionally acceptable (Hochschild, 1979). When the caregivers strive to live up to norms and ideals, and make their commitments normatively intelligible, they do so to lead emotionally sustainable, *liveable* lives. In this thesis, *liveability* is about negotiating conflicting norms to be able to put up with oneself and one's choices emotionally, to feel like a "good" person, and a good enough caregiver. If the discrepancy between ideals and practice becomes too large, one's own shortcomings may become too painful and life may seem unliveable. Such discrepancies may arise, for example, when someone who is emotionally close and one feels responsibility for is not getting the care he or she needs or feels alone. Caregiving is emotionally and morally charged as it is essential for our lives and our bodies - we must care for each other to survive (as thoroughly discussed in feminist literature, e.g. Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 1993).

Caregiving is also an interesting phenomenon to study in relation to ideals of gender equality and doing gender because it is both a symbolic issue for gender equality policies and a practice shaped by notions of masculinity and femininity. Not only are family care practices carried out by women more often than by men, but also the understanding of caregiving is gendered, so that giving care is understood as doing femininity. This is especially true for motherhood, which is also linked to perceptions of being or becoming a "real woman". That is why the involved father can become a symbol for gender equality and change - he transgresses the gendered norms of caregiving and notions of masculinity. Previously, it was the full-time working mother who symbolized change because she, too, was transgressing gendered norms regarding caregiving (Hochschild & Machung, 1989).



## Aim and research questions

This thesis addresses core sociological issues of stability and change in social structures and normative systems. In order to understand how family caregiving in Sweden continues to be shaped by gender, despite ideals of gender equality, the thesis seeks to explain how conflicting norms regarding care are managed emotionally, and how transgressions of gendered norms are made intelligible and liveable. Starting from criticism of the normative narratives of gender equality, the thesis explores how these narratives influence how prioritizations, between caregiving, work, and other aspects of life, can be made intelligible and legitimized. Parents' care for their children and adult children's care for their aging parents, two situations where ideals of gender equality have had very different influence, are theoretically and empirically contrasted, enabling the importance of the ideals to be highlighted and examined in broader perspectives. The aim of the thesis is to contribute to understanding of how gender continues to be given relevance in family caregiving when caregivers, in their efforts to form liveable and emotionally sustainable lives, make themselves intelligible in relation to sometimes conflicting norms and ideals of care, work and gender equality. The overarching research questions addressed in the thesis are:

- How are masculinity, femininity, gender equality and other, sometimes conflicting, norms and ideals drawn into caregivers' accounts of their care arrangements and commitments to work?
- How do caregivers manage conflicting norms, conformity and transgressions of norms, and the emotions they evoke, in order to make everyday life appear intelligible?
- How do caregivers manage their own imaginations of needs of those they care for in order to endure their situation and lead liveable lives?
- How can attention to caregivers' constructions of intelligibility and emotion management help us to better understand gendered normative and transgressive choices and practices in family care arrangements?

Through answering these questions, the thesis seeks to identify important aspects contributing to stability and change in gendered understandings and practices in family caregiving.

## Organization of the thesis

This thesis consists of an introduction and three papers. The introduction is structured as follows. Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework used to address the research questions presented above. It begins with a presentation of the theoretical understanding of gender underpinning the thesis, presenting gender as done through practices in manners that allow caregivers (and other people) to become intelligible in relation to gendered norms. It also discusses conceptualizations of change in gender accountability and presents the notions of re-doing and undoing gender. It then presents how I subsequently analyse gendered understanding using the notions of masculinity and femininity, and how they are linked to hegemonic masculinities. The chapter also presents my understanding of class, and discusses how masculinities and femininities are related to class, then briefly discusses the concept of care and perspectives on men's involvement in family eldercare. Thereafter, previous research and perspectives on fatherhood are presented, discussing changes in ideals and practices of fatherhood and different approaches to fathers' abilities to choose their commitments to caregiving. A critique of Swedish discourses of gender equality in relation to gendered intelligibility is then presented and discussed. Chapter 2 ends with a presentation of my theoretical framework regarding the relation between emotions and norms, including use of the concepts of liveability and empathic imagination to analyse the relations between norms and emotions, and emotion management. Previous relevant research with a sociology of emotions perspective on parenthood is also presented. In Chapter 3, I present the methods applied in the empirical studies, and discuss empirical materials, my analytical approach and ethical considerations. In Chapter 4, I summarize the three empirical studies and in Chapter 5 I relate them to each other, and present my conclusions and contributions. Through the concept of "liveability" I link the discussion of intelligibility in the first two studies to emotions discussed in the third study. The thesis ends with a discussion of my findings and conclusions, summarizing consideration of the questions presented in the introduction, and identification of important questions for future research.

# 2

## Theoretical Framework and Previous Research

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In my analysis, I try to understand how care providers relate to different *norms*, *ideals* and *discourses* in accounts of their care arrangements. I see *norms* as societal perceptions of what is considered "normal" and desirable. They are invisible, taken for granted and both shaped by, and contribute to the maintenance of, social power relations. Norms become visible through what they define as deviant – “notions and feelings of abnormality” (Martinsson & Reimers, 2010:1). *Ideals* are also shared perceptions of what is desirable, but they articulate what to aspire to rather than what is considered necessary to be socially accepted. *Discourses*, as I understand them, are coherent systems of ways to talk, think and act in relation to a specific topic. Norms give rise to dominant discourses that shape what, in a particular context, is possible to think, say and do in relation to certain topics – and be intelligible (Butler, 1990, 2004).

### Gender as practice

To analyse how gender is made relevant in accounts of family care arrangements I have used theories of *gender as practices*. Rather than strictly adhering to theoretical orthodoxy, I have strived to construct a conceptual framework that supported efforts to meet the aims of the empirical studies (and subsequently thesis) and explain interesting aspects of my empirical data. Since the empirical data consist of accounts related to prevailing norms and ideals, both *accountability* (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and *intelligibility* (Butler, 2004) have been illuminating concepts in my analysis. Therefore, I have worked eclectically and combined elements from West and Zimmerman’s theories of “doing-gender” with some concepts drawn from Butler’s work (for discussions, and similar combinations,

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of theoretical approaches see e.g. Brickell, 2005; Martin, 2003; Moloney & Fenstermaker, 2002; Nentwich & Kelan, 2014).

West and Zimmerman (1987) have inspired a focus on interaction. They have described gender as an omnirelevant and inevitable quality of all our everyday actions, where we “do” gender by a routinized creation of differences. To appear understandable to others, individuals behave in accordance with gendered norms and discipline themselves, knowing that they can be held *accountable* in relation to gendered standards. I have used Butler’s concept *intelligibility* to analyse how interviewed caregivers drew on different discourses and norms, which enabled and limited what could be made intelligible. The *intelligible* is, thus, that which can be recognized and acknowledged in relation to prevailing norms (Butler, 2004). The norms vary between contexts and in many situations several, sometimes conflicting, norms may be relevant simultaneously. Norms not only regulate gendered understandings and identities, but also other normatively shaped positions. Thus, the interviewed caregivers not only accounted for themselves as gendered beings, but also needed to be intelligible in relation to multiple discourses and norms. Butler’s concept of “intelligibility” has therefore helped me to apply an intersectional perspective on gender accomplishment (see also West & Fenstermaker, 1995). Such perspectives are crucial for analysing how multiple power structures and norms intra-act and are given meanings through each other (Collins & Bilge, 2016). In this thesis, the intersections analysed were mainly gender and family relationships, but they also included (to some extent), class or professional position, and how these structures created positions where different norms got different meanings in relation to each other.

In sociological investigations of the family it has often been observed that women have changed their practices through entering the labour market and sharing the responsibility to provide for their family, more than men have changed their practices through sharing responsibilities for care of their children (e.g. Connell, 2005b; Holter, 2007; Pleck, 1998). It has been debated whether fathers’ practices are slowly changing, or if the changes have mainly occurred at the discursive level. Various authors have also stressed the importance of neither obscuring the changes actually occurring, nor idealizing men’s contributions and overestimating structural change (Dermott & Miller, 2015; Deutsch, 2007; Hanlon, 2012; Ranson, 2001, 2011). To conceptualize change in gendered hierarchies and changed meanings of gender, and to catch the complexity of gender accomplishment and how reproduction and change may occur at the same time, I have deployed the concepts of *re-doing gender* (West & Zimmerman, 2009) and *undoing gender* (Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2009). *Re-doing gender* has been used to signify when gendered norms were negotiated, drawing on new forms of mascu-

linities and femininities, while gender accountability persisted, as well as gendered power relations (West & Zimmerman, 2009). *Undoing gender*, on the other hand, was used to capture situations where gender as difference was made less relevant, or accounts were not gendered at all (Deutsch, 2007). This concept differs from Butler's use of *undoing gender* to denote actions which invalidate or challenge the binary understanding of masculinity and femininity (Nentwich & Kelan, 2014). I primarily used Deutsch's understanding of the concept in my analysis. I was also interested in when people understood as men were attributed, or accounted for their actions through, femininity and when people understood as women became intelligible through masculinity and thereby destabilized gendered understandings (Nordberg, 2005).

### Masculinities and femininities

Gender became discernible in the empirical material when it was used to describe and legitimize the division of responsibilities in family care. To enable rich and broad analysis of gender as practice, I chose to focus on *masculinities* and *femininities*, which I understood as changing perceptions, practices, and positions associated with gendered identities (Nordberg, 2005). I examined how care arrangements, with divisions of responsibilities, care commitments, and prioritizations, were made intelligible through drawing on gendered norms, masculinity, and femininity, but also considered apparent transgressions of gendered norms that emerged in some interviewees' accounts (c.f. Nordberg 2005). By investigating how the caregivers related to several masculinities and femininities, and how, for example femininity could be used to account for actions by people who identified themselves as men (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Nordberg, 2004), gender was not presumed to be done in coherent and unambiguous ways (Beasley, 2015). It also became possible to analyse how the associations linked to masculinity and femininity may change when gendered norms were negotiated through practices, and how gender could be given less relevance for both divisions of responsibilities and making oneself intelligible (see also Nordberg 2005). Although I adopted a pluralistic understanding of gender as practice, which allowed for changing positions and shifts in meanings of gender, it was hard to avoid also, to some extent, reproducing gender as a given binary. This was because the gendered norms studied are based on that binary and even when I wrote about gender as undone, the undoing was understood through the binary it challenged.

In my analyses of doing masculinity I deployed the notion of *hegemonic masculinities* developed within the field of critical studies on men and masculinities, to

explore gendered norms and practices (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985). The notion have been defined in numerous, disparate ways (Hearn & Morrell, 2012) and both the theoretical foundations and empirical applications of hegemonic masculinities has met a thorough critique (for an overview and discussion see Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Departing from some of the critique, I will here outline how I have used the concept. *Hegemonic masculinities* are dominating forms of masculinity that function as norms for male behaviour. The concept of hegemony, as defined by Gramsci (1971), involves the active consent of dominated groups. That is, the power exercised by the hegemony appears as legitimate, natural and normal (Hearn, 2000). Thus, hegemonic masculinities are not extremely masculine, but exercise their power through being conceived of as normal and functioning as norms. They not only appear as legitimate in themselves, they also legitimize the social gender order in which they have developed (Connell, 2005a). This means that through the normativity of hegemonic masculinities, the gendered order appears as given and “good”. Since norms of masculinity vary between different situations and positions, hegemonic masculinities are multiple and contextual (Nordberg, 2005; Wetherell & Edley, 1999), and they evolve in ways that maintain their legitimacy when gendered norms change (Demetriou, 2001). Some conceptions of masculinity become linked to ideal images such as “the involved father” or “the gender-equal man” and become hegemonic through being understood as normative. By being associated with hegemonic masculinities, some male practices can be legitimized and made intelligible. Hegemonic masculinities are, thus, norms that individuals can relate to, draw on and identify with or against. Hence, I do not claim that some men “have” hegemonic masculinities, but their practices (as described for example in interviewees’ accounts) actualize elements of discourses that associate them with hegemonic positions, and thus allow them to make distinctions in relation to subordinated masculinities and femininities. Women’s explanations of their choices and practices can also draw on discourses and norms of masculinity, but there are limits to how much masculinity one can account for without becoming incomprehensible as a woman.

Femininity has often been imagined to be subordinated to hegemonic masculinities (Carrigan et al., 1985). However, in the context of caregiving, where femininity can be understood as competence, characteristics associated with femininity may also be desirable for men (Nordberg, 2004, 2005; Plantin, Månsson, & Kearney, 2003). Caregiving has also been presented as a key factor in discourses of gender-equal masculinity. In these discourses, through their experiences of caregiving (for their children), men are expected to develop as human beings and transform into “new men” who are less aggressive and more in touch with their feelings (Buchbinder, 1994; Nordberg, 2005). In the European

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context, this transformation of men has been discussed in terms of men developing “caring masculinities” through experiences of care practices (for an overview see Elliott, 2016). While hegemonic masculinities in societies in the West generally has been described as linked to ideals of transnational business masculinity, characterized by ceaseless work to maximize one’s chances, free movement in geographical space, and sacrifices of social relations (Connell, 2005a), the ideals of gender equality have, to some extent, induced other hegemonic masculinities in Sweden. Thus, hegemonic masculinity in Sweden today may be embodied in “the new man” who is profeminist, empathic, and caregiving (Johansson & Klinth, 2008; Plantin et al., 2003).

Hegemonic masculinities (and norms of femininity) need to be understood in relation to other power relations, notably *class*-based relations. The preferences of the middle class often constitute norms that delimit legitimate and respectable ways of doing femininity and masculinity (Skeggs, 1997). Previous research has shown how ideals regarding new masculinities and involved parenthood have enabled class distinctions and classed practices (Chesley, 2011; Farstad & Stefansen, 2015; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 1994; Plantin, 2007). In this thesis, I am interested in *class* in terms of both material inequalities and cultural constructions, but focusing mainly on associated practices, accounts, distinctions, and lived experiences. *Class* is here, like gender, not understood as a given trait, but as something which is *done* in an institutionalized inequality, where the doing of class influences the doing of gender and vice versa (Skeggs, 1997; Sohl, 2014).<sup>2</sup> The significance of different dimensions of class can be very complex in relation the roles of caregiving and work in life. Occupational positions affect workers’ influence both on working conditions and working hours (Bihagen & Halleröd, 2000), but may also influence expectations of self-fulfilment through work. Economic assets and income affect both opportunities to work part-time and to buy care services, not least to care for aging parents. The level of education is important as a resource in negotiations with both public care providers and other family members (Ulmanen, 2015b). People’s kind of education and occupation may also influence the significance of different norms and ideals in life. Moreover, different class positions are associated with differing cultural assets and opportunities to identify with certain normative positions. This may involve having access to discourses to make oneself intelligible and opportunities to take the position of the normative and highly valued (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 1994). Class also has moral dimensions,

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<sup>2</sup> When I described the caregivers’ class positions in my discussion of methods and my analysis, in line with international research in the field, I applied a pragmatic approach and defined class position based on educational level and occupation (e.g. Brandth & Kvande, 2015; Gillies, 2005; Stefansen & Farstad, 2008).

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notably caregiving has differing symbolic values in differently classed and gendered positions (Skeggs, 1997). Class-specific moral ideals may influence feelings of pride and shame related to ideals of caregiving and gender equality, especially when the ideals are in conflict. Thus, class is highly relevant in analysis of how care responsibilities in families can be made intelligible in relation to gendered norms. Nevertheless, class was not a primary concern in the empirical studies, so it is not addressed in depth in the thesis. However, it is discussed briefly, and in my concluding discussion I address questions regarding classed care practices, experiences and emotions that this thesis has raised and warrant further research.

### Masculinities in family eldercare

A primary concern of this thesis is how gender is given relevance in family care arrangements, both generally and specifically in accounts of participants in the empirical studies. The relation between caregiving and doing gender has been an important issue for feminist researchers for a long time (e.g. Gilligan, 1982; Finch & Groves, 1983; Tronto, 1993). In this section, I first briefly discuss the notion of care and then consider in more detail gendered understandings of family eldercare. *Giving care* is a multidimensional practice that not only requires practical work, but also involves emotions; a “labour of love” (Finch and Groves, 1983). Distinctions have been made between “caring for”, as the actual practice of caring, and “caring about” as feeling concern for another (Fisher & Tronto, 1990; Graham, 1983; Skeggs, 1997). The dimension of “caring about” also involves emotional commitment resulting in moral obligations (Finch & Mason, 1993; Naldemirci, 2013). Both of these dimensions are important elements of the theoretical framework of this thesis, providing a broad definition of caregiving that embraces all kinds of practical and emotional assistance given to family members, as well as planning and worrying for the wellbeing of those cared for. Earlier research has shown that seemingly modest involvement in care can be burdensome because of emotional strain, and that responsibilities to coordinate care also may be demanding (Le Bihan, Martin, & Campéon, 2013; Naldini, Wall, & Le Bihan, 2013; Sand, 2010; Ulmanen, 2015b).

Giving care to either elderly relatives or children is a practice generally understood as “doing femininity” (Miller, 2011b; Thompson, 2002). Therefore, men’s involvement in family eldercare tends to be understood as problematic. Men giving care have been portrayed either as poor caregivers, because they do not give care in the same manner as women, or deviant as men if they do give care in the same manner as women (Eriksson, Sandberg, & Pringle, 2008; Rus-



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sell, 2001; Thompson, 2002). Filial care is more gendered than other family caregiving, such as childcare and spousal eldercare (Campbell & Carroll, 2007), also in Sweden (Johansson et al., 2003). Yet, family eldercare is less gendered in Sweden than in many other European countries (Keck, 2008) and there are many men who provide family eldercare (Dunér, 2010). However, previous research has provided conflicting indications about gender differences in adult children's care for aging parents in Sweden, depending on whether caregivers or care receivers have been studied and how questions have been asked (for an overview and discussion see Ulmanen, 2015b).

The gendering of family care arrangements through practices has been theorized through the concept of *commitments*. While gendered norms function as a backdrop of general moral guidelines, family members negotiate their responsibilities mainly through practices developing into commitments. Commitments are here understood as responsibilities that a person takes on and have real and lasting consequences for future negotiations about responsibilities. The moral understandings of responsibilities change when commitments, consisting of emotional bonds, develop between family members (Finch & Mason, 1993). A person who starts caring for someone will be considered morally responsible for caregiving in the future, by the caregiver, the care recipient, and others. Thus, while on a societal level norms change very slowly, on a family level they can be rapidly negotiated and reshaped through family caregiving practices. However, women end up with commitments to care for elderly relatives more often than men. Recently researchers engaged in critical studies of men and masculinities have taken an interest in how men are drawn into care practices through similar processes, which have been described as a development of *caring masculinities* (e.g. Elliott, 2015; Wojnicka & Kluczyńska, 2015). When men, as a result of new ideals of masculinity, become involved in care practices new masculine identities are developed that are based on caring (Hanlon, 2012).

Internationally, most research on men's family elder-caregiving has focused on what tasks men perform and do not perform, or do differently from women. While some studies report traditionally gendered divisions of tasks, including less involvement of men in personal and hands-on care (Dwyer & Coward, 1991; Twigg & Atkin, 1994), other studies have shown that men may give all kinds of care (for overviews see Birt, 2010; Campbell, 2010; Campbell & Carroll, 2007; Hanlon, 2012; Harris, 2001; Thompson, 2002). It has also been claimed that men generally express a taking-charge or just-do-it approach to caregiving (Campbell & Carroll, 2007), while women express more emotional engagement (for an overview see Birt, 2010). However, these differences may have more to do with gender accomplishment in interview situations than with actual differences in care practices (Carroll & Campbell, 2008). The experience of giving

care has also been described as gendered (for an overview and critique see Wallroth, 2016), but Swedish studies have come to somewhat diverging conclusions about this too (Almberg, Jansson, Grafström, & Winblad, 1998; Ulmanen, 2015b). Internationally, very few studies have focused on how masculinity and femininity are negotiated in family eldercare (for overviews see Campbell & Carroll, 2007; Thompson, 2002). In Sweden, a masculinity and femininity perspective has been applied in analyses of men's positions as both professional caregivers (e.g. Nordberg, 2005; Sörensdotter, 2008), and fathers (see the section below), but less attention has been paid to their roles and negotiations as family eldercare givers. A prominent exception is a recent study by Wallroth (2016) of men's attitudes and negotiations of masculinities in relation to care responsibilities and practices. Although the men who participated in Wallroth's study expressed indications that they put their masculinity at risk by giving care, they did not perceive their caregiving to be optional and were emotionally and morally motivated to provide care. To explore how both women and men understood femininity and masculinity in relation to men's family eldercare practices and responsibilities, and the relevance of gendered norms and ideals of gender equality, I have investigated caregivers' accounts of men's involvement in caregiving.

### Masculinities in child care

While men's involvement in family eldercare has received very sparse attention from a masculinity perspective, fatherhood has been much more intensively investigated from such perspectives. Many studies have concluded that while traditional notions of father-as-primary-breadwinner continue to have power as an ideal to strive for (Gatrell, Burnett, Cooper, & Sparrow, 2015; Henwood & Procter, 2003; Johansson & Klinth, 2008; Townsend, 2010), since the early 1980s there has been a discernible shift in the general culture of fatherhood, towards a much greater emphasis on fathers' nurturing role, closer emotional relationships with their children, and greater participation in caregiving work (Aarseth, 2009; Bach, 2015; Bekkengen, 2002; Björnberg, 1994; Gatrell et al., 2015; Marsiglio & Roy, 2012; Wall & Arnold, 2007). In Sweden, these ideals of "involved fatherhood" have, as mentioned above, produced new hegemonic masculinities (Johansson & Klinth, 2008). Fathers have also started to change their practices and are more involved with their children, although mothers continue to carry the main responsibility for child care, even when both parents are working (for overviews see Doucet, 2006; Ranson, 2011). This also applies in Sweden (Almqvist, Sandberg, & Dahlgren, 2011; Björnberg & Kollind, 2005; Forsberg, 2007; Roman & Peterson, 2011).

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While involved fatherhood includes traditionally feminized practices of caregiving, studies of fathers who stayed at home or worked part-time have found that these fathers, who prioritized caregiving, continued to make gender relevant and made themselves intelligible through re-doing masculinities in Canada (Doucet, 2006; Ranson, 2011), the USA (Chesley, 2011) and Sweden (Larsson & Björk, 2017, see also Hauser, 2015; Lengersdorf & Meuser, 2016; Nordberg, 2006). However, while doing masculinity and sometimes distancing themselves from femininity through their accounts, fathers' involvement in care practices led them to assign higher values to traditionally feminized competences (Chesley, 2011; Doucet, 2006; see also Nordberg, 2005). Earlier research in Sweden has also shown that extending parental leave has a major positive impact in terms of the development of fathers' parental identities and their assumption of parenting responsibility (Duvander & Jans, 2009; Evertsson, Boye, & Erman, 2015; Haas & Hwang, 2008). When fathers take on caring responsibilities, the new responsibilities may come into conflict with demands at work, thus calling for new approaches from the fathers, and (thus) creating new ways of doing fatherhood (Chesley, 2011; Elliott, 2016; Magaraggia, 2012; Nordberg, 2007; Plantin et al., 2003). On the other hand, Miller (2011a, 2011b, 2012) found that intentions of many fathers who initially embraced the ideal of involvement changed when they faced the difficulties of combining work and caregiving in practice, and consequently retreated to more traditional ideals of masculinity, such as breadwinning. However, this was in a British context where many fathers could not take parental leave.

Previous research on men's involvement in child care in Sweden has often focused on fathers' use of early-childhood parental leave, largely ignoring their subsequent parental part-time work choices (e.g. Bekkengen, 2002; Bygren & Duvander, 2006; Chronholm, 2004; Duvander & Johansson, 2012; Johansson & Klinth, 2010; Plantin, 2001). In the Swedish context, only Larsson (2012a) has specifically examined fathers' use of their parental part-time work entitlement. He found part-time work to be an alternative available primarily to fathers with sufficient resources, in terms of income, individual reflexivity, partner support, and acceptance in the workplace. Generally, fatherhood ideals and practices are shaped by classed opportunities to challenge certain ideals and identify with others, with middle-class fathers being most likely to identify with the ideal of the involved father (Chesley, 2011; Farstad & Stefansen, 2015; Plantin, 2007). Moreover, fatherhood policies may be implicitly rooted in perspectives of middle-class fathers (Gillies, 2009; Stefansen & Farstad, 2008). However, while middle-class fathers tend to be more involved on the discursive level, working-class fathers may be more involved in practice (Farstad & Stefansen, 2015; Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Shows & Gerstel, 2009). Structural factors, such

as male unemployment or shift work, may also have stronger effects than gender ideologies on the time fathers spend caring for their children (Chesley, 2011; Stefansen & Farstad, 2008). This interplay between structural and ideological factors has been theorized by Holter (2007) and incorporated in terms of two models of change – “new circumstances” or “new men”. The “new circumstances” model stresses the importance of changed material conditions experienced by men while the “new men” model explains changes in terms of new ideals of masculinity and commitment to gender equality. In this thesis both models are considered, but with a focus on norms and ideals.

The extent to which fathers can choose their commitments related to care for their children has been intensely debated in research literature on fathers’ involvement in child care. It has been claimed that fathers have greater room for manoeuvre than mothers, owing to parenting norms that put less moral pressure on fathers to actively participate in child care than on mothers (Bekkengen, 2002; Brandth & Kvande, 1998; Elvin-Nowak, 2005; Klinth, 2005). However, others have claimed that fathers’ choices are also conditioned by moral expectations that enable fathers to choose to prioritize work over family more easily than to prioritize caregiving over work (Featherstone, 2003; Miller, 2011b; Williams, 2008). The choices are also, as indicated above, dependent on context, as some countries (and many circumstances within all countries) offer very limited choices for fathers (Bailey, 2015; Doucet, 2016). The impression that fathers have greater ability to choose their work–life balance may also be partly due to interviewed fathers expressing themselves in terms of active choices to display masculinity through being in control (Björk, 2013; Miller, 2011b). Thus, in my analyses I have explored how Swedish fathers accounted for their choices when challenging traditional ideals of masculinity, such as breadwinning through part-time work, and how they made themselves intelligible as men when engaging with ideals of involved fatherhood, including traditionally feminized competences of caregiving.

### Doing gender and gender equality

Since discourses of gender equality are well-established and widely accepted in Sweden, they can provide resources for those who seek to challenge certain gendered norms. However, policies and discourses of gender equality have been criticized for not being equally accessible to everyone, and for having the heterosexual, ethnic Swedish couple with children as both point of departure and normative ideal (Norberg, 2009). Although the discourses are formulated to promote equality, they have been criticized for creating difference – in relation to sexuality, class, race, and ethnicity, but also gender (e.g. Dahl, 2005; de los

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Reyes, 2001; Gottzén & Jonsson, 2012; Larsson, 2015; Magnusson, Rönnblom, & Silius, 2008; Norberg, 2009; Ålund & Alinia, 2011, for an overview see Martinsson et al., 2016). It should be noted that those who formulate this type of criticism generally endorse the ambition to achieve greater equality. Thus, they differ completely from the more conservative critical voices heard in the debate, who advocate more traditional gender roles, or claim that policies of gender equality have a narrow women's perspective, and that men are now the most discriminated against (see e.g. Ström, 2007).

In the following discussion, I focus on how discourses of gender equality have been criticized for producing gender differences, also relating to sexuality, heteronormativity and the nuclear family as a norm. The Swedish concept of gender equality, "jämställdhet," was especially formulated to describe the relationship between women and men, thus it presumes these two positions as given (Dahl, 2005; Edström & Brunila, 2016; Honkanen, 2008; Martinsson et al., 2016). Policies and practices to promote gender equality have aimed to form new (less traditional) ways of thinking about women and men. Thus, understandings of gendered identities have been deconstructed through questions about what is masculine and feminine, how children should be brought up, how parental leave should be allocated between parents, and what men and women should contribute in different contexts. At the same time, gender identities have been reconstructed through conceptions of "gender-equal" men, women and children. In these conceptions, gender as a binary continues to be taken for granted, or is even made a more important component of identity as men and women are expected to have differing and complementary perspectives and experiences (Dahl, 2005; Jonsson, 2009; Martinsson et al., 2016).

With a binary understanding of gender, discourses of gender equality tend to situate gender equality mainly within the heterosexual couple. Through presuming heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships, certain masculinities and femininities become intelligible for "gender-equal women" and "gender-equal men." Boundaries for intelligible "gender-equal" femininity are drawn, excluding the too "traditionally feminine" and the overly sexualized or sexually available. At the same time, heteronormativity also establishes boundaries against what is considered an overly aggressive aspiration for gender equality, interpreted as unattractive and man-hating, with the militant lesbian woman as border guard and contrast. The "gender-equal woman" is, thus, expected to present an emancipated, but still attractive, heterosexual femininity (Dahl, 2005). Similarly, intelligible "gender-equal masculinity" is defined against the irresponsible and violent masculinity, seen as "traditional" and "unequal" (Gottzén & Jonsson, 2012). In a further similarity, men are not expected to pass the border into the overly

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responsible and soft, but continue to present a certain kind of masculinity to avoid appearing non-heterosexual (Dahl, 2005; Nordberg, 2005).

The heterosexual couple, the point of departure for discourses of gender equality, is also expected to live together in a nuclear family. The Swedish gender equality project has focused on parenthood and thus made the family with children a norm for gender-equal life (Egeberg Holmgren, 2011). I would argue that, by being so focused on the nuclear family and parenthood, ideals of gender equality also become gendered as they are connected to differing moral ideals regarding motherhood and fatherhood (see e.g. Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001). Gender is, therefore, reproduced through differing understandings of what “gender-equal mothers” and “gender-equal fathers” do and are. Returning to the central theme of this thesis, gender might not be given continued relevance in family care arrangements *despite* gender equality ideals, but rather at least partly *through* gender equality ideals.

### Norms and emotions in family care

When interviewed caregivers made themselves intelligible through accounts of their care arrangements, *emotions* were highly important. This is hardly surprising as emotions play key roles in how life is experienced, and caring for close relatives and family members is an emotionally charged practice. However, emotions were also important because norms and transgressions of norms were experienced through emotions (Ahmed, 2014). Through emotions we are rewarded for conforming to norms, for example through feelings of pride, and we experience discomfort and shame when deviating from norms (Wasshede, Wettergren, & Jonsson, 2015). Thus, attending to emotions provides a way to discern norms and norm conflicts. Norms also include *emotion regimes*, with normative expectations concerning emotions (Reddy, 2001; Wettergren & Jansson, 2013). A sociological perspective on emotions embraces “not only what people feel, but also how they think they should feel, and what they think others think they should feel” (Garey & Hansen, 2011, p. 5), thereby connecting micro-level feelings with macro-level structures. Emotion regimes are sets of *feeling rules* prescribing who should experience what emotions, at what times, and how they should be presented (Reddy, 2001; Wettergren & Jansson, 2013). Thus, emotions should not be seen as spontaneous reactions, but as culturally constructed responses that are shaped by social norms (Garey & Hansen, 2011) and adapted through *emotion work* (Hochschild, 1979). In this thesis, emotion work is understood as the work of trying to feel and display the right emotions in relation to

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norms and emotion regimes<sup>3</sup> (Wettergren & Jansson, 2013). Although emotion work can be conscious and strategic, coping with everyday life and adjusting to normative expectations involves habitual *emotion management* that operates below consciousness (Fitzpatrick & Olson, 2015; Theodosius, 2006).<sup>4</sup> Norms regarding emotions vary depending on positions, for example gender, as different emotions and emotional expressions have been used to define femininity and masculinity (Peterson, 2005; Shields, Garner, Di Leone, & Hadley, 2006). Emotion regimes are also contextual, and multiple regimes linked to different normative systems can coexist in a society, even if they are sometimes conflicting (Fine-man, 2010). In many caregiving scenarios, for example when a parent combines care responsibilities with work, numerous norms with related emotion regimes may come into conflict with each other. Thus, I have investigated how caregivers interviewed in the empirical studies managed norms, conflicting norms, and transgressions of norms through emotion work.

In relation to norms, *shame* is a crucial emotion. It is caused by seeing oneself through the eyes of others and perceiving oneself to have been devalued through deviating from some norm (Scheff, 1990). Thus, shame makes us feel visible and uncomfortable at the same time (Ahmed, 2014). Another important emotion in the context of caring responsibilities is *guilt*. Like shame, guilt is an uncomfortable emotional state, but it is caused by one's own valuation of one's actions and non-actions. It often involves a sense of responsibility for other people and a feeling that one has betrayed them or abused one's power over them, and thus caused them suffering (Kemper, 2007; Stolinski, Ryan, Hausmann, & Wernli, 2004; Wettergren, 2013). Feelings of guilt are therefore influenced both by norms regarding responsibilities and empathy - the ability to imagine another's feelings. Imagination is important here because empathy does not imply an ability to access the other person's "true" feelings or to perceive them accurately in all cases (Cuff, Brown, Taylor, & Howat, 2016; Morton, 2013). This is particularly important when considering relationships between adults and children (or other adults who are not always capable of articulating their feelings) as the adult's empathy in such cases may reflect his or her ideas

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<sup>3</sup> Many studies on emotion work in family life treats emotion work as an area of work in the family, in addition to household work and childcare. Emotion work in these studies is understood as the maintenance of relationships and provision of emotional support through comforting and encouragement of family members (e.g. Berhau, Lareau, & Press, 2011; Devault, 1999; Erickson, 2005; see also Jónasdóttir, 2003). These studies are, therefore, mostly concerned with determinants of the division of emotion work and its significance for gender identities and marital satisfaction (e.g. Erickson, 1993, 2005; Kroska, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> I use *emotion work* and *emotion management* as synonyms.

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about unexpressed needs rather than the other person's true feelings. Thus, normative beliefs about what is good for children shape the *empathic imagination*. The notion of empathic imagination applied in this thesis is not taken from discussion of therapeutic relationships by psychologists (e.g. Flaskas, 2009; Margulies, 1989), but inspired by Morton's (2013) ideas about the relations between emotions, imagination, and empathy. Morton claims that emotions shape and orient imagination while imaginations, in turn, affect emotions. When one imagines another person's situation one can both know one's own emotions about the situation and empathically imagine the emotions of the other. I was particularly interested in how parents' emotions are influenced by their imaginations of their children's situations and emotions. Since imagining different feelings in children can evoke other feelings in parents, empathic imagination could serve as a tool for emotion management. Thus, I have used the concept of *empathic imagination* to explore how parents made some circumstances and ideals more or less relevant when imagining their children's feelings and needs, and how these inclusions and exclusions related to and negotiated norms.

While feelings of guilt and shame deter us from transgressing norms and emotion regimes, feelings of *comfort*, *pleasure* and *pride* encourage us to reproduce norms. Compliance with norms generates comfort, consensus and solidarity among those who can feel at home in and express the norms (Ahmed, 2014; Collins, 2004; Jonsson, 2009). These feelings of comfort in complying with a norm are difficult to detect, partly because norms only become visible when they are transgressed (Ahmed, 2014). Since emotion regimes and feeling rules are norms in themselves, compliance with emotion regimes can also generate comfort or even pride, that is, pride over being able to feel the "right" feeling. We can thus also "have feelings about [our own] feelings" (Barbalet, 1998, p. 181).

Emotions perspectives were initially introduced into sociological study of how parents balance work obligations with family life and child care in Arlie Hochschild's book *"The second shift: Working parents and the revolution at home"* (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Since then they have been very influential, triggering a rich flora of studies of emotions related to combining work and family (for overviews see Erickson & Cottingham, 2014; Garey & Hansen, 2011). My investigations were inspired by earlier studies that connect emotions and emotion management to moral self-presentations (Garey, 1999, 2011; Lavee & Benjamin, 2016). Garey (1999, 2011) addressed emotional dimensions of doing motherhood and found that mothers' requirements for being accountable and morally acceptable included displaying the "right" emotions, e.g. appearing "natural" and "effortless" in caring for their children, which in turn required emotion management. Lavee and Benjamin (2016) drew on this moral perspec-



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tive of mothers' emotions, but in a context of potentially conflicting norms in relation to work and caring for children. They found the feeling rules associated with the labour market and motherhood to be conflicting. In the face of these feeling rules, Lavee and Benjamin describe how Israeli working-class mothers managed emotions to present themselves as respectable citizens by expressing emotions in line with feeling rules of devotion to work, while their practices reflected an ideology of intensive mothering. Emotions associated with conflicting norms have previously been theorized through the notion of *ambivalence*, which "may be defined as simultaneously held opposing feelings or emotions that are due in part to countervailing expectations about how individuals should act" (Connidis & McMullin, 2002, p. 558). Two important points from this perspective are that the normative structures become contradictory precisely in the individual living in them, and that through the individual's efforts to reduce her or his ambivalence, by negotiating structural positions, the structures can be renegotiated and changed. Actors with different positions and resources have different abilities to manage ambivalence and renegotiate conflicting social expectations.

Some norms are more morally charged than others, and gendered norms related to caregiving tend to be highly morally (as well as emotionally) charged, especially those related to parenthood and associated discourses of "good" motherhood and "good" fatherhood (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001). In Sweden, the generally dominant discourses concerning "good motherhood" emphasize the importance of a mother's presence and accessibility for children (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001). Fatherhood, on the other hand, is not as clearly morally regulated, and there are still several culturally accepted ways of being a father, ranging from active participation in the children's everyday lives to investing all effort in career-making and work (Bekkengen, 2002; Elvin-Nowak, 2005; Plantin, 2001). Adding this moral dimension to the analysis of doing gender further strengthens the significance of both accountability and emotions (Doucet, 2006). I have used the notion of *moral intelligibility* to explore moral dimensions of gendered norms regarding care and work. Morality defines what is good or bad, right or wrong. Thus, moral intelligibility has helped explain why caregivers generally (and interviewed caregivers specifically) cannot readily transgress norms of care; since the norms have moral dimensions their accountability as "good" parents, sons or daughters are at stake. The moral dimensions of the norms can amplify feelings of shame or guilt, but also of pride.

As discussed above, I have found Butler's notion of intelligibility useful for analysing how caregivers need to relate to norms and draw on dominant discourses to make themselves intelligible, and recognizable in relation to the

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norms. To link the concept of intelligibility to emotions I have used Butler's (2004) notion of *liveability*, regarding a liveable life as a life supported by norms. While intelligibility concerns the ability to account for oneself as understandable and legitimate in relation to norms, liveability is the feeling that one's life is bearable in relation to normative standards. Thus, the concept highlights how norms are made relevant and embodied through emotions. Butler describes life that cannot be made intelligible as unbearable and thus *unliveable*. Butler's discussion of how normative understandings of gender can undermine some people's possibilities to lead liveable lives starts from the exclusions and violence that homosexual, intersexual and transgender people experience. Norms regarding caregiving in the family can be perceived as less exclusionary and violent, but when they are challenged or transgressed, e.g. when women choose not to have children, the norms become visible and may result in exclusions and hurts (Peterson & Engvall, 2013). However, as mentioned above, motherhood is strongly regulated by morally charged norms for those who are mothers too. In my interviews, I found that parents' emotions associated with deviance from norms could be very strong, notably emotions of guilt and shame if they feel they are not a "good parent" for a loved child. Of course, not all transgressions of norms were unbearable and I have used Ahmed's (2014) notion *discomfort* to describe the feeling of not really fitting in. Thus, both discomfort and unliveability have been used to describe emotions associated with norm transgression, but there is a difference in degree between life becoming uncomfortable and it becoming unbearable and unliveable.

My theoretical points of departure could be summarized as follows. Gender is done through practices, in interactions with others, in order to become intelligible in relation to prevailing norms. Intelligibility, in turn, is essential to make life feel liveable. Since gender is done through practice, the meanings of masculinities and femininities can shift and change through changes in patterns of action. Thus, gender categories can also become less relevant in some contexts. Although ideals of gender equality are superficially concerned with reducing the relevance of gender, they have gendered aspects, which have been major interests in my studies. Empirically, I have focused on caregiving which provides particularly interesting cases to study when trying to understand reproduction and changes of gendered practices. Caregiving is strongly gendered, associated with femininity, and has moral and emotional dimensions that reinforce the significance of intelligibility and liveability. Other important theoretical elements have included understandings of emotions as normatively regulated, while norms and transgressions of norms are made relevant, and felt, through emotions. Therefore, norms can be reproduced and negotiated through emotion management. A framework composed of these eclectic elements has supported

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my analyses of material drawn from interviews with family caregivers. Before I present my analyses, I will account for, and discuss, my methods; how my material has come to be, how I have worked analytically and how I have handled ethical considerations.



# 3

## Research Methods

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During all the data collection and analysis procedures I have tried to retain awareness that there is no neutral production of knowledge, as all knowledge is situated in relation to the researchers' positions and experiences (Carlson, 2002; Harding, 1991; Skeggs, 1997). As a researcher, in many ways I have been part of forming my results: through selecting research questions I found interesting, my interactions with interviewees, and the inspiration I got from my previous experiences, thoughts, theory and material. I have also had relevant experiences while conducting the studies and writing this thesis. I have had care responsibilities for older relatives, whom I love, and negotiated these responsibilities in conjunction with other family members and public care providers. I also have two children and, along with the children's father, tried to be a parent in less gendered ways than those we have seen in most other families, by exploiting both parental leave and part-time work opportunities, and by our division of child care responsibilities. Although I did not include these experiences in the material I analysed, they have inspired my questions and considerations, and contributed to my perceptions of what was most important in the material.

### Qualitative materials

As already stated, the overall objective of my studies was to contribute to understanding of how gender continues to be given relevance in family caregiving when caregivers, in their efforts to form liveable and emotionally sustainable lives, make themselves intelligible in relation to sometimes conflicting norms and ideals of care, work and gender equality. To do so I drew on three sets of interview materials collected in two projects (Family Life without Time Pressure and Workers under Pressure and Social Care), as outlined in Table 1 and described below.

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Table 1. Overview of the aims and research projects that provided materials in Studies I-III

Study	Aim	Material	Research project
Study I	To explore Swedish fathers' parental part-time work and how they made their caring and working arrangements morally intelligible vis-à-vis conflicting ideals of fatherhood and masculinity	Interviews with fathers who worked or wanted to work part time	21 interviews: 18 interviews recorded in "Family Life without Time Pressure", plus three from "Workers under Pressure and Social Care - Childcare"
Study II	To analyse how middle-aged men and women in Sweden, with parents who needed care, related to norms of masculinity and femininity when accounting for men's caregiving	Interviews with men and women with care responsibilities for aging parents	21 interviews recorded in "Workers under Pressure and Social Care - Elder-care"
Study III	To investigate how Swedish working parents related emotionally to norms and ideals of work, parenthood and gender equality	Interviews with working parents	13 interviews: 12 interviews recorded in "Workers under Pressure and Social Care - Child-care", plus one in "Family Life without Time Pressure"

"Family Life without Time Pressure" (Familjeliv utan tidsbrist), was Jörgen Larsson's doctoral project, carried out in 2005–2012 when he was based at the Department of Sociology, University of Gothenburg (Larsson, 2012b). In this project interviews were conducted to explore conditions for part-time work among Swedish fathers (Larsson, 2012a).

"Workers under Pressure and Social Care" was an international research project on atypical working hours and care responsibilities, coordinated by Martin and Bihan, funded by the French National Research Agency and the Research Mission of the French Ministry of Social Affairs, and carried out in 2007–2010 (Le Bihan, Knijn, & Martin, 2014). It included a Swedish sub-project coordinated by Ulla Björnberg, in which two sets of interviews were conducted: one with sons and daughters working atypical hours and caring for their aging parents, and one with parents working atypical hours who had children aged 11 or younger.

Since I was interested in examining how caregiving in families continues to be gendered, despite the ideals of gender equality in the Swedish context, mate-

rials collected in these three sets of interviews were highly relevant, and enabled comparisons between family care for children and for aging parents. The atypical working hours, especially among parents of small children, amplified and made some of the norm conflicts between work and family visible. The fathers' part-time work provided similar amplification, and enabled analyses of how masculinity was negotiated when men transgressed norms regarding prioritizations between care and work. In both projects the interviews were semi-structured, and designed to provide the caregivers opportunities to reflect upon their ideals regarding care and work, account for their care arrangements and talk about their emotions in everyday life, thus enabling analyses of negotiations of intelligibility and emotions in relation to norms and ideals.

### *Recruiting interviewees and conducting interviews*

Since different approaches to norms appear possible and intelligible from different positions, when recruiting interviewees for the studies, we strived to include as much variation as possible in terms of structural positions (mainly class, position on the labour market and gender) and experiences (care responsibilities, working hours, family situations etc.). Thus, the sampling was theoretical and strategic, but it was also pragmatic (Mason, 2002) since my colleagues and I (hereafter we) only interviewed people living in or nearby Gothenburg. We did not manage to get all the variation we sought in terms of structural positions, especially in terms of class, as further discussed below. We conducted interviews until a broad range of experiences had been described, and we felt that new interviews did not add much variation in accounts and explanations.

### Study I

In study I, we sought to interview fathers with children aged two to eight years and who either worked part-time or wanted to do so. These fathers could provide us with accounts of their experiences of actively relating to part-time work. However, recruiting fathers proved difficult. Initially, 1400 requests to participate in the study were distributed to parents through 28 preschools, asking fathers who either worked part-time, or wanted to do so, to contact Jörgen Larsson, the project leader. This initiative did not result in any interviews. Instead, nine of the participants were recruited through an advertisement placed in a major Swedish tabloid paper encouraging part-time-working fathers to contact the researcher for possible participation in the study. Nine more participants were recruited through Jörgen Larsson's personal social networks, and the last

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three were recruited through the research project on atypical working hours and care (see below).

The 21 semi-structured interviews analysed in study I were conducted in 2007–09 with 21 Swedish fathers aged 32–47 years, 14 working part-time and seven working full-time (see Appendix A). Eighteen of the interviews were conducted by Jörgen Larsson (as part of the research project exploring conditions for part-time work among Swedish fathers). The remaining three interviews (with full-time working fathers) were conducted by me, and formed part of the material examined in Study III. Despite efforts to ensure diversity in living arrangements among the interviewees, the recruiting techniques almost certainly contributed to a substantial degree of homogeneity among the interviewees. The study participants were all married to, or cohabited with, the mother of their children. Almost all of them held typical middle- or upper-middle-class jobs, working as journalists, marketers, teachers, dentists, or data processing specialists; two exceptions were an assistant nurse and a security officer. Sixteen of the study participants worked in the public sector, and most of them had a college or university degree. They were all financially stable (despite working part-time) and felt secure and respected in their jobs. Thus, in many ways the fathers interviewed in this study could be said to represent a privileged strata of society, which may have affected the results (as discussed later).

The fathers working part-time had all worked full time before having children; after using up their parental leave entitlement they had begun working at 50 to 90 percent of full-time hours. At the time of the interviews, most of them had worked part-time for at least a couple of years (range: two months to 13 years). Five of the fathers working part-time had partners who worked full-time, while the other nine had partners who also worked part-time.

The semi-structured interviews inquired about the study participants' current work situation, their views on parenthood, and their everyday prioritizations. Fathers who worked part-time were asked about their motives, financial situation, working arrangement at their workplace, and perceptions about the consequences of working part-time for their lives. Fathers working full-time were asked about their future work time preferences and their experiences of any impediments to, or misgivings about, starting to work part-time. The interviews lasted from 60 to 150 minutes, and the sessions were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

### Study II & III

The interviews in Studies II and III, and three of the interviews in Study I, were all conducted within the broader international project on atypical working hours



(evenings, nights, weekends, or over-time) and care responsibilities for children or elderly relatives. To recruit interviewees we distributed invitations, in the form of a short survey, to employees in sectors where atypical working hours are common, e.g. medical care, eldercare, manufacturing industry, trade, culture, and churches. We also sought contact with managers in the public sector, engineers, and doctors who could be expected to work over-time. In order to find potential interviewees who met our inclusion criteria, the survey asked about working hours, care responsibilities, gender, occupation, and if the respondents were willing to be interviewed for our study. The survey was distributed through employers and labour unions, which will not be listed here to preserve the interviewees' anonymity. From the respondents, we chose potential interviewees aiming to cover as much variation in experiences and positions as possible (mainly in terms of gender, occupations, and working hours).

The eldercare givers interviewed in *Study II* were identified through the survey questions: "Do you have an aging relative in need of care or assistance?" and "Are you one of those who take on the main responsibility to make sure that this person gets the help, care, and assistance he or she needs?" Thus, the caregivers interviewed in Study II were self-identified as responsible for caregiving, although most of them were not involved in hands-on personal care. It should be noted that whether or not people regard themselves as having care responsibilities for a relative may depend, at least partly, on the national context. For example, in Germany and southern Europe, where family caregiving is generally more intense (Brandt, Haberkern, & Szydlik, 2009; Le Bihan et al., 2014), people might need to give their parents substantial amounts of help before regarding themselves as "caregivers". In Sweden, on the other hand, where the responsibility for eldercare formally rests on the municipalities, adult children might not expect to take on care responsibilities and thus regard less assistance as "caregiving".

Response rates among approached workplaces and unions varied widely, and were highest from middle-class workplaces. We received a lot of responses from workers from one male and working-class dominated workplace, but none of them claimed to have care responsibilities for an aging relative. Thus, like those in Study I, the interviewees in Study II were predominantly middle class and most of them had a college or university degree. Despite the aim to cover greater diversity in living conditions, the groups reached for interviews in Studies I and II were particularly interesting precisely because of their advantaged life conditions (see also Miller, 2011b). They can be regarded as representing extreme cases, since caregivers in the middle class are likely to have greater opportunities to challenge certain gendered ideals and identify with ideals of gender equality, than other groups (Svallfors, 2004), but also greater economic

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room for manoeuvre and to be in better positions to negotiate with their employers (e.g. Bihagen & Halleröd, 2000). Thus, the samples yielded insights into how gender was reproduced and contested in a group with the greatest opportunity to practice gender-equal caregiving. This also helped me to analyse subtle ways of gender reproduction and how gender could be done through discourses of gender equality.

In Study II, 21 semi-structured interviews were conducted in 2008 with 13 women and eight men (see Appendix A). Seven of the interviews were conducted by Hans Ekbrand and 14 by me. All of the interviewees were employed at the time of the interviews, and most of them saw themselves as shouldering the main responsibility for the care of an elderly parent, by either providing hands-on care or coordinating external care providers. Two of the interviewees were male partners of women who were the main caregivers. The cared-for parents generally had a low level of dependency, with just six out of 21 needing daily assistance. The caregivers mainly helped their parents with shopping, cleaning, transportation, administration, financial matters and contacts with medical care providers and the authorities. Only six of the parents needed assistance with personal care such as bathing, and most of them used public homecare services. Thus, the care receivers' needs were relatively small, but responsibilities to coordinate care, rather than providing hands-on care, may also be demanding, not least emotionally (Le Bihan et al., 2013; Naldini et al., 2013; Sand, 2010). All of the interviewed men had parents who had a low level of dependency or received additional assistance from municipal caregivers, and thus needed their sons' help mainly with transportation and shopping. Since previous research on sons' involvement in care for aging parents has provided conflicting findings (Dwyer & Coward, 1991; Romoren, 2003; Ulmanen, 2015a, see also the discussion above), it is impossible to say whether situations of this sample are representative of caregiving sons' situations in Sweden, or if the interviewed sons are less (or more) involved in care arrangements than sons in Sweden generally.

In the interviews, we asked about the participants' everyday care routines and their sources of support in caring for their elderly parents, how the caring arrangements had evolved, how caring responsibilities were distributed in their families, and why responsibilities were shared in certain ways. Each of the interviews, conducted at the local university, the respondents' workplaces, or their homes, lasted for approximately an hour, with the sessions being recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The parents interviewed in *Study III* were recruited through the same survey as the interviewees in Study II. Parents were identified in the survey through the question: "Do you have children who live with you at least half of their time?" Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted in 2008-2009. Thirteen of

these interviews, in which emotions emerged as an important aspect of the caregiving, were selected for the analysis in Study III (see Appendix A). Seven of the interviewees in this set were women and six were men. They were aged 32-50 years, all of them had children aged two to 13 years, and were employed outside their homes at the time of the interviews. Three of these interviews were conducted by Hans Ekbrand, nine by me, and one was taken from the material collected by Jörgen Larsson, described above. These interviewees were more diverse in terms of occupational positions: three had working class positions (assistant nurse, treatment assistant, and flight attendant) three had intermediate positions (teacher, lower manager and security officer) and seven had upper middle-class positions (priest, doctor, two municipal heads of department, pilot, engineer and governmental officer). All but two of them worked full-time and all but one worked atypical hours. Two of the interviewees were divorced while the others were either married or cohabiting with the other parent. The semi-structured interviews inquired about the interviewees' everyday routines, caring arrangements and responsibilities, conditions and prioritizations at work, and the working situation of the interviewee's partner. The interviewees were also asked to assess their childcare arrangements. Interviews were conducted at the local university, the respondents' workplaces, or their homes, and each lasted approximately an hour. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

All of the interviews in the "Family Life without Time Pressure" project had already been conducted when I joined the project. The other project, "Workers under Pressure and Social Care", started a year before I joined it and the interview guides had already been collectively developed by the international team of researchers. However, when translating and adapting the guides to Swedish conditions I was able to include additional questions related to my research interests. This lack of personal influence has been less significant than one may think. As mentioned above (and further considered below), my research questions and theoretical perspectives have evolved during the research process, and even if I had had the opportunity to formulate the interview guides, I would not have known at that time which questions I would ultimately find most interesting. Instead, I am thankful for the thoughtful questions, formulated by the other researchers in both projects, which resulted in such rich material, giving me opportunities to find my own angles of analysis.

#### Situating the interviews

The interviews for this thesis have been conducted by three different researchers within the frames of two different projects. Therefore, the questions have varied, and in some cases the same questions have been posed in differing ways to the interviewees. However, my intention has not been to compare interviews

with each other in any strict sense, and the diversity in questions and interviewers has extended the variation and complexity in my material, by giving me access to responses to questions, follow-up questions and ways of asking that I did not think of myself. I perceive the interview as a conversation, collectively constructed by those involved in it (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Kvale, 2008). The interviewer shapes the interview through what she says and does not say, speaking and not speaking, questions asked and not asked (Wasshede, 2010). The interviewer communicates her interests through what she encourages and when she changes the subject, what she wants to have explained and what she makes self-evident by not asking further questions about. The accounts analysed in this thesis are therefore both the interviewees' and the interviewers'. Although an interview is reciprocal it is also hierarchical, partly because of the positions as researcher and researched (where the interviewer has the preferential right of interpretation) and partly because of other social positions (Kvale, 2008). The interviewers and interviewees who participated in the interviews considered in this thesis had different genders, ages, occupations, and backgrounds, which have influenced the power relations. It is impossible to recognize, define or describe all the potential effects of these hierarchies on how the interviews developed, but from an ethical perspective we, who conducted the interviews, have made efforts to be as humble and attentive as possible and to give the interviewees space to develop the themes they found important.

When men are interviewed or observed in research about gender, the importance of the gender of the researcher has been a debated issue (for an overview see Nordberg, 2005). In my interviews, me being categorized as a woman might have influenced what the interviewees wanted, and felt they needed, to say to me. However, it is difficult to tell what impact this may have had on different people. Furthermore, at times during the interviews I felt I treated men more cautiously than women, when pressing them with questions about their feelings and thoughts, due to the idea that men may be more uncomfortable talking about some issues. I probably engaged in this manner, and avoided certain topics, jointly with the interviewees in some interviews. When I began to analyse the interview transcripts with a focus on emotions, I also found that the interviews with men revolved less around feelings than some interviews with women. However, I should not exaggerate the importance of gender (in this context). Also in interviews with women I can see that I adjusted to signals from the interviewees about what they did and did not want to talk about. In retrospect, I wish that I had been less keen on keeping the flow of the conversation and not taking too long time. I wish instead that I had taken the opportunity to ask more follow-up questions, or just kept quiet and listened when the interviewees started to talk, instead of interrupting them. The information elicited

from the interviews I conducted did not apparently differ radically from those conducted by two male colleagues, indicating that the interviewers' gender did not significantly affect the interviewees' responses. However, I can also see that we had slightly differing ways of relating to the interview guide, and that we each had our own follow-up questions, so the character of the interviews varied somewhat.

All the interviews were conducted in Swedish. I have translated the quotes, trying to retain both their meaning and tone.

### Analytical approach

As mentioned above, I see the interviews as accounts constructed by the caregivers in the interview situation together with the interviewer (Baker & Johnson, 1998). The interviews provided occasions for the caregivers to explicitly account for their actions, and thus their talk also represented a performative act through and by which moral and gendered norms were reproduced or contested (Austin, 1999; Talja, 1999; Uhnöo, 2011). My analysis focused on discourses and discursive practices in the interviews, rather than the practices talked about. Thus, I did not analyse the "doing" of gender in everyday practices *per se*, but the "doing gender" perspective was used to emphasize the significance of accountability and intelligibility when narrating and legitimizing or criticizing the care arrangements. That said, I also paid attention to caregivers' practices and practical experiences because they influenced the caregivers' future understandings of what could be made intelligible.

All transcripts of the interviews were analysed with the help of Atlas.ti, a computer software for qualitative analysis. The coding was done in two steps, beginning with a close reading of all the transcripts and a first coding with codes, developed during the analysis, focusing on the main research questions posed in the respective projects. Following Potter and Wetherell (1987), this first coding was very inclusive and aimed to identify parts of the interviews that were relevant for certain themes, which could then be further analysed and recoded in the next step of the analysis. For the project investigating fathers' part-time work, the main objective was to understand why a few fathers chose to work part-time, when most fathers do not, despite having the legal right to do so. For this project the codes concerned motives for part-time work, requirements for and consequences of part-time work both at the workplace and in the family, and the family finances. Other codes concerned ideals regarding work and care, and gendered patterns and understandings. In the project on atypical working hours and care responsibilities, the main objective was to un-

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derstand the difficulties that arose from that combination of circumstances in life. The codes mainly concerned possibilities and difficulties in combining work and care, the flexibility and predictability of work and care needs, different caring solutions, the division of responsibilities in the family, negotiations, family cultures, ideals of care and work, and gendered understandings and patterns. After the initial coding, I wrote project reports, together with the other researchers involved in the projects, with primary descriptive analyses of responses related to the main research questions. When working on the analysis for the reports, I developed further questions that I wanted to continue to analyse more deeply and theoretically in articles.

The interviews with fathers working part-time raised questions about fathers' ability to choose their care commitments in relation to moral expectations for fathers. The fathers working part-time seldom appeared to feel forced to work part-time to make their childcare arrangements work, or because they felt discomfort about the time they did not spend with their children. Instead, they were often proud about working part-time, which emerged as a deliberate choice. In an attempt to deepen understanding of these observations, I chose to use theories of hegemonic masculinity in my further analysis. Inspired by previous studies of ideals of gender equality as discourses (discussed in the theory section above), I also decided to analyse the fathers' accounts of how they managed to make themselves intelligible in relation to gendered and morally charged norms and discourses.

The interviews with daughters and sons with care responsibilities for aging parents raised questions concerning the norms, expectations, pressures, and feelings influencing the divisions of responsibilities among family members, and public care providers. Often the care arrangement seemed to "just come to be" without prior discussions or decisions, often resulting in a clearly gendered division of responsibilities. Even so, no one discussed the distribution of care responsibilities for the aging parents as a gender equality issue. Although the division of responsibilities had "just come to be", it could often be explained and justified through the caregivers' descriptions of themselves, their parents and their siblings. After having studied fathers' part-time work, I also wanted to try to understand this gendered pattern using theories of masculinity and femininity. To allow nuanced analysis and discern changes in gendered patterns, even in a context that seemed so "traditionally" gendered, I used theories on doing, re-doing and undoing gender (as discussed in the theory section above).

In analyses of all the interviews with caregivers who worked atypical hours I noticed that emotions related to the care arrangements seemed to strongly affect how pressed the caregivers appeared. The emotions the caregivers imagined that their cared for ones felt, in combination with how the caregivers understood

their own responsibilities for these feelings, seemed to influence the feelings that the caregivers themselves expressed. I chose to focus Study III on parents' emotions related to the care for their children, and to use theories from the sociology of emotions to analyse how emotions were connected to norms and norm conflicts.

To address my research questions, I conducted a second coding based on my theoretical understanding of masculinity, femininity, emotions, emotion management, norms and ideals, morals, and doing, redoing and un-doing gender. In the analysis, I applied iterative cycles of abstraction, examination, problematization, and interpretation of patterns. Inspired by discourse analysis, I sought to tease out how the caregivers related to norms and ideals through the discourses I found to be available for them and how they drew on them to account for their care and work arrangements. In order to analyse norms through discourses I considered what was implicitly expressed in the interviews, what was made impossible, and what was taken for granted in relation to my research questions, as well as what was explicitly expressed (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). In this work, I used my pre-understanding, in the form of previous research regarding the norms I wanted to study, to see how these norms reappeared and were negotiated in the interviews.

Discourses, as I understood them in my analysis, strongly influence what can be said in certain situations, times and places - what can be made intelligible (Butler, 1990, 2004). Discourses are provisional closures, excluding other ways of talking, thinking and doing in relation to a certain situation. In my analysis of the interview transcripts I sought what was made legitimate and illegitimate by the caregivers and how these boundaries were drawn (Talja, 1999). Through their accounts, and the discourses they drew upon, the caregivers could (re)produce, negotiate and destabilize structures (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2000). I also looked for the unsaid; the implicit and taken for granted that did not need to be said (Fairclough, 1992), the absence of some discourses that were unavailable, and the forbidden, which could not be made intelligible through available discourses because it was outside the norm (Foucault, 1993). This was important because norms become discernible in this manner, both through what they include and therefore take for granted and through what they exclude and make unintelligible. Ambivalences and contradictions were also analysed as they might signal conflicting norms and moral ideals (Talja, 1999).

In the analysis in Study III, I focused on the relation between norms and emotions. I looked for emotions in an analogous manner to my search for discourses, by examining both what was said and what was left unsaid about emotions (Kleres, 2011). Emotional aspects were not included in my initial research questions, so I did not film any interviews and have not been able to analyse any

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facial expressions. However, emotions were revealed in the parents' accounts not only of their own feelings, activities and attitudes, but also through how they imagined their children's situations and feelings, and how they drew on norms and ideals to evoke pride or make their choices emotionally intelligible. I also looked for instances when emotions were emphasized verbally, and analysed if these were attempts to avoid expressing, or even feeling, other emotions.

Thus, in the analysis, I looked (among other things) for:

- Engaged narratives – when the interviewees suddenly gave a whole story regarding something (this was often linked to moral understandings and moral expressions)
- Repeated discourses and clichés (general ways of expression)
- Recurring phrases (which appeared in one or several interviews, but I did not recognize as elements of a discourse or clichés)
- The absence of discourses repeated by others
- Gendering discourses and distinctions
- The absence of gendering discourses and distinctions
- Talk about emotions
- Moral expressions
- Silences, implicit understandings and avoided subjects
- Ambivalences and contradictions

Rather than seeing the interview transcripts as conveying something about who the interviewees were or their life stories, through my analysis I tried to find out what discourses were available to the caregivers and how they reproduced and destabilized discourses and norms through their accounts. Thus, I was not trying to understand the caregivers as people or their individual motives, but what was possible for them to say and do in relation to certain situations from certain positions (Wasshede, 2010). I chose to give the interviewees personal feigned names in presentations of my analysis, because although I was more interested in their accounts than in their individual life stories, I wanted the ability to connect all the quotes from specific caregivers when necessary to provide context or explore possible contradictions.

Neither theories of masculinity nor sociology of emotions were part of my theoretical framework when we conducted the interviews; their relevance emerged in the process of analysing the interview transcripts. Thus, the questions we asked in the interviews were not intended to invite the interviewees to reflect on masculinities and femininities, or their own and their children's emotions. For these reasons, I have sometimes felt that the questions asked in the interviews hindered rather than assisted my analyses. However, this also means



that these dimensions emerged as important from the interviews, even though we did not specifically ask about them. Although we did not explicitly talk about either masculinity or emotions, my analyses revealed that we also spoke about these issues when addressing the other questions.

It was also revealing to have transcripts of interviews with both men and women to consider, even in Study I, where I only specifically analysed fathers' accounts. This is because the interviews with mothers, and daughters caring for their aging parents, helped me to identify gendered accounts and discern what can be made intelligible and legitimate from different gendered positions. However, my analytical focus has been on variations in how men and women do masculinity and femininity in accounts of their care arrangements, not to compare men with women. When analysing gender in accounts from interviews I was also aware of how seemingly gendered practices, as presented in the interviews, may sometimes be more a result of gendered distinctions in the interview situation (see also Carroll & Campbell, 2008). The other interviewers and I also sometimes actively engaged in the gender accomplishment, for example, by asking follow-up questions regarding seemingly gendered divisions of labour and thus encouraging gendered explanations.

My own experiences have also shaped the interviews and my analytical focus, particularly my classed experiences of growing up in, and then forming my own, family of academics. Both the family I grew up in and my own family are heterosexual nuclear families. I think the questions I asked and my analysis would have revolved more around classed experiences and heteronormativity if my privileged position had not made these structures less visible for me in the interviews and the analysis.

## Research ethics

None of the research projects this thesis is based upon have been subject to a review by an ethical board. When the project began, we assessed that the research did not pose any major ethical challenges, so we did not need any ethical review. However, throughout my own research I have striven to follow established ethical principles (Gustafsson, Hermerén, & Petterson, 2011). I have ensured that the interviewees were informed about the research objectives, that they agreed to participate, that their anonymity would be preserved and the recorded interviews would only be used for research purposes. Before conducting the interviews, all the study participants were encouraged to ask questions regarding the research project. The study participants consented to be inter-

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viewed, and to have the interviews recorded, and they were told that they could withdraw consent to participate in the project at any time, but no one did so.

In the interviews, we tried to be respectful and let the interviewees talk about what was important to them. I felt that the relations between me as an interviewer and interviewees differed among interviews, resulting in different ethical challenges. In some cases, I felt very conscious of the interviewee's time pressure and wanted to speed up the interview to avoid causing too much inconvenience. In other interviews the interviewee seemed happy to get the opportunity to talk and reflect, which made it easier for me to let the interview take its course. In other cases, I was sometimes drawn into a consensual conversational flow, so I did not ask all the questions I should have asked, because I felt that we understood each other so well that some questions did not need to be asked. This may (of course) have increased the risk of misinterpretation. In one interview, I wondered if the interviewee (a slightly older man) was trying to provoke me, maybe he regarded me as a "young girl" whom he could tease or start a heated discussion. This made it a bit difficult to evaluate if he said what he really thought, or if he was deliberately using some provocative expressions (for a discussion of emotions and relationships in ethical research conduct see e.g. Porter, 1999). In the analysis, I have therefore thought carefully about how we interviewers participated in defining what was possible and intelligible to say in the interviews, not only by the questions we asked, but also through the emotions and relationships that arose.

In presenting my analysis, I have strived to do the interviewed caregivers justice, I have sought to make the interviewees understandable and represent them in nuanced ways. In my analyses the integrity of the caregivers was maintained as I was more interested in how they expressed themselves, and drew on norms and discourses in their reasoning, than in trying to analyse who they "really were" or what they "really wanted". To preserve the interviewees' anonymity, their names and some biographical details (which do not affect the analysis) have been slightly changed, e.g. the ages of the interviewees, the ages of their children and/or their occupations.

Another set of important ethical issues is associated with possible consequences of the research and how the results may be used (or abused). Although this thesis does not give any specific advice about possible ways to reduce limitations of family caregiving imposed by gendered expectations, my ambitions were emancipatory (for a discussion of emancipatory ambitions in feminist research see e.g. Thompson, 1992). Through nuanced descriptions and problematizing explanations, I hope to enhance understanding of the processes that shape family caregiving and thus increase the scope for identifying and adopting possible alternatives. My contribution to the problematization of gender equality

ideals may also facilitate reflection on the formulation of policies to promote gender equality. A risk associated with my research is that the results and critique of gender equality policies may be misunderstood (or deliberately abused) by readers with conservative leanings as indications that such policies should be scrapped.

In sociological research, there is always a risk of reinforcing inequalities through repeating problematic discourses, not least discourses of gender as difference. By discussing gendered experiences, doing gender, masculinity and femininity I contribute to the continued relevance of gender categorizations (see e.g. Butler, 1990). This is an ongoing dilemma for feminist research and activism. In this thesis, I try to undermine discourses of gender as difference by showing how gender can be made irrelevant. To some extent, I also reproduce the heterosexual nuclear family as the point of departure for discussions of gender equality, by, once more, studying how people in this particular family constellation relate to gender and ideals of gender equality. However, I also try to widen the perspective by discussing several generations in families and analysing elderly care as a potential arena for gender equality. I also show and problematize how gender is done through discourses of gender equality and relate this to heteronormativity. Another problematic repetition in this thesis is connecting the privileged middle-class man more strongly than other men to discourses of gender equality. However, this is also problematized as a class distinction rather than a distinction of ideals and practices.



# 4

## Summary of the papers

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In this section I summarize the main findings from the three studies reported in the appended papers. Table 2 provides an overview of the studies.

Table 2. Overview of the three studies

Study	Focus	Material	Theoretical perspectives	Problems/lines of conflict	Key results
1	Fathers' part-time work in relation to gendered moral norms of parenthood	Interviews with fathers	Moral dimensions of accountability and intelligibility, hegemonic masculinities	Parenthood is gendered and morally regulated. Fathers' part-time work transgresses gendered norms and requires moral accounts.	Rather than subverting masculinity through feminized practices, fathers made themselves morally intelligible in relation to different hegemonic masculinities.
2	Men's involvement in family eldercare in relation to gendered norms	Interviews with men and women caring for aging parents	Doing, re-doing and undoing gender	Care for aging parents is a feminized practice, but men are also involved in care commitments, thus actualizing understandings of masculinity and femininity in caregiving.	Gender was done, re-done and undone in the accounts of men's involvement in care. Discourses of gender equality were not relevant or accessible in relation to family eldercare.

Study	Focus	Material	Theoretical perspectives	Problems/lines of conflict	Key results
3	Parents' emotion management in relation to conflicting ideals and emotion regimes.	Interviews with parents	Emotions perspectives on norms and transgressions of norms	Conflicting norms are experienced through emotions which need to be managed.	Empathic imaginations were important in parents' emotion management. Gendered norms were negotiated when emotions in relation to transgressions of norms were managed. Ideals of gender equality included gendered emotion regimes.

### Paper I

**Doing Morally Intelligible Fatherhood: Swedish Fathers' Accounts of their Parental Part-Time Work Choices.** *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers*, 2013 11 (2), 221-237.

In this paper, I focused on Swedish fathers' parental part-time work and analysed fathers' negotiations of the moral intelligibility of their caring and working arrangements vis-à-vis conflicting ideals of fatherhood and masculinity. My analysis was based on interviews with 14 Swedish fathers working part-time and seven working full-time, all of whom had at least one eight-year-old or younger child.

In analysing fathers' accounts of their work-time choices I applied a combination of theories of doing gender and gender performativity to discern fathers' efforts to be accountable in relation to gendered norms and to construct intelligibility in relation to gendered discourses. This accountability and intelligibility has moral dimensions since parenting is a morally charged practice, with different ideals for mothers and fathers. Since part-time work is an exception among fathers in Sweden, those working part-time are interesting cases in terms of accountability. They could not rely on established norms of fatherhood, but had to negotiate the meaning of "good fatherhood" to make their work-family choices morally intelligible.

The fathers were found to relate to both traditional masculinity and ideals of involved fatherhood, with both these ideals understood as forms of hegemonic masculinities in Sweden today. The hegemonic masculinities varied between

contexts, and fathers sometimes found themselves in a complex moral landscape with conflicting moral ideals. Despite claims that fathers have greater possibility than mothers to choose their commitments in child care, I found that fathers' choices were conditioned by moral expectations. The impression that fathers can choose their commitments might be due to expectations of fathers, as men, explaining themselves in terms of active choices, thereby doing masculinity through appealing to discourses of control and decisiveness. Although fathers can often choose commitments at work before caring for their children the opposite choices are not always as available. The ideal of involved fatherhood was sometimes not morally binding enough to provide the leverage needed to challenge the moral norms at work.

Nevertheless, during their long parental leave some fathers had developed responsibilities for their children that subsequently enabled them to make prioritizations of child care morally intelligible. Here, the applied perspectives of West and Zimmerman, as well as Butler, are useful for illuminating both the limits constricting parental practices (as they have to be intelligible through gendered discourses) and the potential for change, as discourses can be renegotiated through changed practices which, in turn, establish new discourses of masculinity and fatherhood. However, neither the experience of a long parental leave nor the discourses of gender equality and involved fatherhood may be available and morally feasible for all fathers, depending on classed resources or contexts (e.g. male-dominated or career-oriented workplaces).

I found that "involved fatherhood" and fathers' part-time work did not, for many of the interviewed men, represent any subversion of "masculinity", but offered ways to evoke an alternative hegemonic masculinity that could be drawn upon to re-masculinize traditionally feminized practices. Assertions of reflexivity and gender equality ideals also sometimes functioned as distinctions in relation to seemingly less gender-equal men. However, there were also accounts where masculinity as difference was made less relevant and taking on responsibilities for child care was not made intelligible through gendered discourses.

## **Paper II**

**Doing, Re-doing or Undoing Masculinity? Swedish Men in the Filial Care of Aging Parents.** *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 2015 23 (1), 20-35.

In this paper, I examined how middle-aged men and women in Sweden with parents who needed care related to norms of masculinity and femininity when accounting for men's caregiving. The potential for change in gendered understandings of caregiving was explored through the concepts of doing, re-doing

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and undoing gender. My analysis was based on interviews with 13 Swedish women and eight Swedish men caring for their elderly parents.

The point of departure in this paper was that family eldercare has become more important as public care has been downsized. Family eldercare is both a female-dominated practice and a practice understood as “doing femininity”. However, men do also provide family eldercare. Since eldercare arrangements are usually a result of family negotiations, both women and men participate in gendering the care arrangements. Therefore, this paper analysed how both men and women relate to gendered norms when accounting for men’s involvement in caregiving.

I applied a “doing gender” perspective to show how ideals of femininity and masculinity were made relevant when family eldercare givers accounted for their care arrangements. Men’s lesser involvement in caregiving was often accounted for through gendered distinctions. These explanations also conveyed something about which male care practices were acceptable and understandable, and how these boundaries were maintained and challenged. In contrast, men who were involved in family eldercare did not as easily explain their commitments through drawing on gendered discourses, and had to account for masculinity and femininity in other ways. Some of the caregiving men distanced themselves from their caregiving by stressing their lack of choice. However, through their practices, they still challenged discourses of masculinity as un-involvement in care. Understanding gender as performative, these new practices may also bring about new gendered positions and identities. I used the concepts of “re-doing” and “undoing” gender to analyse changes and renegotiations of gendered understandings. In some situations caregiving men re-did gender in their accounts, upholding ideals of masculinity as difference through drawing on discourses of a “new” caregiving masculinity. Thus, gendered norms were challenged as caregiving was understood as a new form of masculinity, yet gender accountability persisted. There were also some situations where caregiving men made gender irrelevant in their accounts of their care arrangements, thereby undoing gender.

There was a striking absence of discourses of gender equality in the accounts of family eldercare arrangements (compared to findings in earlier studies of divisions of child care responsibilities in families). The ideal of gender equality is very influential in Sweden, and presenting someone as a “good Swedish man” generally involves accounting for how he shares the burdens of household work and caregiving. However, since policies and debates on gender equality have focused more on parenthood than other care relationships, “new caring masculinities” have not been made an ideal in relation to care for aging parents. Thus, the men who cared for their parents spoke of how they accepted commitments rather than chose them as part of a caregiving identity.



**Paper III****Emotions and Empathic Imagination – Parents Relating to Norms of Work, Parenthood, and Gender Equality. *Families, Relationships and Societies*.****Prepublished February, 2017. DOI: 10.1332/204674317X14861127314323.**

In this paper, I used perspectives from the sociology of emotions to discern how norms gain influence in parents' lives through the emotions they evoke and prescribe, and how parents manage these emotions. My analysis was based on interviews with 13 Swedish working parents with at least one child less than 12 years old.

The theoretical point of departure in this paper was that norms are made relevant through emotions; norm conformity generates comfort while transgressions evoke shame. Norms also involve emotion regimes with expectations concerning emotions. The interviewed parents faced several, sometimes conflicting norms and emotion regimes regarding work, parenthood, and gender equality. While parents expressed shame and guilt regarding some situations, as they were unable to live up to their ideals, in other situations they managed to harmonise the norms and feel pride in their ability to “feel the right feelings”. Thus, they also expressed feelings about their feelings, for example pride in being able to feel pleasure when spending time with their children, or shame for not being able to escape feelings of guilt connected to traditional motherhood ideals, despite their gender equality ideals.

To manage and avoid conflicts between different norms and emotion regimes, and avoid feelings of shame when transgressing norms, interviewees performed different forms of emotion work. A key tool for such work addressed in this study was empathic imagination. When the parents imagined their children's situations, needs and feelings, they also related to their own ideals of a “good childhood” and gendered ideals of parenthood. The feelings evoked in the parents depended on which ideals and norms they drew on and made relevant. Thus, by incorporating some ideals in their empathic imagination, while rejecting or paying less attention to others, the parents could also, to some extent, shape their own feelings. The parents' possible and feasible imaginations were also shaped by their material circumstances. Parents who had inflexible working hours, very restricted financial situations, or were single, sometimes had to restrict their imaginations to avoid evoking feelings that they would be unable to act upon.

Interestingly, the emotion regimes connected to gender equality ideals in relation to work-life balance, were found to be gendered. In Sweden, policies promoting the ideal of gender equality have sought to recruit men to the ideal through their position as fathers, promoting ideals of “gender-equal” masculini-

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ty through involved fatherhood. Therefore, for fathers the emotion regimes of gender equality converged with those of involved parenthood, enabling fathers to feel pride in their involvement with their children. In contrast, mothers potentially faced conflicting emotion regimes and feelings of shame, regardless of whether they prioritized work or spent time with their children. However, the relevance of the emotion regimes of gender equality varied greatly; for some parents the ideals simply seemed unavailable in their emotion management, and some even rejected the ideals.

### Theoretical concepts in the three studies

Table 3 provides an overview of how the main theoretical concepts in this thesis are made relevant and discussed in the three studies.

Table 3. Overview of theoretical concepts and their relevance for the studies

	<b>Study 1</b>	<b>Study 2</b>	<b>Study 3</b>
Doing gender and performativity	Combined perspectives to analyse gendered intelligibility and accountability	Focus on the concept of doing gender with re-doing and undoing	Gender and gender equality are done through emotions
Masculinity and femininity	Different hegemonic masculinities to relate to. Doing masculinity and gender equality at the same time, thus re-doing gender.	Both masculinities and femininities are related to both women and men.	Caregiving and involved masculinity allow for pride in relation to discourses of gender equality and involved parenthood.
Gendered norms (negotiated through accounts of caregiving)	Gendered norms regarding parenthood condition mothers' and fathers' choices in different ways, but gendered norms are sometimes made irrelevant.	Gendered norms regarding caregiving shape men's involvement, divisions of responsibilities and care practices, however, gendered norms are sometimes made irrelevant.	Gendered norms are negotiated through emotion management in relation to transgression of norms and gendered expectations on caregiving.

SUMMARY OF THE PAPERS

	<b>Study 1</b>	<b>Study 2</b>	<b>Study 3</b>
Discourses of gender equality	Discourses to draw on to construct moral intelligibility provide new hegemonic masculinities to relate to. Not as available for all fathers or in all contexts.	The discourses are surprisingly absent in relation to family elder-care.	Ideals that parents have to emotionally relate to, creating new challenges.
Gendered dimensions of discourses of gender equality	New ways of doing gender difference through new hegemonic masculinities.	Discussion of the consequences of the discourses in terms of re-doing and undoing gender	Different emotion regimes for mothers and fathers.
Moral ideals	Parenthood is morally regulated for fathers as well as mothers. Fathers must be able to make themselves morally intelligible in relation to gendered norms.	Moral dimensions are not explicitly discussed in study II.	Norms have moral dimensions evoking shame in relation to transgressions of norms and pride in relation to doing and feeling "the right things".
Emotions	Emotional dimension of fatherhood stressed in new fatherhood. Talk of feelings in relation to norms.	Emotions are made relevant through sons' reluctance and feelings of insufficiency in relation to their parents and their own caregiving.	Norms influence, and are experienced and negotiated through, emotions. Emotions are managed through empathic imagination.
Intelligibility and liveability	Through constructing moral intelligibility in relation to available discourses, life is made legitimate and liveable.	Divisions of care responsibilities are made intelligible in relation to masculinities and femininities. When caregiving cannot be made intelligible in relation to gendered expectations, it feels unfair and not really liveable.	Emotion management is needed to make life liveable despite conflicting norms, evoking shame and guilt.



# 5

## Concluding Discussion

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In the following section, I first briefly reiterate the theoretical framework, the aims and the research questions addressed in this thesis and the empirical studies it is based upon. I then summarize and bring together the results and insights from the three studies in order to, thereafter, extend the discussion and reflect on the theoretical consequences of my results, and finally present questions that warrant attention in further research.

The studies have contributed to understanding of how norms are reproduced and changed by providing insights into how gender is given continued relevance in family care arrangements in Sweden, despite wide acceptance of ideals of gender equality. I have been interested in the emotions evoked when people face conflicting norms regarding care and work, and how they manage when they cannot live up to social expectations. By studying both parents' care for their children and adult children's care for their elderly parents, I have been able to compare the two kinds of caring relationships in the family, with different prominence in public discourses of gender equality in Sweden. Starting from previous critical discussion of the narrow normative point of departure of gender equality ideals, I have analysed the importance of these ideals in the caregivers' accounts of their care arrangements. The aim of the studies was to contribute to understanding of how gender continues to be given relevance in family caregiving when caregivers, in their efforts to form liveable and emotionally sustainable lives, make themselves intelligible in relation to sometimes conflicting norms and ideals of care, work and gender equality. The overarching research questions were:

- How are masculinity, femininity, gender equality and other, sometimes conflicting, norms and ideals drawn into caregivers' accounts of their care arrangements and commitments to work?

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- How do caregivers manage conflicting norms, conformity and transgressions of norms, and the emotions they evoke, in order to make everyday life appear intelligible?
- How do caregivers manage their own imaginations of needs of those they care for in order to endure their situation and lead liveable lives?
- How can attention to caregivers' constructions of intelligibility and emotion management help us to better understand gendered normative and transgressive choices and practices in family care arrangements?

Through answering these questions, the thesis seeks to identify important aspects contributing to stability and change in gendered understandings and practices in family caregiving.

## Conclusions from the empirical analyses

### *Masculinity and gender equality in different care relations*

To understand how gender continues to be relevant in family care arrangements I focused in Study I on gendered moral ideals of caregiving and gender accomplishment through “moral intelligibility”. The moral intelligibility concept helped me to discern how fathers' choices regarding work and caregiving were morally regulated, just as they are for mothers, and gendered norms make some choices easier to account for than others. The study also made an empirical contribution to knowledge regarding aspects of fathers' part-time work, which has received relatively little attention. Fathers' part-time work is less prominent than fathers' parental leave in gender equality policies and public debate. Therefore, fathers' part-time work has not been made a necessary and legitimate part of doing “involved fatherhood” or “gender-equal parenthood”. Many of the interviewed fathers working part-time were still able to draw on discourses of involved fatherhood to make their part-time work intelligible. Moreover, for many of the interviewed men, working part-time and accounting for themselves in terms of “involved fatherhood” did not represent any subversion of “masculinity”, as it offered ways to re-do gender through an alternative hegemonic masculinity. Nevertheless, there were also accounts where masculinity as difference was made less relevant and care responsibilities for the interviewee's children were not made intelligible through gendered discourses.

Theories of hegemonic masculinities have helped me to discern the continued relevance of gender through how male caregivers had to relate to, and draw on, different hegemonic masculinities to make their care arrangements intelli-

ble. Study II extends previous research by exploring masculinity and femininity in the accounts of sons' involvement in the care for their aging parents, which has previously received very little attention in Sweden (but see Wallroth, 2016). Although both fathers' part-time work (Study I) and sons' care for their elderly parents (Study II) can be perceived as transgressions of gendered norms, fathers' part-time work could be accounted for more easily in terms of hegemonic masculinity, through discourses of involved fatherhood and gender equality. Although both studies focused on care for relatives in Sweden, which has a history of active policies to promote gender equality and associated ideals, filial caregivers either could not or did not need to relate to these ideals in accounts of their care arrangements for their aging parents. Because masculinity in elder-care has not been made a gender equality issue to the same extent as in childcare, masculinity became both more and less relevant in relation to care for aging parents than in childcare. It became more relevant because gender could be used unproblematically to account for divisions of responsibilities and men's lack of involvement in caregiving. However, masculinity was also less relevant because men who were involved in the care of their parents re-did gender through drawing on discourses of "new" caregiving masculinities in their accounts less than the fathers who participated in study I. An important finding in Study I was that fathers' emphasis on active choices related to caregiving might not only be an expression of men's greater room for manoeuvre regarding care responsibilities, but also a way to make themselves intelligible in relation to expectations, stemming from hegemonic masculinities, for men to express control. Interestingly, most of the male participants in Study II who provided care for their aging parents did not emphasize any active choices regarding their care involvement. Instead, the caregiving sons did masculinity through dissociating themselves from the caregiving and expressing their lack of choice by stressing how circumstances had pushed them into care commitments.

In my studies, I found that legitimate and intelligible ways for men to engage in care were negotiated, delimited and expanded by drawing on discourses of masculinity, femininity, and gendered understandings of care responsibilities, but also by not making these discourses relevant. Gendered norms sometimes became less important through men's practical experiences of care (e.g. through their parental leave). Thus, gender and moral intelligibility were performative, and new practices made new priorities, and new ways of being morally intelligible, possible (see also Elliott, 2016; Finch & Mason, 1993).

### *Emotions of gender equality and empathic imagination*

In the first two studies, I was interested in how norms of masculinity and femininity were made relevant and negotiated in accounts of care arrangements with a focus on men's involvement in care. In Study III, I took a step back and examined how these norms were made relevant through emotions and negotiated through emotion management. The interviewed parents faced several, sometimes conflicting norms and emotion regimes regarding work, parenthood, and gender equality. While parents expressed shame and guilt in relation to some situations, as they were unable to live up to their own ideals, in other situations they managed to harmonise the norms and evoke pride. Gendered norms made certain aspects of some lives comfortable or even pleasurable, while the same aspects of other lives became uncomfortable and burdened with guilt.

Ideals of gender equality regarding the combination of work and family involved gendered emotion regimes which, for fathers, were congruous with emotion regimes based on ideals of involved parenthood, while for mothers these emotion regimes were often conflicting. Thus, caregiving and involved masculinity allowed fathers to feel pride, or even prescribed that they should feel such emotion. Hence, feeling pride in their involvement with their children provided a way for fathers to simultaneously do masculinity and gender equality. Although ideals of gender equality are influential in Sweden and affect parents emotionally, the ideals were not as relevant to everyone and did not affect all parents' emotions to the same degree. Some parents even dismissed the ideals and expressed pride in not living up to them.

The notion of "empathic imagination" was applied in the theoretical framework of Study III, which aimed to understand how parents' feelings were influenced by their imaginations of their children's situations and feelings. Norms regarding responsibilities and caring ideals became visible through parents' imaginations. This is because norms shape and prescribe emotions, which in turn orient imaginations. For example, norms regarding the importance of mothers' caregiving and presence with their children prescribe that mothers should try to reduce the time their children spend in childcare. Thus, they could evoke emotions in the mothers and make them imagine that their children's situation in childcare is distressing, and their children are feeling sad, lonely, or abandoned. These imaginations may, in turn, shape how the mothers feel as mothers (inadequate, guilty), and these emotions could be so negative that they might be perceived as unbearable and unliveable. Emotions orient actions, so the mothers could either try to reduce their children's time in childcare, or try to manage their emotions to avoid or at least shift such orientation. One way of



managing emotions could be to try to change the empathic imaginations of the children's feelings. If a mother can imagine that her children are getting on well in childcare and that it is "good for them", she may instead feel comfortable with her care arrangement (the childcare may become liveable for her), so other options and actions are available for her. Structural factors (such as unsociable working hours and financial constraints) may also limit parents' empathic imaginations, by making certain fantasies unsustainable because they evoke emotions that the parents have no possibility to act upon. Thus, emotions, norms, and material resources interact and may contribute to the reproduction of gendered family care arrangements.

### *Liveability*

Although the parents were structurally positioned in relation to norms, they were also active and negotiated norms and emotions through emotion management. Thus, through emotion work they were able to make some norms less relevant, and their deviations from norms liveable. Using Butler's (2004) notion "liveability" I link the discussion of intelligibility to the discussion of emotions. Intelligibility, addressed in Studies I and II, concerns the ability to present oneself as understandable and legitimate in relation to norms. Liveability is about how intelligibility is experienced emotionally, where a liveable life is a life that can be made intelligible and legitimate, and hence bearable, in relation to normative standards. Some of the parents interviewed in Study III expressed feelings that their lives were unbearable because they felt that their children were suffering, due to their own work commitments. For example, a lone mother (Olivia) expressed feeling that it was unbearable to have to leave her child alone and afraid of the dark, as she had to work night shifts.

Emotions evoked by conflicting norms and transgressions of norms were handled through emotion management and empathic imaginations, enabling attempts to adapt to, or renegotiate, norms. Thus, emotion management also provided a way for interviewees not only to make themselves intelligible, but also to make their lives liveable. The findings show that emotion management can provide a form of negotiation of norms to make life, as one lives it, legitimate and liveable. If there are no available alternative discourses and ideals, emotions evoked by transgressions of norms may be unbearable and, thus, impose pressure to change one's life to improve conformance to norms, thereby making it appear intelligible and feel liveable.

The last paragraphs of this section, before the final discussion, summarize the main findings from the empirical studies. One of the most important is that

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gendered understandings of family care can be reproduced through the doing of gender equality. This implies that politicizing something as an arena for gender equality might trigger a re-doing of gender with “gender-equal” masculinities and femininities, rather than reducing the significance of gender. Moreover, ideals of gender equality also include gendered emotion regimes which, combined with ideals of individualization regarding child care and career, may generate different emotional situations for mothers and fathers.

In this thesis, I have shown how norms can be painfully perceptible through emotions. The caregivers had to manage ambivalence between emotionally powerful norms regarding individualization and self-fulfilment on one hand, and provision of care and presence for dependent relatives on the other. Espousing ideals of gender equality did not always reduce this ambivalence, and could even amplify it. To cope with themselves and their prioritizations the caregivers needed to manage emotions associated with failing to live up to some norms and ideals. I used the concept of empathetic imagination to discern how caregivers could manage their own emotions to make their care arrangements and lives feel liveable, by managing their imaginations of the situations and emotions of those they cared for.

By examining how gender continues to be made relevant in family care arrangements, despite widely shared gender equality ideals, this thesis contributes to the understanding of stability and change in normative structures. Although ideals of gender equality are widely shared, conflicting norms also remain. These norms continue to have impact through the emotions they evoke - even for those who want to liberate themselves from them. Ideals of gender equality also take certain normative positions as points of departure, so they are not as available or relevant in all positions or contexts.

## Discussion

### *Conflicting norms of gender equality*

Ideals of gender equality in Sweden are closely related to ideals of individualization. Gender equality and family policies have aimed to promote independence of the individual. Policies have been implemented to reduce the individual's dependence on the family through public care provision and increase women's ability to earn an income and support themselves. Thus, the policies to promote gender equality have also helped to make Sweden a very individualized country (Roman & Peterson, 2011). Through ideals of individualization other ideals are also connected to gender equality, such as ideals of self-fulfilment, not least for

women to become “gender equal” though being able to work, exercise, have hobbies, and “time for oneself”. That, in turn, leaves less time for caregiving. Through this understanding of gender equality, the man and his way of life become norms (see also Kittay, 1999). Thus, ideals and norms that have been mainly associated with men, such as full-time work, obtaining self-fulfilment through work, supporting oneself, and being a good breadwinner, also become more emotionally relevant for women. Nina Björk (2012) observes that within feminism attempts have been made to educate women to adopt new emotional patterns consistent with these ideals. Thus, women are supposed to avoid feeling guilty when they prioritize work before time with their children. In this emotion regime of individualization and feminism, women’s guilt becomes outdated and a “gender-traditional” emotion. Ideals of gender equality might not in themselves be sufficiently important or have sufficient moral weight for lives that are not “gender-equal” to be perceived as unliveable, even in Sweden. However, the norms that are included in, and developed together with, the ideals of gender equality can carry such moral weight. Individualism, with the male life as a norm, can be such a potent ideal that it defines the limits of a life worth living. Not being economically self-sufficient, not having a self-fulfilling job, or being able to be an equally valuable colleague, etc., can be perceived as unliveable.

Through ideals of individualization gender equality is understood as autonomy and independence, but what happens then to caregiving? What kind of caregiving can be made intelligible in relation to gender equality as individualization? Children depend on their parents and they bind the parent of the collective by making parents more dependent on public support and the help of relatives. Nevertheless, caring for children has been part of the ideals of an individualized life, because children can be understood as a part of their parents’ self-development and life projects. Becoming a parent can be a proud, chosen identity and through discourses of gender equality men’s parenthood especially has been presented as an opportunity to develop as a human being (Buchbinder, 1994; Nordberg, 2005).

The nuclear family, in the form of the cohabiting heterosexual couple with children, has been placed at the centre of narratives and policies for gender equality (Egeberg Holmgren, 2011). However, this focus on parenthood has different symbolic meanings for women and men. Having children is part of an established story of how a life is lived, especially for women who become “real women” through motherhood (Peterson & Engvall, 2013). Thus, as parenthood is supposed to produce women as gendered beings, one can say that by presupposing parenthood, ideals of equality also presuppose women as gendered beings. However, ideals of femininity linked to motherhood also come into con-

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flict with the ideals of femininity linked to gender equality as individualization, discussed above. For men, becoming a father is generally not as important to become a “real man”, but in becoming “the gender-equal man” fatherhood is central (Buchbinder, 1994; Nordberg, 2005). Nevertheless, childcare commitments do not conflict with ideals of individualization as much for fathers as for mothers because “the gender-equal man” can seek self-fulfilment through his parenthood.

Gender equality discourses regarding care have focused on care for children, but as public elderly care provisions are downsized, the care of another generation of family members is becoming increasingly relevant. Gender equality in eldercare has mainly been politicized through the provision of public care to enable women to be on the labour market, and in accordance with the individualization ideals, enable elders to be autonomous and reduce their dependence on their families. In recent decades, cuts in public care budget have led (*inter alia*) to the return of responsibilities for eldercare to the family, a development that counteracts both individualization and gender equality for both caregivers and care receivers (Björk et al., 2013; Ulmanen, 2015b). Family eldercare has not been incorporated into ideals of gender equality or individualization in the same manner as parents’ care for children. Caregiving for elderly relatives cannot be chosen (unlike having children may be), and caring responsibilities for aging parents are seldom presented as part of a proud identity or investment in the future. Thus, care for elderly relatives cannot be understood as self-realization, as easily as childcare, but has connotations of tradition and duty. It is also a lower status practice, a “dirty work” due to its association with the sick and the bodily (Anderson, 2000; Sörensdotter, 2008).

Because ideals of gender equality have been linked to the nuclear family and the heterosexual couple as norms, and family care arrangements for elderly relatives are primarily negotiated between siblings, the negotiations cannot be understood as arenas for gender equality. Therefore, men’s involvement in the care for aging parents does not become a proud “doing of gender equality” as fatherhood can be. The “new men” presented as the pride of gender-equal Sweden are not sons involved in the care of their parents. Similarly, Herlofson & Ugreninov (2014) found that caring masculinities cannot be easily translated between different care relations in Norway. They reported that fathers who were very involved in the care of their children spent *less* time than more “traditional” fathers on care of their own parents. This could be partly explained by the involved fathers having less time to care for their own parents, but it is still interesting that son’s care for parents is more strongly associated with traditional gender roles than with valuing gender equality and expressing caring masculinities in relation to children.

When I compared the doing of masculinity in childcare and eldercare in my studies, I was intrigued by the relevance of discourses of gender equality for doing, re-doing and undoing gender. Nordberg (2005) has argued that when issues are made arenas of gender equality, the gender categories are actualized and new limits are established for what men and women may do. There might be a risk that politicizing family eldercare as an arena for gender equality, to recruit men to caregiving through “new caregiving masculinities”, may promote re-doing gender, rather than loosening the gendering of care. Thus, when gender is analysed in relation to caregiving it is also crucial to consider how gender and gendered distinctions and privileges are reproduced also when “doing gender equality”. Since discourses of gender equality are gendered it might not be possible to do gender equality without also doing gender. On the other hand, policies to promote gender equality in family eldercare could contribute supportive discourses, making it easier for men to make their caregiving morally intelligible. If men are enabled to give care and share responsibilities, the gendering function of caregiving might, through practices and repetitions, be weakened. Further research is needed to discern how gender equality and gender are done in relation to each other in different contexts.

### *Proud gender-equal men*

Policies and discourses of gender equality have helped to establish gender-equal and involved fatherhood as a hegemonic masculinity in Sweden (Johansson & Klinth, 2008). Thus, involved fatherhood has become a norm and emerged as a legitimate way of doing masculinity. It may seem contradictory that a masculinity focused on both gender equality and caregiving can be claimed to be hegemonic (and therefore dominant). Indeed, in discussions of the notion of “caring masculinities” (see, for instance, Elliott, 2016), these masculinities are presented as alternatives to hegemonic masculinity through involving “identities of care rather than domination” (Ibid., p. 240). However, I do claim that care and dominance can coexist, precisely because the “gender-equal” father on parental leave appears so legitimate and good. In the Introduction, I described how the image of the father on parental leave has become a normative ideal that can evoke pride and comfort for those who can embody the ideal, while making other ways of doing fatherhood or gender equality less comfortable and accessible. So, although the fathers are involved in care practices, and get experiences that may change them and their priorities, “the gender-equal father” becomes a hegemonic masculinity. The fathers themselves probably identify more with care than with domination, but they may still occupy a normative position defining what is

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considered “good”; a norm that others will have to relate to. The fathers can also continue to have high status and privileges through their normative position. Connell (2005a) has claimed that transnational business masculinity, characterized by ceaseless work, free movement in geographical space, and sacrifices of social relations, generally is a hegemonic masculinity in societies in the West. Even though the ideal of involved fatherhood, with its focus on caring relations, is far from the individual freedom and disconnectedness that characterizes hegemonic business masculinity, both these masculinities can be expressed in terms of a strive for successfulness and self-development.

According to Connell (2005a), hegemonic masculinity is the masculinity that implicitly and naturally tells us why patriarchy should remain, thereby legitimizing the gender order. I would claim that “the gender-equal father” does just that. Since he is understood as gender-equal, there are no reasons to change the gender order. Sweden appears to be an already gender-equal country that can be proud of its gender-equal men. Instead, it is the “unequal men” who appear to be problematic, those who are portrayed as “the other” in discourses of gender equality; fathers who do not go on parental leave, men with “traditional” masculinity, and men from “less gender-equal cultures” (See Gottzén & Jonsson, 2012). However, women can also be seen as problematic in relation to gender-equal hegemonic masculinity. In connection to this, it is interesting to note that although gender equality has been a “women’s issue” in Sweden, it may now be embodied and symbolized by men, doing masculinity. While fathers’ parenthood is idealized, mothers’ parenthood may seem problematic because it is, by definition, more “traditional” (see also Farstad & Stefansen, 2015). It may be difficult to see how women engaging in care for their children can do something “new” or “gender-equal” because they “do what women have always done”.

Accordingly, Study III clearly showed how “the gender-equal father”, with the support of coherent emotion regimes, could have caring responsibilities without feeling guilty, unlike the mothers who were jammed between conflicting emotion regimes. “The gender-equal father” may then appear as more radical because he does not have the problematic emotions that mothers may feel that drive them to “traditional” choices. However, fathers did feel guilty about failing to meet work commitments, and thus were also driven to more “traditional” priorities.

If men become the norm for gender equality in the family, there is a risk of women's work, competence, and radicalism becoming invisible, as well as men's continued privileges. Not only may women's care for their children become less valued because it is perceived as more “traditional”, women's efforts to “do gender equality” through parenthood may also become less visible. To relinquish responsibility and let someone else define how the children should be

cared for, can be quite demanding - not least emotionally in relation to moral ideals regarding motherhood. However, it is difficult for mothers to find pride in, and make visible, when they are *not* pushing the pram; although the mothers may be the driving force behind the fathers' "gender-equal fatherhood" and through their everyday nagging, remind the fathers of remaining inequalities in the division of childcare responsibilities. Although such nagging could be regarded an expression of radicalism in relation to gendered norms, it may be difficult to find pleasure and pride in doing it. Instead, the mothers may feel guilty both for their failure to achieve "gender-equal family life" and for tiresomely nagging the "gender-equal father" who is already doing so well. At the same time, the idea of "the gender-equal father" makes invisible how women continue to carry the primary responsibility for the care of the children.

Examination of the normative narratives that compose the ideals of gender equality clearly reveals that gender-equal care practices may be (im)possible, (un)available, and/or (un)liveable to varying degrees in different positions and contexts. It may also require different efforts to combine ideals of gender equality with other pressing norms and ideals. These differences and norm conflicts may partly explain the slowness of change towards more gender-equal care practices in families. To return to the picture in the Introduction, of the gender-equal father as a proud national symbol, I wonder if it is the emotionally powerful norms, which the ideals of gender equality are linked to, that make gender equality so highly appreciated in Sweden. Are Swedes so proud of their gender equality ideals because the ideals imply individualization and the heterosexual nuclear family, symbolized by the gender-equal fathers? If so, this may be paradoxical, as it may be these norms that make gender equality so contradictory and, for many, inaccessible or irrelevant. The ideals of gender equality primarily invoke comfort and pride for those who can inhabit normative positions in relation to the ideals. Yet it may be difficult, even for them, to live "gender-equally" because of other morally and emotionally strong norms pushing in other directions, such as the ideals of self-realization through one's work and providing one's family with a high standard of living. Those who do not inhabit normative positions in relation to ideals of gender equality cannot as easily and comfortably "sink into" gender equality and the knowledge that they are doing "the right thing" (cf. Ahmed, 2014). Instead they risk feeling shame for, or having to explain, their everyday lives. Their aspirations to be, for example, good parents, or to achieve justice, will not as easily be perceived as "doing gender equality" but may appear as less admirable projects.

*Future studies*

All three studies that this thesis is based upon have considered the accessibility and relevance of the discourses of gender equality for caregivers in different positions and contexts. Since the discourses have been formulated with a middle-class perspective and tied to Swedishness, they also enable classed and ethnified distinctions (de los Reyes, 2001; Ericson, 2011; Gottzén & Jonsson, 2012; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 1994; Larsson, 2015; Magnusson et al., 2008; Ålund & Alinia, 2011). When I discuss the link between gender equality and ideas about “Swedishness” in this thesis, I do not mean that there is a uniform Swedishness, but that there are notions of such uniformity. People who live in Sweden have different backgrounds and different ideals and norms, which affect their understandings and practices of gender, care and work. How these differences influence the meaning and doing of gender equality requires further research. In this thesis, I have paid little attention to class, partly because no class-related issues were included in my initial research questions, and the interviews did not include questions or induce responses that would have enabled nuanced analysis of such issues. In addition, my sample was too dominated by middle-class interviewees for me to make well-grounded representations about positions and experiences of the working class. Nevertheless, I have perceived some aspects in the interviews that would have been interesting to analyse further from a class perspective. Therefore, I will briefly discuss some reflections regarding class and gender equality ideals that my doctoral studies have inspired, and formulate some questions that warrant attention in future research.

The influence of the individualism ideal, which is included in the ideals of gender equality, is likely to depend on class position. Both seeking “self-fulfilment” through work as a mother, and being an “involved parent” as a father may be ways of “doing gender equality” that are more accessible and appeal most strongly to the middle class (cf. Forsberg, 2009; Plantin, 2007). Finding pride in these practices may then also be an opportunity to make classed distinctions in relation to seemingly less gender-equal parents (see also Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 1994). Gender equality policies have also been criticized for having the heterosexual nuclear family and the middle class as ideals and normative positions. Notably, the “Daddy policies”, primarily the individualization of parts of the parental leave benefit, have been claimed to make life more difficult for mothers who do not live with a “gender-equal father”. Single working class mothers are marginalised by these gender equality policies, which rather than increasing their independence make the mothers more dependent on the children’s fathers. If a father is not involved in the



childcare, a mother must, as a result of the design of the parental leave benefit, try to persuade him to relinquish benefit days, or she will have to finance her own parental leave until the child is old enough to be in public childcare (Ljungberg, 2015).

The moral and emotional significance of family eldercare may also depend on gendered and classed positions. Caring for aging parents may be more essential for working-class women to be morally intelligible and feel like a “good enough” daughter, because working class positions have historically been associated with dirt and lower morals. Thus, the working class, especially the female members, have had to prove their respectability by presenting cleanliness and willingness to provide care (Skeggs, 1997). Therefore, the symbolic meanings of elderly parents beginning to have a messy and dirty home may also depend on class position (Sörensdotter, 2008). In the middle class, not concerning oneself with caregiving and contact with the sick, bodily and dirty, can instead function as a distinction, linked to the historical ability of groups with abundant resources to delegate work associated with the “necessities of life”, such as food, death and waste, to social groups with less resources (Bourdieu, 1979/1989; Flisbäck, 2010). Elderly people with low education also get more help from their families than those with a higher education. This is, of course, also linked to the elderly people’s, and their families’, financial resources to buy private services and cultural resources to exploit services offered by public providers (Szebehely, 2009; Ulmanen, 2015b).

Thus, the doing of class, gender, gender equality and care need to be analysed together, intersectionally. Being “emancipated and individualized” or “respectable and proper” are potent moral ideals with emotional significance, which may simplify or increase the difficulty of “doing gender equality”, depending on how gender equality has been defined and the ideals it includes. Therefore, it would be interesting to examine more closely how the doing of class and gender equality are connected, and the emotions the ideals evoke and make possible in different positions. Several associated questions should be addressed. What are the requirements to become intelligible in relation to gendered and classed norms, and how are they related to ideals of gender equality? How is resistance to gender equality ideals done? What is required for life to feel liveable in different positions?

Previous research has shown discrepancies between accounts and practices regarding gender equality in everyday life. For example, gender equality ideals may be features of both the accounts and aspirations of men in middle-class positions, but when faced with practical circumstances they may be unable to make gender-equal priorities or follow gender-equal practices. Men in working-class positions, on the other hand, may not be equally identified with ideals of

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gender equality, although, in practice, they share the everyday care work with their partners (e.g. Farstad & Stefansen, 2015; Hochschild & Machung, 1989). To be able to dissect more thoroughly how gender, gender equality and resistance to gender equality ideals is done through everyday family practices, and how practices relate to accounts and emotions, further research with ethnographic methods is needed.

# Svensk sammanfattning

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Både när Sverige presenteras utomlands och i svenskars självuppfattningar har jämställdhetsideal ofta en framskjuten position. Sverige har en lång historia av jämställdhetspolitik som bland annat syftar till att involvera fäder mer i omsorgen om sina barn. Trots jämställdhetsideal och politik visar dock forskning att Sverige i praktiken fortsätter att vara ojämnt på många områden, inte minst i familjens omsorgsrelationer. Det här väcker frågan om varför kön fortsätter ha så stor betydelse i familjers fördelning av omsorgsansvar. Tidigare forskning har visat att framhävandet av svenska jämställdhetsideal ofta bär med sig andra föreställningar om till exempel kön, sexualitet, klass, och hudfärg. Dessa föreställningar kan göra att "jämställdhet" inte blir lika tillgängligt för alla. I den här avhandlingen tar jag fasta på den kritiken och undersöker hur jämställdhetsideal kan, och inte kan, användas för att ge kön mindre betydelse i omsorgsrelationer i familjen, både när det gäller föräldrars omsorg om sina barn och när det gäller vuxna barns omsorg om sina föräldrar.

Även om många svenskar är för jämställdhet är de idealen långt ifrån de enda som omsorgsgivare i Sverige förhåller sig till. Ideal om jämställdhet utgör en del av ett spänningsfält av olika, delvis motstridiga, normer kring omsorg och arbete. För att hantera motstridiga ideal och förväntningar behöver omsorgsgivare göra val och prioriteringar. Normer, ideal och motstridigheter blir kännbara och viktiga eftersom de väcker känslor. Mest kännbara blir normer om man inte lever upp till dem. För att känslomässigt kunna stå ut med sig själv och sina val måste omsorgsgivare kunna legitimera sina prioriteringar. Normer kring kön och samhällliga förståelser av maskulinitet och femininitet får betydelse för vad som kan göras legitimt och begripligt och därmed vad som känns rimligt. "Levbarhet" handlar i den här avhandlingen om att lyckas hantera motstridiga normer för att kunna stå ut med sig själv och sina val och att känna sig som en tillräckligt god omsorgsgivare. Om diskrepansen mellan ideal och praktik blir för stor kan de egna bristerna bli outhärdliga och livet framstå som olevbart.

Avhandlingen ger sig i kast med den i sociologin centrala frågan om stabilitet och förändring i sociala strukturer och normativa system. Syftet med avhandlingen är att bidra till förståelsen av hur kön ges fortsatt relevans i omsorg i familjen, trots jämställdhetsideal. Avhandlingen söker förklara hur motstridiga

normer kring omsorg, arbete och jämställdhet hanteras emotionell och hur överskridanden av normer kring kön görs begripliga och levbara. I avhandlingen ställs följande övergripande forskningsfrågor: Vilken roll spelar maskulinitet, femininitet, jämställdhet och andra, ibland motstridiga, normer och ideal i omsorgsgivares förklaringar av sina omsorgsarrangemang och engagemang i arbetet? Hur hanterar omsorgsgivare motstridiga normer, normkonformitet, normbrott och de känslor de väcker? Hur hanterar omsorgsgivare sina egna föreställningar om omsorgstagarnas behov för att stå ut med sin situation och för att livet ska bli levbart? Hur kan analyser av omsorgsgivares försök att göra sig begripliga och hantera sina känslor hjälpa oss att bättre förstå reproduktion och överskridanden av könade normer i familjers omsorgsarrangemang? I avhandlingen analyseras intervjuer med 31 föräldrar till barn under 12 år och 20 intervjuer med söner och döttrar som ger omsorg till sina åldrande föräldrar.

Avhandlingen består av en kappa och tre artiklar. I kappan går jag igenom mina teoretiska utgångspunkter, redogör för mina metoder och sammanfattar och relaterar resultaten från mina tre studier till varandra så att jag kan formulera övergripande slutsatser.

### Artikel I

I den här studien intresserade jag mig för svenska pappors deltidsarbete och analyserade hur fäderna, i sina beskrivningar av prioriteringar mellan arbete och omsorg, förhandlade moralisk begriplighet i relation till motstridiga ideal kring faderskap och maskulinitet. Analysen baserades på intervjuer med 14 deltidsarbetande och sju heltidsarbetande svenska fäder med minst ett barn yngre än nio år.

För att förstå pappors berättelser i relation till samhällliga normer och ideal kombinerade jag teorier om att "göra kön" med teorier om performativitet. Det hjälpte mig att synliggöra fädernas ansträngningar för att göra sig begripliga i relation till könade normer och diskurser. Moral hade stor betydelse i berättelserna eftersom föräldraskap är moraliskt reglerat med skilda ideal för mödrar och fäder. I Sverige är det ovanligt att fäder väljer att arbeta deltid och därför var det extra intressant att undersöka hur deltidsarbetande pappor förklarade sina val. De kunde inte luta sig på etablerade normer kring faderskap utan var tvungna att förhandla betydelsen av "gott faderskap" för att kunna göra sina prioriteringar mellan arbete och familj begripliga.

Analysen visade att fäderna tog stöd både i "traditionella" maskulinitetsideal och i ideal om närvarande faderskap. Båda dessa ideal kan förstås som hegemoniska maskuliniteter i Sverige idag. Trots det fanns det variation mellan olika

kontexter vilka maskuliniteter som framstod som begripliga. Fäderna hanterade ibland komplexa moraliska landskap med motstridiga ideal. Även om det i tidigare forskning har konstaterats att fäder har större möjlighet än mödrar att välja sina åtaganden i omsorgen om sina barn, fann jag att även fäders val villkorades av moraliska förväntningar. Att fäder ansetts ha större valmöjligheter kan delvis bero på att män förväntas formulera sig i termer av aktiva val och göra maskulinitet genom att ge uttryck för kontroll och beslutskraft. Även om fäderna i studien ofta kunde välja att prioritera åtaganden i arbetet framför omsorg om sina barn, var det motsatta valet inte alltid lika tillgängligt. Idealet om närvarande faderskap var ibland inte tillräckligt moraliskt bindande för att ge stöd att utmana andra moraliska normer på arbetsplatsen.

Vissa fäder hade dock under sina relativt långa föräldraledigheter vant sig vid ett ansvarstagande för sina barn som gav dem moraliskt stöd att fortsätta prioritera omsorg framför arbete. De teoretiska perspektiv som användes i analysen, både West & Zimmermans och Butlers, bidrog till att tydliggöra hur gränser upprättades kring fäders omsorgspraktiker genom vad som kunde begripliggöras i relation till könade diskurser. Men perspektiven visade också möjlig förändring då diskurserna kunde utmanas genom förändrade praktiker, som i sin tur kunde bidra till att etablera nya förståelser av maskulinitet och faderskap. Men både praktiker som lång föräldraledighet och diskurser kring jämställdhet och närvarande faderskap kan vara olika tillgängliga och moraliskt gångbara för olika fäder, beroende på deras klassbakgrund och sammanhang, som t.ex. mansdominerade eller karriärorienterade arbetsplatser.

Jag fann att "närvarande faderskap" och deltidsarbete för många av de intervjuade fäderna inte innebar något brott mot, eller tydligt avsteg från, maskulinitetsideal. Istället utgjorde "närvarande faderskap" en alternativ hegemonisk maskulinitet som fäder kunde ta stöd i för att maskulinisera en traditionellt feminiserad praktik. Uttryck för reflexivitet och jämställdhetsideal kunde också ibland fungera som distinktioner i relation till synbart mindre jämställda män. Men det förekom också berättelser i intervjuerna där maskulinitet som skillnadsskapande var mindre viktigt och där ansvaret för omsorgen om barnen kunde göras begriplig utan hjälp av några könade diskurser.

## Artikel II

I den här studien undersökte jag hur medelålders män och kvinnor i Sverige, med omsorgsbehövande föräldrar, talade om mäns involvering i omsorgen och hur de då relaterade till normer kring maskulinitet och femininitet. Jag undersökte uttryck för stabilitet och förändring i könade förståelser av omsorg med

hjälp av begreppen att "göra kön", "göra om kön" och "ogöra kön". Min analys baserades på intervjuer med 13 kvinnor och åtta män som alla hade omsorgsansvar för sina gamla föräldrar.

Utgångspunkten i den här studien var att familjers omsorg om äldre anhöriga blivit mer omfattande och viktig i takt med neddragningar i den offentliga omsorgen. Familjers äldreomsorg är både kvinnodominerad och en praktik som förstås som att "göra femininitet". Trots det är män också involverade i omsorg om äldre anhöriga. Eftersom ansvarsfördelningen i familjen för omsorgen om äldre anhöriga oftast är ett resultat av förhandlingar, är både män och kvinnor aktiva i att låta kön forma omsorgsarrangemangen. Därför analyserade den här studien hur både män och kvinnor förhöll sig till könade normer när de förklarade mäns grad av involvering i familjens äldreomsorg.

I studien använde jag mig av begreppet "göra kön" för att visa hur ideal kring maskulinitet och femininitet blev relevanta när omsorgsgivare förklarade ansvarsfördelningen i omsorgen om äldre anhöriga. Mäns mindre insatser i omsorgen förklarades ofta genom tal om kön som skillnad och som avgörande för ansvarstagande i omsorg. Dessa förklaringar gav också en bild av vilka manliga omsorgspraktiker som var acceptabla och begripliga, och hur gränser för det upprätthölls och utmanades. Män som var involverade i omsorgen om äldre anhöriga, förklarade däremot sällan sina insatser med hjälp av könade diskurser. Istället var de tvungna att förhålla sig till maskulinitet och femininitet på andra sätt. Några av dessa män distanserade sig från sitt omsorgsgivande genom att understryka sin brist på valmöjligheter. Trots det, utmanade de ändå de diskurser där maskulinitet förstås som avståndstagande från omsorg genom att de själva faktiskt var involverade i omsorg i praktiken. Om kön förstås som performativt kan dessa praktiker medföra nya könade positioner och identiteter där omsorg får en annan betydelse.

Jag använde mig av begreppen "göra om" och "ogöra" kön för att analysera förändringar och omförhandlingar av könade förståelser. I vissa situationer *gjorde* männen *om* kön i sina förklaringar. Då upprätthölls förståelsen av kön som skillnader, men betydelsen av maskulinitet utmanades genom att männen tog stöd i diskurser och ideal om "nya" omsorgsinriktade maskuliniteter. Samtidigt som detta utmanade könade normer genom att omsorg kopplades till maskulinitet, reproducerades könade distinktioner och könade begriplighetsgöranden. Det fanns dock också situationer när de omsorgsgivande männen inte lät kön bli relevantt alls i sina förklaringar och därmed *ogjorde* kön.

Det var slående hur frånvarande diskurser om jämställdhet var i berättelserna om familjers ansvarsfördelning för omsorg om äldre anhöriga jämfört med tidigare studier av familjers omsorg om barn. Jämställdhetsideal är inflytelserika i Sverige och för att framställa någon som en "bra svensk man" ingår generellt att

beskriva hur han delar ansvar för hushållsarbete och omsorg. Men eftersom politik och offentlig debatt kring jämställdhet fokuserat mer på föräldraskap än på andra omsorgsrelationer verkar inte "nya omsorgsinriktade maskuliniteter" ha blivit ideal i omsorgen om gamla föräldrar. Männerna som var involverade i omsorgen om sina föräldrar pratade därför snarare om hur de accepterade åtaganden än om att de valt dem till följd av sin omsorgsinriktade identitet.

### Artikel III

I den här studien använde jag emotionssociologiska perspektiv för att synliggöra hur normer får inflytande i föräldrars liv genom de emotioner som de väcker och föreskriver. Jag analyserade också hur föräldrar hanterar de emotioner som normefterlevnad och normbrott väcker. Min analys baserades på intervjuer med 13 förvärvsarbetande svenska mödrar och fäder med minst ett barn under 12 år.

Den teoretiska utgångspunkten i studien var att normer blir relevanta genom känslor, där normkonformitet skapar känslor av bekvämlighet medan normbrott väcker skam. Till normer är också emotionsregimer knutna, med förväntningar på känslor och känslouttryck. De intervjuade föräldrarna mötte flera, ibland motstridiga, normer och emotionsregimer kring arbete, föräldraskap och jämställdhet. Flera föräldrar gav uttryck för skam och skuld över att de inte kunde leva upp till alla förväntningar. Men det fanns också föräldrar som i vissa situationer fick normerna att samverka så att de kunde känna stolthet över sig själva, inte minst över att de kände "rätt känslor". De uttryckte alltså även känslor över sina egna känslor, som till exempel stolthet över att kunna njuta av samvaron med sina barn eller skam över att, trots sina jämställdhetsideal, inte kunna undvika skuld-känslor i relation till "traditionella" moderskapsideal.

Föräldrarna utträttade olika former av emotionsarbete för att hantera och undvika konflikter mellan olika normer och emotionsregimer samt för att undvika att känna skam inför normbrott. Ett nyckelverktyg i det arbetet var empatiska föreställningar. När föräldrarna föreställde sig sina barns situationer, behov och känslor förhöll de sig också till sina egna ideal om en "god barndom" och till könade ideal för föräldraskap. De känslor som väcktes hos föräldrarna hängde ihop med vilka ideal och normer som de gjorde relevanta i sina föreställningar. Genom att i sina empatiska föreställningar ta hänsyn till vissa ideal och lägga mindre tonvikt vid andra, kunde föräldrarna också i viss mån forma sina egna känslor. Men vilka föreställningar som var möjliga och hållbara för föräldrarnas påverkades också av deras materiella villkor. Föräldrar som hade inflexibla arbetstider, påtagligt begränsade ekonomiska tillgångar eller var ensamstående kunde ibland vara tvungna att begränsa sina empatiska föreställningar för att

undvika att väcka känslor som de ändå inte skulle kunna agera på och som då kunde blivit plågsamma eller till och med outhärdliga.

Med jämställdhetsideal följde också förväntningar och emotionsregimer som skiljde sig åt för mammor och pappor. I Sverige har jämställdhetspolitiken inriktats på att rekrytera män till idealen genom deras position som fäder och verkat för "jämställd" maskulinitet genom närvarande faderskap. För fäderna konvergerade därför emotionsregimer kopplade till jämställdhetsideal och involverat föräldraskap. De föreskrev känslor av stolthet för fäderna i deras engagemang i barnen. I kontrast till det, riskerade mammorna att möta motstridiga emotionsregimer och känna skam oavsett om de prioriterade sina arbeten eller att vara med barnen. Jämställdhetsidealerna var dock inte lika relevanta för alla utan verkade otillgängliga för vissa föräldrar och andra tog till och med avstånd från dem.

### Slutsatser

I avhandlingen visade jag hur könade föreställningar kan reproduceras också när omsorgsgivare "gör jämställdhet" i familjens omsorgsarrangemang. Det innebär i sin tur att när någonting politiseras som en jämställdhetsfråga riskerar det att medföra att kön *görs om* med "jämställda" maskuliniteter och femininiteter, snarare än att kön ges minskad relevans. Jag visade också hur jämställdhetsideal bar med sig könade emotionsregimer, som i kombination med ideal kring individualisering och barnomsorg skapade olika motstridiga situationer för mammor och pappor.

I avhandlingen tydliggjordes hur normer kan bli smärtsamt kännbara genom emotioner. Omsorgsgivarna behövde hantera ambivalens mellan å ena sidan känslomässigt starka normer kring individualisering och självförverkligande och å andra sidan att ha nära anhöriga eller barn som var beroende av deras omsorg och närvaro. Ideal om jämställdhet minskade inte alltid den ambivalensen, utan kunde till och med förstärka den. För att stå ut med sig själva och sina prioriteringar behövde omsorgsgivare hantera emotioner i relation till de normer och ideal som de inte kunde leva upp till. I avhandlingen använde jag mig av begreppet empatiska föreställningar för att visa hur omsorgsgivare genom att hantera sina föreställningar om de omsorgsbehövandes situationer och emotioner kunde hantera sina egna känslor för att få omsorgsarrangemanget och livet att kännas levbart.

Genom att undersöka hur kön ges fortsatt relevans i familjers omsorgsarrangemang, trots utbredda ideal om jämställdhet, ger den här avhandlingen ett bidrag till förståelsen av stabilitet och förändring i normativa strukturer. Trots



## SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

att jämställdhetsideal är så spridda i Sverige, finns det också en mängd normer som verkar i andra riktningar och som fortsätter att ha kraft genom de känslor de väcker – även hos dem som försöker frigöra sig från de normerna. Jämställdhetsidealen tar också vissa specifika positioner som utgångspunkt vilket gör att de inte är lika tillgängliga och relevanta i alla positioner eller kontexter.



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<b>Study I</b>							
<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Children's age</i>	<i>Length of parental leave taken per child (in months)</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Percentage of full-time hours worked</i>	<i>Percentage of full-time hours worked by partner</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>
Andreas	34	2, 4	12	Governmental officer	75	75	Jörgen Larsson
Björn	42	4	10	Educational entrepreneur	50	80	Jörgen Larsson
Christian	38	1, 3	8	Municipal administrator	70	60	Jörgen Larsson
David	40	3, 6	8	College teacher	65	75	Jörgen Larsson
Erik	44	4	9	Government investigator	60	100	Jörgen Larsson
Fredrik	40	3, 6	11	Governmental public relations officer	80	80	Jörgen Larsson
Gustav	40	4, 7	10	Accounting officer, public sector	80	100	Jörgen Larsson
Hans	38	1, 4	11	University public relations officer	80	80	Jörgen Larsson
Ingemar	46	11, 13	10	Journalist for public television	80	100	Jörgen Larsson
Jakob	45	4	5	Governmental marketing manager	80	65	Jörgen Larsson

Karl	39	2, 9, 11	na.	IT specialist, private sector	75	100	Jörgen Larsson
Lennart	41	3, 5, 8	8	Marketer, private sector	90	100	Jörgen Larsson
Martin	39	3, 6, 10	9	Dentist, private practice	65	60	Jörgen Larsson
Nicklas	47	4	3	Assistant nurse, public sector	90	90	Jörgen Larsson
Patrik	44	3, 5, 13, 15	4	Project coordinator, private sector	100	80	Jörgen Larsson
Rickard	38	6	4	IT consultant, private sector	100	75	Jörgen Larsson
Stefan	33	5 months	6	Marketing coordinator, private sector	100	0 (on parental leave)	Jörgen Larsson
Ulf	38	2	3	System developer, private sector	100	75	Sofia Björk
Victor	39	3	na.	Technician, private sector	100	0 (student)	Jörgen Larsson
Jonas	42	6	5	Priest, civil sector	100	100	Sofia Björk
Peter	32	8, 16	2	Security officer, private sector	100	100	Sofia Björk

Study II							
<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Care receiver</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Working hours per week</i>	<i>Siblings</i>	<i>Care tasks</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>
Mona	Mother	W	Priest	>40	1 sister	Daily conversations, contacts with public care providers	Hans Ekbrand
Gunnar	Mother	M	Doctor	>40	2 sisters	The mother lives in a facility for demented elders and needs no practical assistance from her family.	Hans Ekbrand
Carina	Parents in law	W	Industrial worker	40	na.	Household work. They live far away and Carina visits them every other weekend.	Hans Ekbrand
Sven	Mother	M	Lay welfare worker	40	No siblings	Shopping, cleaning, transportation, and handling technical matters.	Hans Ekbrand
Anders	Mother	M	Stage manager	40	No siblings	Administration and keeping company	Sofia Björk
Birgitta	Mother	W	Assistant nurse	>40	2 sisters and 3 brothers	Cleaning, financial administration, and keeping company	Sofia Björk
Cecilia	Parents	W	Nurse	37.5	1 sister	Cleaning, transportation, financial administration, and contacts with public care providers	Sofia Björk
Diana	Mother	W	Nurse	32	No siblings	Organize everything in everyday life and cleaning	Sofia Björk
Elisabeth	Mother	W	Municipal head of unit	>40	2 sisters	Shopping, transportation, and financial administration	Hans Ekbrand



Fredrika	Parents and mother in law	W	Municipal head of department	36	3 brothers and 2 sisters	Contacts with public care providers	Sofia Björk
Gunilla	Parents	W	Municipal head of department	>40	1 sister	Administration, transportation, and contacts with public care providers	Sofia Björk
Helén	Mother	W	Municipal head of department	40	1 brother	Shopping and taking care of the house	Hans Ekbrand
Ingvar	Mother	M	Technician	>40	2 sisters	Shopping, transportation, and taking care of the house	Sofia Björk
Jonas	Father and aunt	M	Priest	>40	No siblings	Shopping, transportation, and keeping company	Sofia Björk
Carl	Mother	M	Priest	>40	1 brother	Shopping and keeping company	Sofia Björk
Karin	Mother	W	Doctor	>40	2 brothers	Keeping company and contacts with public care providers	Sofia Björk
Lars	Mother in law	M	Doctor	>40	na.	Keeping company and contacts with public care providers	Sofia Björk
Margareta	Parents	W	Administrator	20	1 bother	Contacts with public care providers and practical assistance	Sofia Björk
Olga	Mother	W	Assistant nurse	32	4 brothers	Personal care, shopping, and cleaning	Hans Ekbrand
Göran	Mother in law	M	Purchasing manager	>40	na.	Keeping company	Sofia Björk
Malin	Mother	W	Janitor	28	No siblings	Taking care of her houses, contacts with medical care providers	Sofia Björk

<b>Study III</b>						
<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Children's age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Working hours per week</i>	<i>Interviewer</i>
Anna	40	W	5	Priest	40	Sofia Björk
Carl	50	M	11, 13	Treatment assistant	38,5	Hans Ekbrand
Doris	44	W	6, 4	Pilot	40	Hans Ekbrand
Elinor	46	W	9, 11	Flight attendant	32	Hans Ekbrand
Ida	36	W	2, 5	Municipal head of department	40	Sofia Björk
Kamilla	37	W	6	Municipal head of department	50	Sofia Björk
Josef	43	M	7	Doctor	50-60	Sofia Björk
Lena	40	W	8	Teacher	30-50	Sofia Björk
Martin	38	M	3	Engineer	40	Sofia Björk
Nicklas	41	M	8	Lower manager	60	Sofia Björk
Olivia	48	W	10	Assistant nurse	38,5	Sofia Björk
Peter	32	M	8, 16	Security officer	27h - full time	Sofia Björk
Andreas	34	M	2, 4	Governmental officer	30	Jörgen Larsson