

# **The Daddy Issue**

*A generational comparison of a shared sense of Norwegian middle-class fatherhood, 1990s and 2020s*

**Isabel Rav Borrevik**



**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Philosophy in  
Gender Studies**

*Centre for Gender Studies*

*University of Oslo*

*Blindern, Norway*

20.11.2023



# Abstract

In this thesis, I explore the changes in the shared sense of fatherhood between two generational groups of Norwegian middle-class fathers. The exploration is based on personal stories about fatherhood as they appear in semi-structured interviews with two groups, the first group consisting of 6 interviews with fathers of children born in the 1990s, and the second consisting of 5 interviews with fathers of young children at the time of the interviews late 2022-early 2023. As important context to this exploration, I provide an overview of the story of ‘the new father’ of the 1990s as it appears in the Norwegian public narrative and previous research. In doing this, I argue that the ‘new father’ is both a descriptor of the wave of men who made it their project to enter in to the family and caregiver role in ways that their fathers had not done before them, and a figure that symbolizes a societal shift towards one specific version on new fatherhood. Following this, I construct a theoretical and methodological analytical framework drawing on narrative hermeneutics to propose the concept of a shared sense of fatherhood, understanding the experience of fatherhood as simultaneously subjective and social, with personal fatherhood projects as developed against a temporal horizon of pre-cognitive interpretation. On the foundation of this framework, I analyze how this shared sense of fatherhood appears different between the two generational groups and how said differences appear as references to shared fatherhood projects within the different generations. In my analysis, I find that where the 90s group saw it as important to establish themselves as new against the generation of their fathers, the 20s group rather sees themselves as similar to their fathers in their fatherhood. However, the normative ideal of taking ownership of your role as a primary caregiver on equal grounds as the mother appears as stronger in the 20s group, appearing as an implicit continuation of the ‘new father’ project of the 90s generation.

---

I denne avhandlingen utforsker jeg endringene i den delte følelsen av farskap mellom to generasjoner av norske middelklassefedre. Utforskningen er basert på personlige fortellinger om farskap slik de framstår gjennom semistrukturerte intervjuer med to grupper, den første gruppen bestående av 6 intervjuer med fedre til barn født på 1990-tallet, og den andre bestående av 5 intervjuer med fedre til små barn på tidspunktet for intervjuene sent i 2022 til tidlig i 2023. Som viktig kontekst for denne utforskningen, gir jeg en oversikt over historien om 'den nye faren' på 1990-tallet slik den framstår i den norske offentlige fortellingen og tidligere forskning. I det jeg gjør dette, argumenterer jeg for at 'den nye faren' er både en beskrivelse av mennene som gjorde det til sitt prosjekt å gå inn i familien og omsorgsgiverrollen på måter som deres fedre ikke hadde gjort før dem, og en figur som symboliserer en samfunnsmessig endring mot én spesifikk versjon av nytt farskap. Etter dette konstruerer jeg et teoretisk og metodologisk analytisk rammeverk som trekker på narrativ hermeneutikk for å foreslå begrepet 'delt følelse av farskap'. Gjennom dette begrepet forstås farskapsopplevelser som både subjektive og sosiale, med personlige farskapsprosjekter som utvikles mot en tidsmessig horisont av pre-kognitiv tolkning. Med utgangspunkt i dette rammeverket, analyserer jeg hvordan denne delte følelsen av farskap framstår forskjellig mellom de to generasjonsgruppene, og hvordan disse forskjellene framstår som referanser til delte farskapsprosjekter innenfor de ulike generasjonene. I min analyse finner jeg at mens 90-tallsgruppen så det som viktig å etablere seg som nye i kontrast mot generasjonen av sine fedre, ser 20-tallsgruppen seg heller som like sine fedre i sitt farskap. Imidlertid framstår det normative idealet om å ta eierskap til sin rolle som primær omsorgsgiver på like fot med mor som sterkere i 20-tallsgruppen, og fremstår som en implisitt fortsettelse av 'den nye faren'-prosjektet til 90-talls generasjonen.



## Acknowledgements

To my supervisor, Helene Aarseth: thank you for being forever encouraging even before you were my official supervisor, asking the right questions to bring me back when I got lost in what I was trying to do, and going above and beyond in your supervisor duties to ensure I had all the help and guidance I could possibly need.

To all the ‘grown-ups’ I’ve encountered at STK over the past years: thank you for creating an environment where your students feel seen and taken care of throughout both my bachelor and master years.

To my fellow Master Cave inhabitants Johanne, Amalie, Itzel, and Adele: thank you for being both my colleagues and friends through thesis related freak-outs and theory related breakthroughs.

To Andrea: thank you for being an absolute feedback machine, reading full chapters and returning with comments, questions, and suggestions at an inhuman speed for the mere payment of some leftover croissants.

To my mom, my dad, my stepmom, and both my sisters: thank you for being endlessly proud of me in pursuing my masters, even when I was pretty sure I lost you along my half crazed ramblings about pre-cognitive interpretation and the generational ‘sense of life’.

To my boss, Jorid, and my regulars at Lille Valkyrien: thank you for being the biggest cheerleaders a local barista could ever dream of.

To my friends outside the thesis world, particularly Edith, Pia, and Ronja: thank you for making sure I was fed, comforted, and generally kept alive throughout the writing process.

And finally, to my wonderful participants: thank you for taking the time out of your life to let me interview you, trusting me with the stories you shared, and your enthusiasm for the project in general. I hope the final product is something you can be proud of having a part in.

---

# Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 CHANGING FATHERHOOD IN THE NORDICS .....	2
1.2 THE NEW FATHER: SOCIETAL MODEL OR PERSON? .....	4
1.3 PURPOSE OF STUDY .....	5
1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS .....	6
<b>2. CHAPTER 2: LIT REVIEW .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 NEW FATHERS AND NEW MEN.....	8
2.2 THE GENDER EQUAL FATHER .....	11
2.3 ONE RIGHT WAY OF NEW FATHERHOOD .....	14
<b>3. CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1 STORIES AND NARRATIVE .....	18
3.2 PERSONAL AND PUBLIC, PERSONAL AND CULTURAL STOCKS OF STORIES .....	19
3.3 PRE-REFLECTIVE INTERPRETATION .....	22
3.4 SHARED SENSE OF FATHERHOOD .....	24
3.5 PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT PUBLIC STORIES .....	27
<b>4. CHAPTER 4: METHOD .....</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS AS METHOD .....	29
4.2 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS .....	30
4.3 THE ABDUCTIVE APPROACH.....	32



---

4.4	THE PARTICIPANTS .....	33
4.5	INTERVIEW GUIDE AND TREATMENT OF DATA.....	38
4.6	THE INTERVIEWS .....	39
<b>5.</b>	<b>90S FATHERS .....</b>	<b>41</b>
5.1	A DIFFERENT GENERATION .....	41
5.2	FATHERS AS A PRODUCT OF THEIR TIME .....	46
5.3	THEN AND NOW.....	48
5.4	FLEXIBLE ROLES.....	52
<b>6.</b>	<b>20S FATHERS .....</b>	<b>58</b>
6.1	“WELL, I THINK IT’S PRETTY SIMILAR...” .....	58
6.2	PARENTHOOD AS A COLLECTIVE PROJECT.....	61
6.3	PERSONALITY, NOT GENDER.....	65
6.4	GENDER EQUALITY AS AN IDEAL OUTSIDE THE HOME .....	68
<b>7.</b>	<b>DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>73</b>
7.1	A CHANGING SENSE OF FATHERHOOD.....	73
7.2	PARENTHOOD VERSUS FATHERHOOD AND MOTHERHOOD.....	78
7.3	SAMENESS AS THE DOMINANT FORM OF FATHERHOOD .....	82
<b>8.</b>	<b>CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>87</b>
8.1	SUMMARY OF THE STUDY.....	87
8.2	FURTHER RESEARCH .....	89
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>92</b>



# 1. Chapter 1: Introduction

How does something as personal as fatherhood become social to the point of looking drastically different throughout society in the course of a single generation?

Norway and the Nordics are widely referred to as a case where a completely new fatherhood model gained a foothold through society in a matter of decades (Johansson & Andreasson, 2017a, p. 7). In Norway specifically, the 1990s and early 2000s saw a surge of interest from academics in what has come to be known as the ‘new fathers’ – the ‘new’ men who were actively getting involved in family life and taking ownership of being caregiver in ways their fathers before them had not done (Brandth & Kvande, 2003). While certainly helped along by policies meant to encourage the further development of contemporary fatherhood in this direction, state interference cannot be said to be responsible for the insistence with which the new fathers collectively entered into the family. On the contrary, researchers have argued that a big reason for the success of these policies was that the men were already in the process of redefining themselves as the new fathers (Holter & Aarseth, 1993; Aarseth, 2011). Fast forward to today, and the figure of the new father is no longer simply a description of the men who took it upon themselves to enter into the family in new ways, but a societal metanarrative of a certain way of doing and identifying with fatherhood that serves as a background against which today’s fathers develop their own fatherhood projects (Eerola & Huttunen, 2011).

Starting from this picture, I was curious as to who the new fathers were and are from the perspective of today. A new generation of men have come into fatherhood since the trailblazers of the past decades, and the new fathers of the 1990s are not so new anymore. What then about the new ‘new fathers’? How do the fatherhood projects of the two generations compare to each other, and what has the ‘father revolution’ of the 1990s fathers done to the landscape of contemporary fatherhood the new generation are starting from? In this thesis, I explore this through a series of qualitative interviews with fathers who can be said to be particularly representative of these two generations of fathers. My goal is to explore the different fathering landscapes, or the different *shared*

---

*senses of fatherhood*, of the men in these two groups: Norwegian middle-class fathers of the 1990s and Norwegian middle-class fathers of today.

## 1.1 Changing fatherhood in the Nordics

It is widely accepted that throughout the Nordics, and throughout the Western world in general, the cultural ideals surrounding fatherhood have undergone significant changes throughout past decades (Farstad & Stefansen, 2015). As men and women's movements in the public and private spheres change, so do the ideals and practices of fathers and mothers. The structures of family life are continuously influenced and informed by culture outside the family, and as women become increasingly present in the public sphere and the labor market, men follow by entering into the family in new ways. As a result of this, many societies have in recent times found themselves in an ongoing conversation about the new, involved, and care-oriented father. In this global conversation surrounding new fatherhood, the Nordic countries are often referred to as the success story of this new father model (Johansson & Andreasson, 2017b, p. 7). The story depicts a fundamental social and cultural shift in the ways Nordic men see and practice their own fatherhood, breaking the molds set by previous generations and setting out to do things in a new, better way – the new fathers are the modern, gender equal, and emotionally available counterparts to the outdated absent fathers that came before them. In the context of Nordic family life, “[b]eing a caring father seems nothing less than culturally obligatory.” (Farstad & Stefansen, 2015, p. 67)

The emergence of the new Nordic father model must be understood in relation to an explicitly stated ideal of a gender-egalitarian society. While the Nordic countries do have certain differences, they can be said to engage in a mutual dialog concerning policy development and value sets, especially on the topic of gender. (Farstad, 2016, p. 14). For a long time, the Nordics have been characterized by welfare regimes largely driven by the goal of gender equality. This is something that has been a point of observation from the outside in, but also a point of pride and identity for the Nordics themselves (Lister, 2009, p. 243). The welfare states' involvement in pursuing this goal has been understood as vital, and through collaboration between socially driven initiative from 'below' and politically supported policy from 'above' the Nordics are considered largely

---

successful in transforming gender relations in their respective societies (Teigen & Skjeie, 2017, p. 128).

This explicit focus on gender equality as a value has been a major driver behind the establishing of the new, involved father as an ideal. Policymakers have not only focused on facilitating women's entrance into the work place, but have also doubled down on consciously changing the role of the father in the family. These efforts have largely been considered successful. The traditional male breadwinner model is no longer the norm, replaced by a policy-supported dual-earner/dual-carer family model presumed to challenge traditionally gendered parenting roles and promote an egalitarian partnership between parents (Leira, 2006). While this shift is not exclusive to the Nordic societies, the Nordic welfare regimes are still considered pioneers in this area, being described by some as the 'father-friendly welfare states' (Brandt & Kvande 2013, Farstad & Stefansen 2015).

Norway specifically has been described as a 'test laboratory' for the construction of a caregiving father through being the first country in the world to implement a father's quota into its parental leave scheme in 1993 (Brandth & Kvande, 2003, 2013). While Norway already had a parental leave scheme in place that allowed for the division of leave between the parents, the father's quota further promoted fathers' entry into early childcare by allotting a non-transferable portion of the parental leave to the father. The policy was intended to strengthen the bond between father and child, in addition to promoting gender equality by not only focusing on women's presence in the labor market but also encouraging men's role as caregivers in the home through 'gentle force' (Lister, 2009, p. 255). The father's quota is largely considered a success, helping transform the normative foundation of what is considered good fathering practice as it has become natural for fathers in Norway to stay home on parental leave (Brandth & Kvande, 2013, p. 14).

This year, 2023, then marks 30 years since the father's quota was first introduced. In the context of Norway and the Nordics, the emergence of this new father figure both in everyday practice and as a societal ideal has been described as a 'father revolution' of the 90s and early 2000s (Lorentzen, 2012, p. 9). As gender relations

---

change, so do the contents and ideals connected with fatherhood and motherhood, and the image of the new, care-oriented fathers is firmly rooted as a normative cultural ideal that is unavoidably part of how we view family life (Eerola & Huttunen, 2011). ‘The new fathers’ has become more than a descriptor of the fathers who took it upon themselves to enter into the family in ways that broke with the norms of previous generations. It is also the description of a societal model, encompassing a very specific way of relating to and practicing fatherhood.

## 1.2 The new father: societal model or person?

As stated in the first section of this chapter, my objective in this thesis is to explore the difference in how the new fathers and their successors relate to fatherhood within their respective contemporary shared senses of fatherhood. In order to explore this, I must start out by defining who the new fathers ‘really’ are and were. The model of the new father has made its way into larger societal narratives about ideal fatherhood, which works normatively on a structural level through policies specifically meant to encourage the practices that are associated with the story of the new fathers. However, while this story may appear homogenous and consistent, the reality of it is of course more nuanced. As I will go further into in Chapter 2, the figure of the new father as synonymous with the gender equality-driven Nordic welfare model has been problematized. The idea of the new fathers being inherently synonymous with a specific approach to gender equality has been challenged as downplaying the ways in which the fathering projects of certain groups do break with traditional understandings of gender, and for making invisible the reinforcing of these in others (Farstad & Stefansen, 2015).

While the new father as a caregiver in a capacity he was not before is visible throughout Norwegian society, the public narrative has been criticized for treating a very specific version of new fatherhood as the universal (Farstad, 2016, p. 74). In order to understand whose practices and fathering projects are actually recognized as belonging ‘properly’ to the new father ideal, we must then start out by separating the ideal from the people, so to speak. It is well-established that there is a classed side to who is recognized as fulfilling the ideals of the new father. Policy reform as developed over the past couple of decades

has been problematized as promoting the fathering practices of the middle-class as the implicitly ‘correct’ version of new fatherhood (Brandth & Kvande, 2014; Stefansen & Farstad, 2010). While there has been a development and change in fatherhood and fathering practices in Norway as a whole, the ideals and practices we associate the ‘new’ fathers that we now think of as universal were, and still remain, primarily the ideals and practices of the middle-class. However, even with the understanding that the middle-class only represents one version of a complex composition of new fathers, this does not mean they are not worth investigating as the new fathers. On the contrary, it is exactly because of this that they are particularly relevant when it comes to exploring the developments in now the new fathers understand their own fatherhood. This group was not only the implicitly representation of the new fathers, they were also explicitly claiming the identity of ‘the new fathers’ as part of their life and fatherhood projects (Aarseth, 2011). As such, though they cannot be said to represent all facets of the figure of new father, they become the closest version of what he represents specifically through taking ownership of said figure is understood to be. As the self-proclaimed pioneers of the new, Norwegian father model, the middle-class fathers of 90s then become the ‘starting point’ in my exploration of how their active efforts to define themselves as such has shaped the landscape in which the next generation of fathers create and give meaning to their own fatherhood.

### 1.3 Purpose of study

My goal in this thesis is to investigate how this ‘landscape’, or *shared sense of fatherhood*, looks different through the personal stories told through qualitative semi-structured interviews with fathers of two groups: Norwegian middle-class fathers of young children in the 1990s and Norwegian middle-class fathers of young children today. The study consists of 11 participants in total, 6 participants in the first group and 5 in the second one.

My exploration of this further revolves around the two following questions:

- 
- How does the new father model appear within the shared sense of fatherhood between the two groups?
  - How do the fatherhood projects of the two generations compare to each other?
  - What has the ‘father revolution’ of the 1990s fathers done to the shared sense of contemporary fatherhood the new generation is starting from?

In order to achieve this, I construct a theoretical and methodological framework where I introduce the concept of a shared sense of fatherhood as a central term in my analysis. I approach this from a point of narrative inquiry. My theoretical and methodological framework for this thesis understands narrative as not only the retelling of events and experiences that emerge as empirical accounts that can be studied and analyzed. Rather, my analytical perspective in the discussion of my findings revolves around narratives as crucial to how we (both consciously and pre-consciously) interpret the world around us, ourselves both as part of that world and as subjects within ourselves, and our possibilities and choices. Specifically, I draw on a hermeneutic approach to narrative that understands narratives as continually constructed and reconstructed against a horizon of both conscious reflection and pre-cognitive interpretation (Meretoja, 2017). This horizon is understood to be both deeply subjective and deeply social in nature, constantly evolving through both interaction with social and cultural narratives and personal lived experience. Through my participants’ personal stories of their own fatherhood and their father’s fatherhood, and their stories about the ‘bigger picture’ relating to societal expectations of fathers then and now, I explore in my analysis how this horizon, and therein my concept of a shared sense of fatherhood, takes shape differently in how they make sense of and give meaning to their own fatherhood within it, and in their reflections on how that landscape has changed over time.

## 1.4 Structure of the thesis

In Chapter 2, I go into more detail about the story of the new, Nordic (and specifically Norwegian) fathers as they appear in previous research. The goal of the chapter is to give important context as to how the horizon from which fathers of the 1990s shaped and gave meaning to their personal fatherhood looked, as well as to separate the new fathers as people with personal practices and identity projects from the societal ideal of



the new father. The chapter thus mainly focuses on qualitative studies exploring the narratives of fathers and their stories about their own fatherhood in relation to the societal landscape their fatherhood took place in. In Chapter 3, I present the theoretical and methodological framework I will be working from in my analysis. Because my objective is to explore how the horizon of Norwegian fatherhood influence how Norwegian fathers understand and give meaning to their personal fathering practices, this chapter lays an important foundation for my understanding of how said horizon are developed through both personal experience and social and cultural influence.

Following this, Chapter 4 goes into my approach and choices regarding method on the basis of methodology described in the previous chapter. In Chapter 5 and 6, I present my findings from my analysis of the 90s group and the 20s group respectively. These are divided into themes as they appear in their groups. In Chapter 7, I discuss the findings from my two groups in relation to each other from the framework presented in Chapter 3. Finally, in Chapter 8, I summarize my findings and discuss the implications these point to regarding the changes in the shared sense of fatherhood between the new fathers of the 90s and the continuation of the new fathers in form of the 20s fathers, as well as discussing how the analytical framework developed in Chapter 3 can be used for further research.

## 2. Chapter 2: Lit Review

### 2.1 New fathers and new men

The story of the new fathers has had a foothold in both academia and public discourse in Norway and the Nordics for several decades. As far back as the 70s, there emerged an explicit focus on a policy level to promote an ideal of the new man and father where masculinity and care could exist as non-conflicting (Johansson & Andreasson, 2017, pp. 42-43). With Norway's implementation of the father quota in 1993 and growing academic interest the narratives of fathers throughout the decade and into the early 2000s, the Norwegian fathers of the 1990s were firmly established as part of the reform of the new fathers (Brandth & Kvande, 2003, pp. 16-17).

Briefly summarized, the new father describes an idea of the modern man and father who takes part in caregiving work and is emotionally expressive in a way that was not the case for his father's generation, without being characterized as feminized or less masculine (Brandth & Kvande, 2003, p. 28). An important part of the story of new fathers of the 1990s was that they were exactly that: they were *new*, and they were doing things differently from their own fathers. The new fathers were seen as representing a shift in cultural views of fatherhood where the normative ideal of a good father went from being what Norwegian literature and gender scholar Jørgen Lorentzen has termed a father 'for' the family, an outside provider, to a father 'in' the family, a participating caregiver (Lorentzen, 2012, p. 12).

This is apparent in previous literature about the group, including that which focuses on the 90s fathers' own stories. Norwegian sociologists Berit Brandth and Elin Kvande (2003) found in their interviews with fathers of young children in the late 1990s<sup>1</sup> that the dominant ideal of the new father often became apparent through how the interviewees compared themselves with their own fathers in their personal stories (pp.

---

<sup>1</sup> Their material consisted of interviews with 30 couples with young children from various social and occupational backgrounds conducted in 1997. The couples were interviewed separately.

---

131-132). Brandth and Kvande argue that the way the fathers in the study presented the contrast between themselves and their fathers is indicative of the changing norms of fatherhood, as a way to illustrate their own fatherhood as in line with the progressive practices of new fatherhood. In other words, the new fathers framed their own fathering practices by placing themselves in relation to the story of the absent fathers of previous generations. The old father appeared as a figure representing what the new fathers were *not*, which Brandth and Kvande takes to indicate a societal story of change away from the old and towards a more present father (p. 132).

Norwegian sociologists Øystein Gullvåg Holter and Helene Aarseth (1993) similarly found that the fathers in their study, fathers of young children in the early 1990s, were very critical in their descriptions of their own fathers from their childhood (pp. 34-43). Tensions between the old, absent father model and the new, present one were illustrated in the ways the men talked about their personal fatherhood in relation to that of their own fathers. In many of their stories, their fathers appeared as almost the same one, the image of what they themselves were not. The old fathers thus existed as a contrast to the project of the new fathers. They represented a distant, dominant father figure that was the opposite of what the new fathers were trying to be for their children. Their fathers' ways of doing fatherhood were seen as rigid and fixed, associated with a more traditional and old-fashioned society, while the interviewees themselves saw their own fatherhood as more personal and individualized. In Holter and Aarseth's words, the father became 'pure position' and the son became 'pure person' (p. 37). The new fathers were largely defined by what they were not, and they were certainly not their fathers.

However, the new fathers contrasting themselves with their own fathers should not be seen as a way of defining themselves as new only. Holter and Aarseth are deeply critical of the idea that this is an expression of the interviewees marking themselves as partaking in shifting societal norms alone. They argue that, while the picture their interviewees painted of their fathers could be said to at least in part be interpreted as strongly influenced by the men's own needs to mark their own standpoint, the critical descriptions of their fathers were also deeply personal (1993, p. 37). The critical descriptions of the fathers in their own childhoods are seen as motivated by a genuine dissatisfaction with their fathers' way of fatherhood. Holter and Aarseth find that their

---

interviewees' descriptions of their fathers were not simply the result of the outer, societal influence of the idea of the new father. While the public narratives of the new fathers may have provided a vocabulary for the men's stories of being different to the previous generation, Holter and Aarseth argue that said narratives are not the underlying reason for their critical descriptions in themselves. Rather, the public narrative is a symptom of processes that are already in motion (1993, p. 41). While they did place themselves in contrast to their fathers, this was not only as a way to underline their own position as the 'new' fathers, but rather from a place of being genuinely critical of their father's fathering practices. In this way, the changes in fatherhood have not been a result of changing societal conditions alone, but has just as much been driven by the new choices and practices the 'new' fathers personally resonate with. This may in part be related to the interviewees interpreting their fathers' fatherhood from a more androgynous understanding of masculinity, where 'traditional' masculinity is seen as too authoritarian, absent, and lacking in emotional competence (Holter & Aarseth, 1993, pp. 37, 41).

Studying fatherhood and father practices is unavoidably connected to studying masculinity, and the idea of the 'new' father must be understood through a gendered perspective. Changes in fatherhood are intertwined with changes in masculinity, and fathers cannot be studied as fathers only, but must be studied as men, and thereby socially gendered (Brandth & Kvande, 2003, p. 35). Shifts in fatherhood go hand in hand with shifts in masculinity. In the case of Nordic fatherhood, the incorporation of care work into masculinity practices played into the development of the new fathers as "the concept of the new man came to epitomize the vision of a care-oriented masculinity" (Johansson & Klinth, 2008, p. 43). The development of dominant masculinity ideals that 'allow' men to take part in caregiving and be emotionally involved in family life without being perceived as less masculine have been important for the development of the new father. At the same time, the emergence of the new father model can also be seen as playing a part in expanding the borders of masculinity, creating alternative interpretations of what masculinity can contain (Brandth & Kvande, 2003, p. 215).

In this way, the new man and the new father are inevitably connected. Further, because of the gendered nature of fatherhood, it must be seen in relation to the other gendered side of parenthood: “Naturally, men do not make decisions about their fathering role in a vacuum, but in close relations to the way women make decisions about their mothering role, and cultural ideals connected to these practices” (Farstad & Stefansen, 2015, p. 56). The story of the new father is also the story of new gender relations between parents; namely, it is the story of the gender equal family.

## 2.2 The gender equal father

A key part of the story of the Norwegian (and Nordic) new father is that he represents a gender egalitarian relationship between the father and the mother. From a policy perspective, encouraging involved fatherhood as a normative ideal has been a defining characteristic of the social democratic Nordic welfare state regimes. The Nordics have a long history of promoting gender egalitarianism as an explicit value in their welfare models, something that has been shared by the citizens of the Nordic countries as an important component of national identity and pride (Lister, 2009, p. 246). Foundational to this has been the idea that promoting a dual-earner/dual-carer family model is a vital of implementing said value (Ellingsæter & Leira, 2006, p. 7). The idea that a more present, caregiving father goes hand in hand with the larger principle of gender equality has been a major driver for policies meant to encourage fathers’ active participation in the home. Getting the mother out into the workplace and the father into the home has thus been an important goal on a structural level. Compared to other welfare state regimes, the Nordic welfare states have placed great emphasis on intervention by the state in gender and family arrangements. Ensuring gender equality within the family has not been seen only a private matter, but also a responsibility of the state through public policy. Policy interference in family arrangements specifically aimed at the promotion of gender egalitarianism in the private sphere, such as the father quota, have been not only widely accepted, but also expected by Nordic citizens (Ellingsæter & Leira, 2006, p. 2).

These policies have however been utilized in different ways by different groups, and not always in ways that are seen as fulfilling the gender egalitarian goals of the

---

policies. This difference has been especially apparent between the middle- and working-class. Both Brandth and Kvande (2014) and Norwegian sociologists Kari Stefansen and Gunhild R. Farstad (2010) have explored how social class played into their participants' childcare choices and different strategies for utilization of government childcare policies. Both studies found that the Norwegian middle-class and working-class families in their study generally constructed their use of the family policies available differently based on different understandings of how to best accommodate their interpretations of the children's best interests and needs. In Brandth and Kvande's interviews<sup>2</sup>, the middle-class families tended to view the father as "a parent who can more or less serve as a substitute for the mother and who is just as competent as the mother, that is, a dual earner/dual carer model" (Brandth & Kvande, 2014, p. 138). These families typically had the father step in and take over once the mother's leave period ended and she went back to work. For the working-class families, the father was mainly seen as a supporter for the mother in her role as primary caregiver during the initial first year, finding ways for both parents to stay home during the father quota and any other leave the father might take out. The fathers typically assumed a more independent care practice once the child was older. Stefansen and Farstad arrive at much the same concluding patterns based on their interviews<sup>3</sup>. Practices mainly associated with the middle-class utilized the parental leave schemes available in ways where both parents took turns being the main caregiver, typically the mother for the first six to eight months, followed by the father until the child started daycare and both parents returned to full time employment. Practices associated with the working-class typically viewed it as best for the child and the family for the mother to remain the primary caregiver. The father quota was more important as a way for the family to spend the weeks together, rather than the mother going back to work and the father taking over care responsibilities by himself.

Both these strategies utilized the leave schemes available according to how the parents understood their children's needs and how to best account for those needs, however, the middle-class model is often seen as more gender equality oriented than the

---

<sup>2</sup> Conducted 1997-2001.

<sup>3</sup> Stefansen and Farstad do not give a specific timeframe for when their interviews took place in the quoted article, but Farstad specifies in her doctoral thesis (Farstad, 2016, p. 49) that the interviews for this article took place in 2006-2007.

---

working-class model. The story of the new father as presented in the public narrative is nearly always that of the gender equal father, and ways of fathering that do not emphasize gender egalitarianism are then seen as stagnant and traditional, as counterproductive to the ideal of the new, modern father (Farstad, 2016, p. 75). Because of this, the more typically working-class practices as described above are often implicitly labeled as old-fashioned and non-transformative compared to those more typical of middle-class, which become painted in the public narrative as the practices of the universal new father. However, both above-mentioned studies are critical of this conclusion. Brandth and Kvande find that the fathers in both groups in their study understood and practiced care as unifiable with masculinity norms, and playing the role of supporter was still impactful in redefining fatherhood (Brandth & Kvande, 2014, p. 138). In discussing her study with Stefansen<sup>4</sup> in her doctoral thesis, Farstad (2016) concludes that while the change may appear differently, focusing more on the relationship between father and child rather than explicitly on the gendered relation between father and mother, the working-class fathers still represent a turn towards emotional and practical investment in care-work (p. 76).

The idea that the middle-class' approach to new fatherhood was mainly led by a deep-rooted value of gender equality has also been questioned. While higher educational levels have been connected with stronger ideals of gender equality (Ellingsæter & Kitterød, 2021, p. 31), the ease with which the middle-class of the 90s embraced these new family structures and policies was not necessarily because of a commitment to gender equality alone. Aarseth (2011) argues that the Norwegian middle-class was particularly receptive to the family reforms of the late 1900s, not because they were influenced by the ideals the policies represented alone, but because the way of life the policies aimed for fit well with what the middle-class was already doing. Aarseth argues that this was the case specifically for what she calls the 'new middle-class', which she describes as the fraction of the middle-class who specifically make their living by producing, handling, and conveying knowledge and ideas as opposed to the economic-administrative middle-class who produce and administrate material goods and services (Aarseth, 2011, p. 26). This branch of the middle-class was already in the process of

---

<sup>4</sup> Along-side her similar study in Iceland.

---

redefining the perimeters for self-realization and meaningful life projects, with family life becoming less a sphere based on mutual dependency and more an area of self-fulfillment. Rather than having to adapt their life projects and meaning around the values of the bigger structural gender equality project, the structural gender equality project fit neatly into what the new Norwegian middle-class was already doing. The new fathers of the new middle-class were motivated not only by an obligation to gender equality, but also by a wish for emotional self-fulfillment and belonging (Aarseth, 2011, p. 17).

In this way, the fathers taking an active part in the care of children does not necessitate a change in gender relations as an end goal. Instead, the incorporation of childcare into masculinity may be read as a shift towards a child-oriented masculinity that places the father's self-realization projects at the center of their childcare practices. However, while Aarseth concurs that her interviewees' advance into the caregiver role does not necessitate a more equal gender relation within the family, she questions if the two must be mutually exclusive (Aarseth, 2011, p. 72). While the motivation of the new middleclass fathers may not be the ideal of gender equality by itself, changes in gender relations in parenthood may still contribute to a more gender equal parenthood. In either case, the larger gender equality project may appear to stand stronger in middle-class fatherhood projects than in that of the working-class, implicitly positioning the first as the 'right' way of new fatherhood.

## 2.3 One right way of new fatherhood

As I've touched on in the above sections, the image the new father is considered largely as a dominant ideal of fatherhood in the Nordic countries. It has been established as a societal norm, helped along by policies aimed at furthering the new father and man as what one should strive to be:

“[I]t is clear that the new, gender-equal man lives on as an idea and moral guiding principle. The government-initiated campaigns to promote paternity leave have been one of the most important producers of the image of this man and of



---

what he should look like, what he should think, and how he should act.”  
(Johansson & Klinth, 2008, p. 45)

In the everyday life of men and fathers, this has become a dominant image that everyone must position themselves in relation to, whether they fit into it or not. In the Finnish context, J. Petteri Eerola and Jouko Huttunen (2011) have argued that the idea of the new father exists as a “metanarrative of contemporary fatherhood, as a culturally dominant story, about what it is to be a suitable father in present-day Finland” (p. 213). While the concept of the new fathers at its core refers to ‘real’ fathers and their lives and fathering practices, it has also become part of a metanarrative of fatherhood that proposes the new father – the involved and nurturing contrast to the absent breadwinner father – as the proper way of doing fathering. Eerola and Huttunen found that while not all the fathers in their study described their own fatherhood in strict accordance with the new father metanarrative, it was present and recognized as the dominant mode of contemporary fatherhood throughout their stories (Eerola & Huttunen, 2011, p. 225).

Building on this concept, Farstad and Stefansen (2015) further argues that this metanarrative of the new father is constructed around the father as a “*primary carer*, able and wanting to ‘mother’” (p. 58). The father as a secondary, supportive caregiver or in a traditional male provider role is then constructed as incompatible with the ideal of the new father, contributing to gender inequality by upholding traditional gender roles. There is a clear picture of one version of new fatherhood being situated as the ‘correct’ one, and it is the middle-class, gender egalitarian fatherhood.

This version of the new father is not only established as the accepted version through societal norms, but is also confirmed through policy. As pointed out by Brandth and Kvande, low flexibility policies such as the father quota may be argued to reinforce the idea of ‘the officially recognized Norwegian father’ (2003, p. 23). In light of their analysis on the class-specific patterns of use of family policy, Stefansen and Farstad (2010) argue that the developments in said policies happening at the time of finishing the project could be said to “represent a form of parenting streamlining within a largely

---

unspoken middle-class framework” (2010, p. 138).<sup>5</sup> By preferring and doubling down on policies that affirm the middle-class practices over working-class practices as the norm and desirable model, the state sends a message that there is one correct way of organizing family life:

For middle-class parents, changes in this direction will first and foremost work as a symbolic confirmation; the majority of them are already parenting in exactly this way. For working-class parents, the message will be quite the opposite; the state does not trust them to make the best choices for their children. (Stefansen & Farstad, 2010, p. 138)

Certain forms of fathering practice is thus confirmed as better, officially recognized as the correct way of being a new father, while other forms are implicitly made out to be wrong.

All this is not to say that policies and societal norms aimed at promoting gender equality are bad or should not be promoted. Rather, researchers have problematized the idea that one construction of new fatherhood is inherently gender equal, and another is inherently opposed to gender equality. As I've gone into in the previous section, the 'correct' way of embodying the new father is often focused on how gender equality the model of fatherhood appears. However, both the father as primary caregiver and the father as secondary caregiver approaches to fatherhood have been argued to contain aspects of masculinity that both reaffirms and subverts traditional gender roles within the family (Farstad & Stefansen, 2015). A too narrow definition of involved fatherhood may make us blind to both the ways traditional masculinity exists in 'disguise' in certain iterations of fatherhood, and how other iterations may promote inclusive masculinity in ways that look different from what we expect (Farstad, 2016, pp. 74-76). While one version of fatherhood may hold more weight as the embodiment of the metanarrative of the new father, new fatherhood is visible in different manifestations throughout Norwegian society.

---

<sup>5</sup> This refers to discussion of an extension of the father quota, which was 6 weeks at the time of the interviews, and prioritizing making fulltime institutionalized daycare a right from the age of one, which went into effect the year before the article was published.

With this in mind, my reason for focusing on the Norwegian fathers of the 1990s as the 'starting point' in my own project is that it is well established that they were part of a distinct societal shift in how fatherhood was both viewed and practiced. The 90s fathers throughout Norwegian society were indeed new, and not just because of state policies making it a project to change fatherhood. While public narratives and policy, such as the implementation of the father quota, played a big part in normative societal changes, the emergence of the new fathers cannot be attributed to the introduction of policy reform from 'above' alone. Part of the reason the father quota was such an imitate success likely had to do with the fact that Norwegian fathers were already ready to make use of it (Brandth & Kvande, 2013, p. 14). The Norwegian fathers of the 90s both were already, and became through influence of societal shifts and norms, the new fathers.

### 3. Chapter 3: Theoretical and Methodological Framework

#### 3.1 Stories and narrative

Different approaches to narrative analysis utilize the term ‘story’ in different ways. In some narrative- and discourse approaches, ‘story’ is understood as distinctly different from narrative, being seen as the telling and recounting of events in which narrative and discourse become visible (Riessman, 2012). In this sense, stories may be seen as what is told as part of a told narrative, as “an account with a plot that is told to make a point” (Stanley, 2017, p. x). This use of the term can be understood as interchangeable with told narrative, meaning “the symbolic representation, most often verbal, of a chain of human events” (Hänninen, 2004, p. 70). The told narrative is what we can access and study as empirical data, for example through interviews or personal accounts of events.

On the other hand, ‘story’ as a term is also used in ways that go beyond this conceptualization, as in the case of Scottish sociologist Lynn Jamieson’s exploration of intimacy in modern societies (1998). ‘Story’ as used by Jamieson here encompasses more than just the telling of a plot, but also refers to the narratives and discourses that become visible as the plot is told – what is the ‘bigger story’ behind the plot? The story is not separate from narrative or discourse, it in many ways *is* narrative and discourse. Stories are never ‘just’ stories, but are intertwined with lived personal lives and practices:

Stories are not free-floating but produced and reproduced by people who are located in networks of social relationships. Stories often become part and parcel of sets of practices and ways of doing things, which are in themselves consequential for private lives. (Jamieson, 1998, pp. 11-12)

---

Stories are not only personal and subjective organizations of experiences but are also influential in how experiences unfold in the first place, as they can be understood as part of the inner narrative.

Where told narrative refers to narratives communicated outwardly as stories by people to others in some way, inner narrative can be understood as “the narrative organisation of experience, the story we tell to ourselves” (Hänninen, 2004, p. 70). The inner narrative is not one cohesive and internally consistent story, but rather a forever ongoing process of organization of our own experiences, the told stories we hear from others, and the narratives and discourses we witness and take part in.

– it is “the symbolic representation, most often verbal, of a chain of human events” (Hänninen, 2004, p. 70).

### 3.2 Personal and public, personal and cultural stocks of stories

With the understanding of stories as part of bigger narratives, Jamieson introduces her distinction between *public* and *personal stories* (1998, pp. 10-13). The two interact with and influence each other, but belong to different spheres. Personal stories are just that: stories about and from personal life as told by the people living said life. Public stories are the stories told by the media, academics, politicians, or others with influence over the public. Specifically, Jamieson is concerned with the *public stories about personal life* and how these are separate from, yet still affect “the life that is lived” (p. 10). Just like the ‘plot stories’ of told narrative, public stories are always told from a particular point of view, thus telling a particular version of personal life. Public stories about personal life are important because, while they only tell a version of personal life, they shape lived life just as much as lived life shapes them. Just like with personal narratives, the public story is seldom one internally cohesive, straightforward version. However, certain public stories about the personal become more pervasive than others, thus holding more influence over personal lives.

In her model of the interplay between told narrative, lived narrative, and inner narrative, Finnish sociologist Vilma Hänninen (2004) introduces two concepts similar to

---

Jamieson's public and personal stories: *cultural stock of stories* and *personal stock of stories*. The *cultural stock of stories* refers to "the totality of narrative representations that the person hears or reads in the course of his or her life, ranging from pieces of gossip and TV advertisements to novels and sacred texts, and from fairytales to real-life stories" (Hänninen, 2004, p. 73). The cultural stock of stories is the set(s) of stories that surround a person living their life in a cultural context, ranging from narratives presented by the media or from 'official' sources, to the accumulative personal narratives of other people. The cultural stock of stories does not represent one internally consistent narrative of things (for example one specific narrative of fatherhood), but is rather the cultural 'landscape' that includes all narratives available. Within the cultural stock of stories, there are certain stories that may be given more weight or appear as more hegemonic or normative than others (pp. 73-74). The *personal stock of stories* refers to "the set of stories a person has stored in his or her memory, including both narrativised personal memories and those adopted from the cultural stock of stories" (Hänninen, 2004, p. 74). The personal stock of stories then becomes the stock of stories relevant to the individual's development of their own personal narratives, both the told narrative that is dialogically told to others, and the inner narrative that plays into the individual's understanding of their own life, choices, etc. This includes the individual's own experiences and stories, and selected narratives from the cultural stock of stories.

Combining the two approaches, I see the cultural stock of stories as the overarching concept that includes both the personal stories of individual people as these are dialogically shared between people, and all public stories as conceptualized by Jamieson. Within the cultural stock of stories, there are pervasive public stories. These are just that: they are pervasive throughout the cultural stock of stories, making them unavoidably relevant to everyone in some way as they interact with the cultural stock of stories. Many, if not most, of these pervasive stories will also be experienced as normative in people's personal lives. On a structural level pervasive public stories can influence private lives in systematic ways such as through directly influencing official policy and law-making (Jamieson, 1998, p. 11), as we can see in the case of Norwegian family policies. As described in Chapter 2, the pervasive public story viewing the Norwegian middle-class model of parenthood as being *the* model of Norwegian parenthood has informed the direction of family policies. This then serves to both

---

situationally affect people's lives by structurally influencing the development of policies with the middle-class mode of parenthood in mind, and to further reinforce the middle-class mode of parenthood as a pervasive public story. However, pervasive public stories about the personal also affect personal life in a more indirect way as they become part of people's personal stock of stories. The personal stock of stories holds your own personal stories (i.e. the stories of your own lived experiences), in addition to both public stories and personal stories from others from the cultural stock of stories you have heard and 'stored in your own memory' (Hänninen, 2004, p. 74). Because public stories, particularly pervasive public stories, play into the personal stock of stories, these create narratives that are by necessity relevant to both how the public interacts with the personal, and to how people interpret and navigate their own personal stories and experiences:

“Cumulatively, pervasive stories are inevitably consequential for both private and public life. They become representations that people cannot avoid working with at both a deep and surface level. Pervasive stories are a stock of narratives that anyone can draw on or distance themselves from when telling their own story. They are a repertoire of themes, stereotypes and judgement concerning mothering, fathering, parenting, befriending, sex, dating, marrying, loving and the like for recycling or adaptation when making sense of, justifying or glamorizing personal life.” (Jamieson, 1998, p. 11)

Pervasive public stories about the personal influence personal lives, both in socially being pervasive throughout the common and shared cultural stock of stories that people must place their experiences and choices in relation to in the dialogic telling of their stories, and more 'personally' in the internalization of said public stories playing into someone's personal sense of identity: “At the deeper level, public stories may be taken 'to heart' and profoundly shape personal identity.” (Jamieson, 1998, p. 11). Public stories are not only relevant to someone's conscious positioning of themselves in the dialogical tellings of narrative but are also influential in their subjective understanding of their own identity, preferences, and way of being. To understand how, I turn my attention here to a hermeneutic approach to narrative interpretation.

### 3.3 Pre-reflective interpretation

Crucial to my understanding of how stories are taken ‘to heart’ is a narrative hermeneutic approach to interpretation and meaning-creation as described by Finnish literature scholar Hanna Meretoja (2017). According to her, stories do not only influence how we reflectively and consciously view the world, but also play a part in the pre-reflective and affective horizon from which all conscious interpretation must take place:

“To appreciate the world-constituting, formative dimension of storytelling practices, it is important to acknowledge that they shape not only our cognitive understanding of the world, but also our affective orientations and our sense of the possible.” (Meretoja, 2017, p. 52)

How we feel about something and our sense of what is possible is not something we can always narrate or articulate to others or ourselves, yet it still plays a big part in our cognitive interpretations. As individuals, “[w]e always orient ourselves to the world in a certain way, and in so doing we interpret and bestow meaning on it” (p. 44). This interpretation is not done through reflective and conscious thought alone, but is rather “part of the automatized interpretative practices that largely escape our awareness” (p. 44). In other words, we cannot help but to interpret, because everything we experience is given meaning and interpreted through largely pre-conscious interpretations:

We may think that we experience the here and now with immediacy, but in fact many factors, including our earlier experiences, expectations, and cultural world, affect how we orient ourselves to our present situation and interpret the new experiences we go through. (Meretoja, 2017, p. 47)

Conscious interpretation and reflection does not start from a point of a ‘blank slate’, but must always take place from a horizon of pre-reflective interpretation. Pre-interpretation



is something we cannot help but engage in because it is the affective and pre-cognitive 'world' through which we are able to think about, reflect on, and give meaning to stories and experiences.

Looking at the framework proposed above through this lens, our personal stock of stories are not only relevant to our conscious interpretation and telling of our stories. It is also the landscape for our pre-conscious interpretations. Following this, pervasive public stories that make their way into our personal stock of stories must be part of said landscape. While we can, as Jamieson says, draw on or distance ourselves from pervasive public stories when telling our own story, the cultural stock of public stories, therein particularly the pervasive stories, cannot be avoided as part of the pre-conscious horizon from which we interpret and give meaning to our own stories before we even tell them.

This does not mean that said interpretation is fixed and only allows for the reproduction of choices and interpretations. New impressions, experiences, and interactions add to the 'backdrop' in which our pre-conscious interpretation and meaning-creation happens:

While we encounter new situations from the horizon of our historically constituted pre-understanding, new experiences shed fresh light on our past experiences. They can challenge and transform our pre-understanding and our sense of who we are. Our life histories attune us to orient ourselves to the world in a certain mood, and our affective sensibility and understanding of the world are changed through the new experiences we go through. This circle of (re)orientation is a process of sense-making and world-making, engagement and becoming; it is not just a cognitive operation in which we try to construct mental representations of the world around us. Interpretation is never merely "reproductive," but always also a "productive activity". (Meretoja, 2017, p. 47)

---

As our personal stock of stories is added to by our own new experiences, personal stories we hear from others, and alternative public stories, our landscape for pre-interpretation changes and expands. Our conscious reflections of our experiences are not predetermined by a cemented horizon of pre-understanding but are instead always part of an ongoing process of a pre-conscious orientation and re-orientation to the world around us. The subjective and personal conscious interpretations and reflections that come with this then exist in social networks as they are told through stories, feeding into the cultural stock of stories both as individual personal stories and making their way into public stories as more people share the same interpretations and reflections. In this way, the personal and the cultural are always informing and shaping each other.

### 3.4 Shared sense of fatherhood

As I have touched on above, our horizon of pre-understanding is not only a precursor for cognitive reflection, but is also the pre-cognitive horizon of “our affective orientations and our sense of the possible” (Meretoja, 2017, p. 52). Given that this pre-cognitive horizon exists in and through social relationships, it follows that groups might relate to each other in shared pre-cognitive feelings and understandings of what is possible and/or preferable as their personal stocks of stories ebb and flow in interaction with others. Further, the mutable and dialogical nature of the pre-cognitive horizon also means that said shared feelings and understandings can be subject to change ‘from within’. In line with this, Danish gender scholar Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen (2017) explores how the both personal and social nature of *feelings of gender* play into the social transformation of gender between generations. She understands feelings as “a kind of personal and embodied *meaning* which lingers between the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious, and between inner and outer objects” (Nielsen, 2017, p. 23). Feelings are essential to how we both create and experience meaning both cognitively and pre-cognitively, and thus how we understand and enact our possibilities and desires in the world. Further, while feelings are always personal, they are also always social in being continuously shaped and reshaped in our relational experiences with others. They are therefore also connected to the social and historical context of the subject, and form certain social patterns throughout connected groups, such as

---

generation, gender, or class (p. 23). Nielsen is concerned with how feelings connect the subjective and the social in how societal change gradually takes place, specifically with how feelings of gender influence change in the gendered horizon of pre-interpretation and meaning-creation between generations.

Nielsen's theoretical framework proposes that "[n]ew life projects gradually [come] into being, not only as outcomes of externally imposed norms, but also as the work of subjective feelings of gender." (Nielsen, 2017, p. 2) Generational change in gendered practice and the emotional meaning attached to gender is influenced not only by outside forces but by gradual changes in the subjective, yet shared, feelings of gender across generations (and groups within the generations). Feelings of gender are part of the ways individuals see themselves as gendered, their life projects, their sense of agency, and their sense of self. They are both deeply personal and deeply social at the same time, and are often felt as a sense of shared understanding of personal experience within the same generation or social groups:

Individual experience is always unique, but shared or similar life conditions may produce social patterns in feelings across the individual singularity: we often understand the feelings of our contemporaries much better than the feelings of those who belong to our parents' or our children's generation, and we recognise more immediately the feelings of those who belong to our own social groups than of those who do not. (Nielsen, 2017, p. 2)

These social patterns in feelings are a big part the pre-reflective horizon from which the individual subject interprets and interacts with meaning, possibilities, choices, and life projects. Because feelings of gender are both personal and socially patterned as they are pre-consciously interpreted, they form "a shared feeling of 'the way things are', or a sense of life, in a given period of time" (Nielsen, 2017, p. 12). This can be conceptualized as the horizon from which individuals in that shared time and situation understand the gendered nature of their agency, form life projects, and create and interpret meaning. As this sense of life is built upon and changed through the new

---

experiences of said individuals, their “feelings, reflections and life choices lead to the gendered practice that [becomes] the point of departure for the next generation” (Nielsen, 2017, p. 11). Social change, specifically here regarding gender, can then happen gradually as the shared sense of life develops and changes within a generation, meaning that the next generation will experience and interpret their gendered sense of self, opportunities, feelings, and life projects from a different horizon of pre-understanding, or ‘feeling of the way things are’.

Building on this, my main interest here lies in this *shared sense of life* and its simultaneously subjective and social nature. As I understand it, a shared sense of life is not an articulated story that everyone in a group or generation can reflectively agree on, but rather a sort of shared and social horizon that people cannot avoid as part of their subjective horizon of pre-interpretation. It is a sense, or a pre-understanding, of your contemporaries’ shared orientation towards affective values and possibilities, and while it is not singlehandedly responsible for your personal horizon of pre-understanding, it is unavoidably part of it. It is the pre-cognitive social landscape in which you have no choice but to exist in as you reflectively make choices, review your possibilities, and create your life projects based on your own pre-cognitive horizon and your personal stock of stories. As so, it is part of your grounds for reflective interpretation and meaning-creation, both as you develop your own life projects and sense of self, and as you interpret your own experiences, the personal stories of others, and public stories. As more people in a group or a generation develop similar subjective life projects from a horizon of the shared sense of life, their personal stories will naturally also feed into the cultural stock of public stories about the personal. Pervasive public stories may then appear as expressions of a shared sense of life. However, because of the circular nature of the personal and the cultural stocks of stories, pervasive public stories that manifest as an unspoken (or spoken) ‘the way things are’ or sense of life in the cultural stock of stories are not static and unchanging but can be challenged and change as individuals and groups expand and transform their horizon of pre-interpretation. The subject is not ‘at the mercy’ of a culturally decided sense of life – the sense of life is developed in an interplay between the subjective and the social, and is thus changeable.

---

It is this change in the shared sense of life between my two generational groups I am interested in, or more specifically, changes and differences in their *shared sense of fatherhood*. Similarly to how Nielsen is “trying to understand how each generation strives to find ways to do gender that feel right in terms of their experiences, desires and circumstances” (Nielsen, 2017, p. 3), I am trying to understand how my interviewees strive to find ways to do fatherhood right within their social and historical contexts and to explore what their personal stories say about a shared sense of fatherhood. In order to do this, I need to look at how this sense of fatherhood appears in their personal stories.

### 3.5 Personal stories about public stories

In light of this, I suggest an additional concept that is particularly relevant to my analysis here – on the other side of public stories about the personal, there are *personal stories about public stories*. In their personal stories, people do not simply relay free-floating accounts of their own experiences – these will always be told in relation to a cultural and societal landscape, to the shared sense of life, as the teller interprets it, both through cognitive reflection and through a pre-cognitive sense of life. Personal stories about the public can be explicit interpretations and reflections of what the pervasive public stories are (this is what society is/was like, this is what I feel is expected of me by society, etc.), or can be seen in personal stories about personal life that are situated in interpretation(s) of pervasive public stories. As established, pervasive public stories are unavoidably part of people’s lives, whether they subscribe to them or not. On a surface level, people may intentionally present their reflective interpretation of the public story as something they agree with or distance themselves from. On the ‘deeper’ level, pervasive public stories are ‘taken to heart’ as they play into the pre-cognitive interpretations of the shared sense of life, part of the subjective horizon of pre-understanding. Individuals tell their own stories about what the public story about personal life is through their own personal stories. Their personal stories about the public are stories about their (conscious and pre-conscious) interpretations of the shared sense of life.

This is not to say that everyone can unproblematically relate to a shared sense of life within their own personal stories, even as the pervasive stories are taken to heart.

---

Because it is not the entirety of someone's subjective horizon of pre-interpretation, it may also be interacted with and felt differently by different people:

When many people in a generation share the same feelings towards something, they tend to react in much the same way to new societal opportunities, for instance, investing in the same kind of new family model. In this way the model gradually becomes a social norm, which may be experienced as hegemonic or even coercive for those who do not feel at home in it. (Nielsen, 2017, p. 13)

While a shared sense of fatherhood leads to social patterns in enacted fathering practices and feelings surrounding fatherhood, this does not mean that these are wholly and unproblematically compatible with someone's subjective sense of self. Rather, the shared sense of fatherhood appears as a feeling for what kind of fatherhood is the 'agreed upon' version of fatherhood in the given social context, and someone's subjective stories of fatherhood, both reflectively and pre-reflectively, must be placed in relation to it. The shared sense of life does not always appear as internally consistent, and may at times draw on pervasive stories that are seemingly in conflict with each other. Through looking at how fathers from two different generations place their personal stories about fatherhood into the context of their stories about the public – and how their stories about the public appear in their personal stories – I hope to say something about subtle but impactful normative changes in the shared sense of fatherhood between generations.

---

## 4. Chapter 4: Method

### 4.1 Qualitative interviews as method

Going into this project, my goal was to investigate how the ‘new fathers’ and the new ‘new fathers’ themselves interpret both their own fatherhood and their interpretation of societal changes that surround fatherhood in their lives. Deciding to do this through qualitative interviews was only natural – after all, “[i]f you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them?” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 1).

In choosing qualitative in-depth interviews as my method, I am looking to my interviewees as active agents in constructing their own narratives as they both make sense of and place themselves in relation to the world around them. In this sense, in-depth interviews emphasize “exploration of ideas *with* the individuals being studied” (Ragin & Amoroso, 2019, p. 111) (emphasis added). An important aspect to a qualitative approach to interviews is that, as opposed to survey-style quantitative interviews, it emphasizes the persons interviewed as active agents in producing the contents of the interviews with the researcher, rather than as the objects of study based on an already developed analytical framework:

Interviewing practice need not reduce participants to passive containers of information. Although dehumanizing practices persist, feminist investigators and qualitative researchers generally advocate less dominating and more relational modes of interviewing that reflect and respect participants' ways of organizing meaning [...]. (Riessman, 2012, p. 2)

In contrast to other methodical approaches, qualitative interviews open up for exploration of the ways in which the participants, or subjects, themselves understand and give meaning to their own experiences and lives:

---

The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations. (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 3)

The qualitative researcher understands the interviewees as persons with agency, who actively take part in creating meaning as the interviews unfold. At the same time, it acknowledges that ideologies, discourse, and power relations outside of the interviewees themselves play a part in said creation of meaning. In this way, we can think of the subjects as 'authored authors', according to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 3). They are 'writing' their stories in ways that are meaningful to them, but are also influenced in how this meaning becomes meaningful.

Further, the interviews conducted in this project were what Brinkmann and Kvale calls 'semistructured life world interviews': "interview[s] with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 6). The semi-structured approach allows for flexibility to follow and explore the interviewees' thoughts and stories as they naturally appear in the interview, while still allowing the interviewer to focus on the themes deemed important (Brinkmann, 2020). This made it ideal for a project such as this, where exploring the personal lived experiences and impressions of the participants whilst still keeping a basis for thematic comparison was important.

## 4.2 Narrative analysis

As described in Chapter 3, the analysis in this project springs from that of narrative inquiry, which "takes as its object of investigation the story itself" (Riessman, 2012, p. 368), the story in this context being the told narratives of the participants interviewed in the project. Narrative analysis is a useful approach in exploring how people construct and communicate their own personal stories, while also being influenced by 'outside' factors. Rather than taking the story told as a fixed source of information, narrative analysis allows us to ask why the story was told the way it was told. The focus is on how



the storytellers create and convey meaning through their stories while considering the context they're being told in, both situational, and cultural and historical (Riessman, 2012). This means that the focus is not on deciphering one, correct version of an event or situation from the stories of the interviewees, but that the narrative is itself the object of interest:

Ontologically, a given narrative is understood to present one version of reality among many other possibilities. Therefore, narrative underscores the fragmented, yet malleable and inherently social process of meaning making and reality construction, thus making narrative analysis an excellent choice for examining how people make sense of events and change. (McAllum, Fox, Simpson, & Unson, 2019, p. 365)

While not suitable for bigger studies with large numbers of participants and data, more structured interviews or questionnaires, or fewer possibilities for the researcher to interact with the individual case as a whole, narrative analysis is possible in a study of this size.

There are various different approaches to narrative analysis, but for the sake of this project, I will be approaching my interviews from an angle of thematic narrative analysis. Though thematic analysis is often defined as similar, but separate to narrative analysis (see for example McAllum et al., 2019), I'm working under Riessman's understanding of thematic analysis as one approach under the umbrella of narrative inquiry as analytic framework (Riessman, 2005, 2012). Thematic narrative analysis focuses on the contents of what is said, rather than the specific language used, unlike structural narrative analysis would:

Because interest lies in the content of speech, analysts interpret what is said by focusing on the meaning that any competent user of the language would find in a story. Language is viewed as a resource, not a topic of investigation. (Riessman, 2005, p. 3).

---

Thematic narrative approach will enable the analyst to investigate common, thematic patterns across several individual cases, while still seeing the individual case as a whole. In this way, a thematic narrative approach will allow me to examine how personal narratives and stories both tie into and are shaped by a larger cultural story. The way in which my individual interviewees construct personal narratives around their own fatherhood, their fathers' fatherhood, and how they experience the societal climate surrounding fatherhood through their stories can be seen in relation to each other, thereby forming a picture of a broader, common narrative. It also allows me to contextualize the life circumstances my two groups were interviewed in, while still allowing me to connect them. The two groups were interviewed about the same themes, using the same interview guide, at different times in life and at different points in fatherhood. It cannot be taken for granted that the contents of their stories without context can be a basis for comparison as is. A narrative analytic approach not only acknowledges, but embraces that all stories will be contextual reinterpretations of the contents of the story:

Narratives are useful in research precisely because storytellers interpret the past rather than reproduce it as it was. The “truths” of narrative accounts are not in their faithful representations of a past world, but in the shifting connections they forge among past, present, and future. (Riessman, 2005, p. 6)

By focusing on the narratives they construct, both of their own fatherhood and of normative change in fatherhood, it allows for reflection on social change in experienced fatherhood between the two generations without minimizing the different points in fatherhood the participant are telling their stories from.

### 4.3 The abductive approach

The project was developed through an abductive methodic approach. This means that, similarly to an inductive approach, the themes and perspectives that are object to theoretic analysis spring from the empirical data rather than the empirical data being

collected based on a more theory-driven starting point. Unlike an inductive approach, however, overarching theories and perspectives still play a part both in the development and during the process of the research project:

The analysis of the empirical fact(s) may very well be combined with, or preceded by, studies of previous theory in the literature, not as a mechanical application on single cases, but as a source of inspiration for the discovery of patterns that bring understanding. The research process, therefore, alternates between (previous) theory and empirical facts (or clues) whereby both are successively reinterpreted in the light of each other. (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2018, p. 5)

In the case of this particular project, previous theories and studies on the ‘new’ Norwegian fathers as contextualized in Chapter 2 were grounds for an assumption that certain themes perspectives would be present in the empirical data, specifically for the fathers of the 90s. While the main point of analysis was always to explore the participants’ perspectives and stories as they arose and became clear through the interviewing process, the themes for the interview guide were largely inspired by this assumption. Further, as the interviews progressed and possible thematic patterns in the different groups’ narratives became visible, the interview guide was adapted to ensure that the grounds for exploration of these also appeared in later interviews.

## 4.4 The participants

In the end, the study consists of 11 interviews: 6 fathers of children born in the 1990s and 5 fathers whose oldest child was under 6 years old at the time of the interviews. As touched on above, this project was developed with an understanding that I wanted to explore the difference in experiences of Norwegian fatherhood between two specific groups: the fathers belonging to the ‘father revolution’ of the 1990s (Lorentzen, 2012, p. 9) and their successors of the 2020s. In order to achieve this, I wanted to interview one group who had experienced fatherhood during the 90s, and one group who were

---

experiencing fatherhood today. Specifically, those with young children, which I defined as 6 years old or younger.

Further, I wanted to explore this in the specific groups that were typically associated with the societal model of the new father as understood in the public narrative. The idea of middle-class fatherhood being assumed to be the implicit norm of the new fathers has been problematized as overlooking ways other versions of fatherhood also break with traditional gendered parental roles and ways the middle-class might uphold others (Farstad, 2016). However, the fact that this group is assumed to be the implicit norm is what made them particularly relevant to my study here. As I've showed in Chapter 2, it has been argued that the middle-class was especially enthusiastic about adapting to this 'new' fatherhood for various reasons (Aarseth, 2011), and it could be said that it is this group that represented what we think of as the 'new fathers' described in research. In my recruitment, I accounted for this by adding the requirement of having an educational level of a completed MA or above. Using level of education as a measure of the participants' social class has been used in other studies on Norwegian fatherhood as well (Brandth & Kvande, 2014; Stefansen & Farstad, 2010).

Lastly, it was a requirement that the participants themselves were raised in Norway. A major theme in the interview guide revolved around the participant's own reflections of their fathers growing up, and so it was important for a comparative base that this was a stable variable. It was not a requirement for the participants' fathers to be born or raised in Norway, but this ended up being the case for all participants. My requirements for recruitment then ended up being that the participants needed to

1. Have children born in the 90s or children aged 6 or younger at the time of the interview
2. Have an educational level of a completed MA or above
3. Have been raised in Norway, at least for a significant majority of their childhood

When recruiting for interviews, I was interested in the stories and narratives based on when the interviewees had first become fathers, so I did not consider the interviewees'

---

own ages, but rather the ages of their children. This meant that the age of the interviewees varies greatly across the groups.

In the 90s group the interviewees ranged from 50 to 61 years old at the time of the interviews (born 1961-72), meaning the biggest age gap in this group was 11 years. This is not that strange considering the qualification for this group involved becoming fathers within a 10 year period, resulting in the oldest firstborns born in 1991 and the youngest firstborn born in 1998. Except for one, who had his first child at 19, the others all had their first child at age 30-35. All interviewees in this group were at one point married to their children's mother(s). Four were still with the mother, two were divorced. All participants in this group had two or three children.

The age span ended up varying more in the 20s group, despite the window for this group only being 6 years as having a child 6 years old or less was a requirement. The interviewees ranged from 27 to 42 years old (born 1980-1994), making the biggest age gap 14 years. The age of having their first child ranged from 25 to 38. The oldest firstborn was born in 2016, and the youngest in 2021. Even though most of this group first became fathers towards the end of the 2010s, I will call this group the 20s fathers throughout the project for readability. All interviewees in this group were currently in a relationship with the mother of their children; three of them married, and two of them cohabiting. Two participants in this group had only one child, and the rest had two.

The large age-spans in both groups meant that the oldest participant in the 20s group was closer in age to the youngest of the 90s group than to the youngest of his own group. Because I was interested in the social landscape around the time of fatherhood, rather than birth cohort, this did not prove to be a problem. In my analysis I did not find birth year to be a major factor of difference within the groups. Rather, it seemed that the age at the time of having their first child played a bigger part in this.

Apart from age, there was very little variation between the participants, both within their own groups and overall. All men in both groups had fathers who had also grown up in Norway, and most of their fathers had completed some form of higher education. While sexual orientation was not asked about, all participants had their

---

children in heterosexual relationships. The main variation was that the participants had grown up in different parts of Norway, though they were all based within the general Oslo area today. More diversity between the participants, such as differing parental immigration history or raising their children in a non-heterosexual family situation, would likely have brought other perspectives and reflections for analysis. While I think this could have added something to the project, I don't see the current sample as a disadvantage either. With samples this small, it would not be possible to generalize across a whole population either way. Rather, the project is a comparison between the participants of my two specific groups in an attempt to explore how they navigate, negotiate, and tell stories of fatherhood within the context they are or were fathers in compared to each other. In this respect, as many stable variables as possible could be argued to be beneficial to the comparison.

The original selection consisted of 6 interviews in each group, but one interview was cut during the analysis process. In hindsight, the first requirement should likely have been changed to being a *first-time* father in the 90s or of a child 6 or younger. As a result of not having made this decision before recruiting, one of my participants in the 20s group turned out to fulfill the requirements of my selection in that his youngest child was 6 years or below, but this turned out to be the youngest of older siblings well into their teens. This skewed the participant's perspective in that most of his stories of fatherhood were told from the perspective of his time as a father to his older children. This was a concern in my comparative base of the two groups; several of the 90s fathers had children born towards the end of the 90s, as well as younger children born in the early 2000s. In this sense, although he fulfilled the formal requirements of belonging to the second group, the one participant ended up almost as a part of his own group between the two others. The interview has still conducted and transcribed, but as I got further into analyzing the interviews it became clearer to me that the interview did not fit into the project by itself. I had initially hoped it could be used as a case to say something about the gradual development between the two groups, but the one interview by itself proved not to be very useful for this. I was also concerned with the participant's anonymity, as he would be very recognizable in terms of identifying details being easily connected with his interview excerpts given that the context of his situation would be important for the analysis. I ultimately decided to cut the interview.

This left me with 6 interviews in what I will call the 90s group (those with young children in the 1990s) and 5 interviews in what I will call the 20s group (those with young children today, the 2020s). Ideally, I'd have liked to have done another interview for the 20s group to replace the one taken out, both to make the groups even and to give a broader size to the group. With the timeframe of a master-thesis, the number of interviews in each group would already have to be smaller than I'd ideally have liked. While there is no specific answer to how many interviews a qualitative study should contain to provide properly saturated data, it must be considered that this project attempts to explore a thematic change in the narratives of the two groups based on the generation the participants were part of. Though goal was to explore the personal stories of my participants rather than generalize the experiences of the whole generations, I would still need enough interviews in each group to have a basis to compare the two groups in the project to each other. Unfortunately, the decision to cut the interview was made fairly late in the process, and time did not allow me to recruit for, conduct, transcribe, and analyze an additional interview. While I feel that my analysis could have benefited from an additional interview, I also believe that my current data is saturated enough for my purposes.

Recruitment happened via snowball sampling through private networks. In the 90s group, this resulted in 2 different strands, both of which started with a participant suggested to me by people around me in my personal life. This led to one of said participants putting me in contact with a second one, and the other put me in contact with three others, totaling 6 interviews. In the 20s group I was working with 5 strands. The first was a family friend, initially intended as a test interview that ended up being part of the study, as I'll come back to in the next section. The second strand came from one person sharing my information letter about the project (appendix 1) in her maternity group, leading to two participants contacting me after having heard about it from their partners who were part of the group. The last 3 all came from separate people around me putting me in contact with the participants. This totaled 6 interviews, one of which was not included for the reasons stated above.

---

## 4.5 Interview guide and treatment of data

In line with the abductive approach I was basing myself on, my interview guide needed to enable the interviews to explore certain themes decided on in advance while at the same time being open enough that new themes could arise from the interviews themselves. I had certain themes and patterns I assumed would be relevant based on the existing research and theories, and so I wanted the interview guide to encourage reflection around these themes. On the other side, I also wanted to maintain an open approach to being guided by the interviewees in what themes were relevant to explore in my analysis.

To accommodate this, my interview guide was based around 2 main ‘parts’ with one very open-ended main question each. The first part was based more on personal lived experience, and the opening question was “How do you (or did you when your children were young) see yourself as a father compared to how you experienced your dad as a father when you were young?”. The second part was based more around ideals, both personal and societal, and the opening question was “What should a father be?”. Both parts had other, underlying questions that as guidelines for me to ensure that the interviews explored the themes I anticipated being important for the analysis. These questions were also adjusted and updated throughout the interview process, as themes and patterns I saw as interesting arose as I conducted more interviews. A final version of the interview guide can be found as appendix 2.

Interviews were all recorded through an encrypted mobile app in accordance with University of Oslo’s guidelines and transcribed through the university’s software. Transcripts were anonymized throughout the transcribing process, and recordings were not saved anywhere outside the university’s secure software and a memory stick kept separate from any other material. The participants were also provided a more detailed information letter of providing both information about the project and their rights as participants ahead of the interviews to ensure informed consent (appendix 3), and signed and dated versions of this were also stored separately from any other material. One participant was given access to the excerpts from his interview and the description of his



---

group that would go into the final thesis upon his own request to ensure proper anonymization, and approved this without any further concerns.

## 4.6 The interviews

The interviews took place in varying locations depending on the convenience of the participant, relatively evenly distributed as taking place in the participant's home, at the participant's place of work, or at coffee shops in the participant's requested proximity. The interviews were between 45 minutes and 1,5 hours long.

Before starting the interview, I set the tone for an as explorative interview as possible by emphasizing that the questions were intended as guidelines for reflection, not as a straight question-answer format. I encouraged the participants to speak freely and follow the lines of thought as they felt like it. This ended up being helpful, as there were several occasions where the participants seemed to stop to consider if their current line of thought was relevant to the question, but continued with their stories and reflections "since you just want me to keep talking, right?". Many of these apparent digressions turned out to be very important, both in bringing up themes and patterns that I recognized through several early interviews and could thus adapt my interview guide to include, and in proving to be significant in the analysis process later on. In most cases these could also easily be tied into the themes of the other questions I wanted to touch upon, and so it did not prove a problem to guide the interviewee back to the main themes if I felt the digressions veered too far off to the side.

After finishing both main parts of the interview, I made sure to ask if the interviewee had any thoughts they wanted to pursue further, either building from something we had already touched on during the interview or something else they wanted to bring up considering the theme of fatherhood. On several occasions, this proved to bring up interesting themes and reflections that would otherwise have gone unexplored in the interview, and also helped develop the interview guide further for later interviews. Lastly, the interview guide contained a checklist of context information about the participant to be gone through after the interview had ended. I decided to do

this last, as I wanted the more open-ended questions to set the tone for the interviews, rather than starting on more fact-based questions such as number and age of children and relationship with the mother(s). These were usually incorporated into the stories and reflections throughout the interviews by the participants themselves as well, and by the time the interview was over I would most likely know the answers to my checklist already.

I initially did two test interviews, one in each generation, to test out my interview guide. These were originally not supposed to be part of the study. The plan was to give myself an opportunity to see how my questions would work out and to give me an idea of what I could anticipate thematically in future interviews. Both test interviews were successful, and I ended up including one of them as an interview in the project. The reason the other was not included was that while the participant economically belonged to the middle-class, he did not fulfill the requirement I had set to control for this, namely having an education level of a master's degree or higher. I decided against including this one to keep my set variables stable. I did include the other, as that participant did fulfill all requirements and I felt the interview was insightful for the analysis.

## 5. 90s fathers

### 5.1 A different generation

Yeah, I do feel that... I feel that I'm a pretty good father, pretty present. My father was a bit typical, like... Sort of very distant. [...] So it starts there, and not something like... I mean, it's actually, it's not very nice to say, but... I'll say this for the project [the thesis], but it was almost a life project in itself not to become like him. So being at home with the kids, that was an important part of it. [...] I often felt like a pioneer.

(Gabriel, 90s father)

The above is an excerpt from the interview with Gabriel, one of the fathers in the 90s group. In many ways, he is a very typical example of 90s group as a whole. Having become a father in his 30s, he has raised three children who are now adults, and he is very enthusiastic about having the chance to be part of a project all about the experience of fatherhood. The excerpt is the beginning of his answer to my very first question – how do you see yourself as a father compared to how you experienced your dad as a father when you were young? – and the tone for the overarching story of his fatherhood is set straight away: his father was old, he was new. His fatherhood project was that of not being the same kind of father as his dad.

As I've gone into in Chapter 2, there exists a very clear pervasive public story of the Norwegian 90s fathers. Present, gender equal, emotionally expressive – these were the new, care-oriented men ready to break away from the role of distant, authoritarian father to take their rightful place as caregivers within the family. Gabriel appears as an almost textbook example of the new father in this story. A lot of the wording in his descriptions is consistent with the language used by researchers, such as we see here with “life project” and “pioneer”, likely influenced by being in a field where he was

---

familiar with said research, and he reflects that he and his partner have probably been more actively aware of these things than most. His personal stories were characterized by a conscious effort to do things differently from his father and to be on truly equal terms with his partner as a caregiver. This was something he took great pride in. Pushing against societal expectations of the mother as the default caregiver has been an important personal project, and stories about such things as getting his local pharmacy to rename their ‘mother and child’ shelf to ‘child and parent’ were relayed as examples of how important this has been to him in his fatherhood.

Though not all the men appear as strongly invested in championing the ‘father revolution’ on a personal level as Gabriel, this acute awareness of their newness was present throughout the 90s group. Another father from the group, Arne, described his experience as less of that of the conscious ‘pioneer’, but refers to a societal shift surrounding the father role around the time he first became a parent as foundational to him and his fatherhood:

It's difficult to say what were conscious choices... But of course, there was a change in society when we became parents as well, right, there was more of an awareness around the father role, I would say, and discussions about it, even though it wasn't necessarily something I discussed with my wife a lot, but... [...] It was maybe, it was probably a conscious choice later on, being that I was in a freelance position, that I wasn't particularly interested in finding a regular job that could tie me to longer working hours, less flexibility, a longer commute, and so on. So that was a conscious choice.

(Arne, 90s father)

It was apparent to him that he and his generation were coming into fatherhood at a time when norms and expectations were changing, and there was a societal shift in how fathers related to their roles. While his decision to remain in a freelance position was rooted in a conscious effort to be present in his family, he at least in part credits this to a collective consciousness surrounding fatherhood. It was a conscious, personal decision, but it was also a decision that felt like the natural one in the societal landscape surrounding him:

I would say that when you start a family, it feels very, very natural to get involved in the family, and I would say that among my friends that I've had throughout that period, it's kind of common for everyone, even the fathers, to have been... What should I say, equally involved. [...] It feels very natural to care for your family when you've started a family and are living together, after all.

(Arne, 90s father)

This story of a collective turn towards involved fatherhood showed up throughout the interviews with the 90s fathers. The men would establish early on that they were part of a very different generation from their fathers, and so would naturally be very different in their approaches to fatherhood. There was also a shared expectation that this would be consistent across the group: “Well, I was considerably more present, as I’m sure you’ve heard from others too” (Kalle, 90s father). The extent to which the group saw themselves as consciously taking part in creating change varied, but they all related to their generation as different from the previous generation of fathers in a positive way, as Johan describes:

There was a much greater awareness surrounding the father role, and parent role in general, but especially the father role, between my father and me. My generation, even though I'm starting to get old now, we were much more conscious of being fathers than what I believe my father's generation was. They were fathers by virtue of being so, so to speak. Many of them were not interested at all. They probably barely knew their son's name, no, I shouldn't say that, that was mean [laughs]. But... They were busy with their own things, the car, hunting, friends, and work, of course.

Responsibilities in the household were much more divided in many ways.

(Johan, 90s father)

His impression was that fatherhood expectations changed significantly between the generations, and his father’s generation “were fathers by virtue of being so”, not

---

expected to be present or active caregivers to fulfill the role as the 90s fathers did. The change was a positive one, and it is clear that the picture painted of the old fathers is not very flattering.

As with previous studies of the 90s fathers (Brandth & Kvande, 2003; Holter & Aarseth, 1993), it seemed that a key aspect of belonging to the generation of the 'new fathers' was an opposition to the 'old' fathers. The participants in the 90s group all distanced themselves from the practices of their own fathers in some way, either describing their efforts very earnestly or laughing it off and saying "well, I should hope so" in response to being asked if they thought they were different in their ways of being fathers to that of their own fathers. At the same time, not many of them would describe their fathers as outright absent or portray them in a purely critical way. Stories of how their own fathers were ahead of their time in some way came up during most of the interviews. This was the case even for those who explicitly did not want to recreate their father's way of fatherhood. Even though it was clear throughout the interview that making a point of being a different father to his own is important, Gabriel still made room to point out the ways his father stood out from his own generation in going against more 'traditional' norms at the time. When talking about how he and his partner arrange and divide housework, he says

In that area, my father was actually quite the innovator, an officer in the military, but he was very active in the home. We lived in a military housing area [...] and it was so bad that one of the neighbors scolded him, because he was an officer, right? He had been seen outside in an apron, and an officer in the Norwegian military couldn't do that; it wasn't acceptable to be seen outside of one's private home wearing an apron. So he was also quite ahead of his time in that way.

(Gabriel, 90s father)

This was another theme that showed up throughout the stories of the 90s group. All participants in the group opened by making it clear that they and their fathers were different, but most of them were also keen to point out similarities, although these had to be viewed through 'what it was like at the time'. For example, Erik, whose father

---

worked in an optician firm when Erik was young, describes how much his father worked as a distinct difference between himself and his father. However, he also comments that his father was probably more inclined to put aside time for his son than other fathers around them did:

Until I was 10-12 years old, he worked a lot and all that. But I also think that it was quite common back then, so I didn't think much of it. And I actually think that, compared to many other fathers where we lived, he... He set aside one day a week to go fishing, and then I was supposed to go with him and all that, but... [laughs] Yeah. So he did enjoy doing things with me[.]

(Erik, 90s father)

While putting aside one day of the week seems very little from the perspective of his own fatherhood, Erik notes it as more than others at the time, and more than his father was probably expected to do.

In this way, the men in the 90s group described their fathers as both mixed in with, yet at the same time separated from, the story of the 'old-fashioned' generation they contrasted themselves against. The participants gave examples of how *their* fathers were present and prioritized family to an extent that appeared modern compared to their friends' fathers. At the same time, they still firmly represented a very different generation. It seems their stories were more about a *distance between the generations* than it was about a distance between the participants and their own fathers. The story about the contrast between their generation and their predecessors was the most important, and their fathers just so happened to be part of that predecessor generation: "That generation, and he too, probably felt a bit more distant" (Arne, 90s father). At the base of these stories was an understanding that their fathers were largely a product of their time.

---

## 5.2 Fathers as a product of their time

While the differences between the participants and their fathers were explained partly as personality-based, being part of a different generation meant that given the chance to develop and be a father at a different time, the 90s group's fathers might have looked different. As they themselves had experienced society shifting and turning since their time as the new fathers, they were reflectively aware of fatherhood and parenting practices as shaped by and interpreted through the social and cultural norms of their time. Looking back, this meant that their own fathers might have been very different in today's world:

It's incredibly strange how things change over time, both in terms of how you yourself develop, how your relationship with the other develops, and how norms and expectations change. [...] I think that if my father had been a father today, he would have been much more similar, he would have had a much more similar role to what I had. Not entirely the same, of course, because the dynamics between him and his wife are completely different from those between us [me and my wife]. But it would have been much more similar.

(Ole, 90s father)

While the 90s group clearly established their own values and practices through stories and examples that contrasted those of their own fathers, many reflected that their fathers were capable of change, and had changed as time went on. The parts of their fathers' fatherhood they felt the need to distance themselves from were not a matter of some essential character, but rather the kind of father he was in his time:

**I:** Do you think you're very different from your father as a father?

**E:** Well, I do hope so, in a way.

**I:** Yes, how so?

**E:** I at least hope that I am different from how he was *then*. Yes, because I suppose he has, he changed too, after all.



---

(Erik, 90s father)

In this way, the fathers could be both examples of their generation, someone the new fathers of the 90s group could contrast themselves with to establish themselves as different, and as exceptions to their generation, as someone who was ahead of their own time. Ole, whose father was a doctor, talks about how he experienced his father not as absent, but rather less involved in everyday family life because he prioritized work:

I mean, he was a doctor and used to be on call every third night and did have, in a way, all kinds of reasons to feel completely exhausted, but that was kind of what was expected of them, young doctors at that time. So I think a lot of it was connected to the fact that he was trapped in a career path that he couldn't control to any great extent. I'm just saying... He was part of it. He chose to be part of it. And he was ambitious and very, very dedicated to his job.

(Ole, 90s father)

While understanding it as partly a consequence of outside pressures and expectations of the time, Ole still remembers seeing his father as being very preoccupied with his job on a personal level that did not align with the priorities of Ole's generation. However, a later conversation with an old colleague of his father left a big impression on him, shedding new light on his father's priorities within the framework of his own generation. The colleague told Ole that his father could have gone even further in his career than he ended up doing, but that he had chosen to prioritize family over work in a way that his colleagues had not:

That was what was so incredibly special about talking to his friend, hearing that my father had actually been like, almost a homebody [laughs]. He [father's friend] had been at work like 24-7, and I thought my father had done that too and then suddenly you hear that he hadn't been, he had actually been someone who had actively chosen his family much more than his colleagues had, much more than was expected in the medical

---

field. So it was super strange, because that conversation really changed so much of my view of both him and them. To get that perspective from him [father's friend]. [...] [W]hen he told me, it was like, yeah, that was the way the doctor-role was back then, and he actually broke out of it.

(Ole, 90s father)

How much his father worked was a clear way Ole chose to differentiate himself from his father, but at the same time, his father was more 'modern' than his fellows in this exact area. In this way, personal stories from the participants' own experiences were used as examples of how the two generations were substantially different in their approach to being fathers, while simultaneously being stories about how society plays a part in shaping your fatherhood – both in terms of the options you have in your specific situation and in being the grounds for how you develop your personal preferences and values.

### 5.3 Then and now

From the perspective of their own fatherhood, the 90s fathers also saw clear societal developments between their time of being new fathers and today. A lot of what they saw was seen as a natural progression of the change they themselves were part of. Their generation had started a shift towards the father taking up the role of an active caregiver in the family, and this became more accepted and expected as time went on. Gabriel brought up several times throughout his interview a sense of loneliness during his time of parental leave as a father, a lack of the community that new mothers seemed to have:

I mean, I'm thinking that maybe for your generation, what was perhaps most different is that... Yeah, you had the beginnings of the internet eventually [in our time], but there weren't in any way the kind of social things, [at least] that I participated in. So you did wander around a lot on your own. [...] I remember going to the health center and asking the postpartum group if it was possible to join in. Then I was practically

---

scolded, because these mothers were there to talk about intimate issues and things that men couldn't participate in [laughs]. So it was a very strange experience. And I think we could have really needed it, because we were so few, and there weren't any Facebook groups or anything like that to connect through.

(Gabriel, 90s father)

The way he remembers it, there wasn't a big community for men insisting on their place in the family as caregivers on equal grounds as the mothers. That role still belonged to them, and seeing fathers out with children by themselves was less common. This is something he thinks is very different today, as he relays back to a story about two fathers with their daughters he witnessed on the tram earlier the same day:

I think I can see that men are kind of *with* their children in a different way now, that they go... I mean, there are, like the ones I described on the tram, there are those men who go and attend events for kids with fairly young children, and the guys, the guys go with their children, right. [...] These were two cool hipster guys around your age [late 20s] with these funny little girls around four years old, right, and they were enjoying themselves. And it was nice, because it felt like a generation of fathers getting involved had passed [from then to now], where... It can be part of like a buddy-guy thing, to do things with your daughters or with your kids. There was very little of that when I was a father. At best, it was families, you know. That the fathers came along as part of the family.

(Gabriel, 90s father)

His impression was that, where his experience of claiming an active caregiver role as a man was a somewhat lonely project, today's young fathers now do it together, as part of a "buddy-guy thing". Young fathers experience themselves as primary parents in their own right, not just as supplements to the mothers, and this was a direct progression of the project of him and his generation.

---

While Gabriel experienced his views and practices in his time as very aligned with what fatherhood looked like today, many of the others felt that involved fatherhood had progressed even past their projects as the new, gender-equal fathers of their time. They expressed that while they saw themselves as very progressive at the time, some of their views or ways of doing things back in the day would probably be considered outdated now. This was not so much to do with being present or not, but more to do with gendered division of responsibilities inside the home. For example, in response to what the thinks has changed about what a father should be from earlier to now, Arne brings up cooking as a means of comparing himself both to his own father and to the younger fathers of today:

Looking at the conventional things, how much one contributes in the kitchen, for example, that has changed, and... I'm not a great cook, and that does mean I contribute less in that particular area, so... Yeah. And that's been the case all along, but I contribute more than my father did, I believe so. [...] I think it's very nice to see that many of today's young fathers enjoy and contribute in the kitchen, I do. And I'm not saying I'm ashamed of it, but I'm a bit, well, I'm a little embarrassed [laughs]. There are two sides to it, but my wife has never expressed any enthusiasm for what I cook [laughs]. [...] Because of that, it was maybe just easier for her as well to take on that responsibility. But I can see that it seems very old-fashioned now.

(Arne, 90s father)

While he contributes more than his father did, the gendered norms and expectations have developed past his time as the new father, and his and his partner's distribution in the kitchen seems old-fashioned by today's standards. What he experienced as progressive and equal compared to before is now "a little embarrassing" when viewed through the lens of contemporary gender ideals.

This was present in other interviews with the 90s group as well, and many were conscious of how certain parts of their gendered practices or views might be considered

---

less progressive today. However, they largely saw this as a positive development. Kalle describes himself as personally having “somewhat traditional views” on what responsibilities the father's role entails. Though he sees himself as present and modern compared to his own father, he personally feels that there is a difference in the responsibilities a father and a mother should fulfill. He describes the father as someone who should represent safe boundaries around the family, be a role model, and be a certain source of strength and stability in the connection between the family and society. While he concurs that this is also the mother's role to a certain extent, he sees her role as more complementary to that of the father, being “more on the side of intimate care, comfort, nurture, and nourishment”. However, he does not describe a shift in these roles from a societal point of view as a negative development. On the contrary, he clearly expresses that even though he personally views the roles as different, the societal shifts in what gender means to these roles are a good thing:

**I:** Yes, because you feel that there is a difference between being a mother and being a father?

**K:** Yes, I really do. But that difference is smaller now than before, fortunately. There's much more overlap, and fathers have a larger role now, in part because of parental leave and such. They also benefit greatly from welfare programs and they're not as consumed by work. And they're more, um, I don't know, emotionally equipped and have more support in the culture to be present and play an active role for their children.

**I:** Do you feel like that is positive or negative, or not necessarily either?

**K:** No, I definitely feel that it's positive.

(Kalle, 90s father)

Even though he identifies himself as more traditional in his own views of the father role, this did not conflict with an understanding of a societal development away from his personal views as positive. Though the 90s group varied in how much they recognized themselves in the way the new father projects of their generation had continued past their generation, they were all clear on this: things had continued to develop past their own time as the new fathers, and this was an important and positive development.

## 5.4 Flexible roles

As seen in the above excerpt from Kalle, one of the identifiers of this development was that the difference between mother and father seemed smaller than before. Seeing a clear difference between the roles of father and mother was something that many of the participants in the group understood as old-fashioned to some extent, or at least not very modern by today's standards. However, a majority did see some differences between the two roles. Physical differences like pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding were understood as important to acknowledge across the group, though what the participants thought this inherently meant for the experience of motherhood and fatherhood varied. When asked if he thought there were differences between being a father and being a mother, Arne says:

Yes, I think so. At least the experience of it, I assume that being a mother is experienced even more strongly. Not because it has to be that way, but simply because... Giving birth, or pregnancy, and childbirth, and breastfeeding, it has to... Or, it doesn't have to, but I think that it does make the bonds perhaps even stronger and more cemented.

(Arne, 90s father)

Many of the others had similar answers. The general opinion seemed to be that the physical connection between mother and child could and often did make a difference, but that it didn't have to so long as it was consciously approached as something you wanted to change. The most vocal proponent that this was an important principle to pursue was Gabriel. He was adamant that given the opportunity to be parents and caregivers on equal ground, parenthood could and would be a more gender-neutral arena:

First of all, I think that to impose on men, or, that women cannot take over men's parental leave is crucial. [...] I don't have this idea that a father should do something differently from a mother; it's nothing, it's

---

completely the same. [...] I'm completely sure that to get the chance to be a parent in your own way, you need to get to be alone and try and fail a bit, and not have this overseer around you, and that's not possible as long as mom is at home. You kind of need to send mom away, and only then you can get that kind of freedom to find your way of being a parent. Call it being a father, but, yeah, to me it's more that my way of being a parent was different from my wife's.

(Gabriel, 90s father)

This was an important point throughout his personal stories of fatherhood. In his experience, it would be more accurate to speak of the role of parent, rather than the role of father and the role of mother. That didn't mean that the mother and the father should have to fulfill the exact same responsibilities and roles for the children, but that these should not be based on a perception of what a father's role and a mother's role contain. Anyone could fill the role of *parent*. However, both parents had to be on board for this to be possible. How much the mother would 'allow' seemed to matter greatly in how similar the roles of mother and father were, as Johan reflects when asked about the difference between being a mother and a father:

Yes, I think there is a pretty big difference. Or, I mean... No, let me rephrase that. I think it depends a lot on the mother and the situation. Our mom was 190% *mom*. She was so much mom that I didn't get to share the parental leave. Not even with the youngest [laughs]. [...] It was like, it was a lot. Maybe too much. But that's how it was.

(Johan, 90s father)

While he would have liked to take more of the shared parental leave, his partner was "so much mom" that that was out of the question. Fathers being able and willing to take on a more caregiving role was not the only factor in deciding how much the initial difference between father and mother mattered later on. The mother appeared to have the final say in how the caregiving roles were divided, precisely because of this initial difference. Ultimately, though Johan might have wanted to take on a bigger part of the

---

‘mom’ role, giving that up was up to his partner as the implicit primary caregiver, and “that’s how it was”.

This theme of mothers being the main drivers behind how the 90s fathers and their partners arranged parenthood was not limited to disagreements. Gabriel, who was the most vocal in the group when it came to degendered parenting as an ideal, also identified this as strongly incentivized by his partner. He describes how, while he was inexperienced and a little unsure about how to care for children when they had their first, his partner was very adamant that he take an active part from the very beginning. She pushed him to take on responsibilities of childcare early on, something Gabriel describes as “smart” on her part to ensure more equal caregiver roles between them later, both in his own and their children’s eyes:

After a while, it was probably just as much me that was at home, and me the kids would call, for example, if they got hurt or something like that. So that was a smart investment by my wife in a way, that she realized that it might be a good idea to ‘allow the father in’, you know, because I think... She was quite generous, because I notice that many women are, at least from an outside perspective, very ‘double’ in that way. [...] They say they want the father to be equally involved, but they might not be prepared to take that step fully, you know, with all that it entails. It entails letting go and giving up control, and giving up being the overseer... [...] You don't get a chance to do that until the mother is out of the house.

(Gabriel, 90s father)

While being an active and present caregiver on equal footing with the mother was a principle he believed in very strongly, he was also adamant that for this to be possible the mother had to be willing to give up the role of primary caregiver. The father should be just as much of a primary caregiver as the mother, and for that to happen the mother had let go of her position as the “overseer”.



---

As touched on earlier, Kalle's views of fatherhood and motherhood were, in many ways, very different from Gabriel's. Though he describes himself as a much more present caregiving figure than his father, he does not feel that the mother being the main caregiver is necessarily a negative thing:

My wife was a very good, or is a very good mother. [...] I haven't really wanted to interfere when things are going well, but I've spoken up when I felt it was important, of course, it's not that I've been self-effacing or anything, or that I've... left it to her, so to speak. But especially when they were younger, I thought it was a very... An important point that, it's one thing is that it's good that the man is present and involved and that, but he should also know when to stay out of the way, so to speak, or... [laughs]  
Avoid causing harm; that's a good principle.

(Kalle, 90s father)

He felt that being a present father and a gender-equal partner did not have to mean that the mother could not remain the primary caregiver, and in his case, this meant letting her take the lead on caregiving decisions. He trusted his partner's judgment as a primary caregiver and did not want to get in the way of what she thought was best, especially in the beginning. Like with Gabriel, his partner appears to have been a big influence in his reflections on the topic:

Of course, I mean, the mother is much more important in the initial phase. And I think that should be reflected in parental leave arrangements as well, I'm not a supporter, and neither is my wife, I'm probably influenced by her, but I'm not a supporter of being forced to share parental leave. I think the woman should be able to have the majority of the leave in the beginning.

(Kalle, 90s father)

Although Kalle and Gabriel were very different in how gender played into their fathering practices, one could argue they were more similar than they first appeared. They both referred to their partners, the mothers, to set the tone for what gendered

---

divisions their parenthood and caregiving roles should contain. This is not to say that their convictions and opinions were somehow not their own, but in both cases, the mother's opinion was given much weight in how these gender relations were developed. As Johan put it, the differences between mother and father in the 90s group seemed, in many cases, to depend on the mother.

However, the whole group was adamant that one of the very positive developments, both within their own generation and the next, was that there was more flexibility on a societal level for different people to fill those different roles. For those who did see the contents of the father and mother roles as significantly different, this did not mean that only a man could fill what they perceived as the father role or only a woman could fill the mother role:

I have no doubt that young children have a very nice and safe time close to their mother for a period after birth, and one can discuss whether it should be 3 weeks or 3 years, I mean... But, I still believe that. [...] A mother who cares and a mother who is present is worth a lot, I dare say. But then again, I think fathers can also become equally important, or even more important in that role. I don't think there's any reason to doubt that, but then the man has to take that responsibility. I think it's up to the man, and of course, he has to be 'allowed in' a bit. But there are many men who I might say fulfill that role just as well as the mother, these days.

(Johan, 90s father)

Johan is initially clear that based on his experience, the mother does generally hold a very important role in the beginning. However, he also thinks that if the father is willing to actively take on that role, and the mother is willing to let him, it's very possible for him to be just as relevant in the same way as a mother these days. The mother *role* did not necessarily equal mother, but seemed to have more to do with the traits and relation to the child that were associated with that role. The same was true for the father role. On the whole, the 90s group agreed that these roles had expanded in a positive way, and were more open and flexible today than before. Erik's reflection on

the difference between being a mother and being a father seems to sum up the general sentiment of the 90s group on this topic, either which side of the spectrum they fell on:

I think that the differences are much smaller than my parents thought they were. But at the same time, my experience is that there is still some difference in how we typically behave, at least. And the expectations placed on us, which are difficult to separate from each other, of course. But... I don't really know how important I consider it to be. [...] [My sister] always used to say that it doesn't matter so much what the family structures are as long as the children have someone around who loves them. [...] I think there's a lot of truth in it, that it's not so important who takes on the what role, or what those relations are, as long as the children live in an environment where they are loved and cared for. I think that's very true. And then it's not so important to define what a man's role is or should be and what someone else's role is or should be, I think. That there are different models and roles you can step into.

(Erik, 90s father)

Who filled what role was not seen as that important, as long as the children had someone in their lives who filled the needs that the role was there to provide.

## 6. 20s fathers

### 6.1 “Well, I think it’s pretty similar...”

No, well... I don't think we're all that different, really. Maybe it's mostly that, or, my father and my mother, they had... compared to me and my partner, there may have been a bit more of a difference in terms of... careers, maybe. So, my father, he worked a bit more and had to commute and such. [...] But other than that, I don't think there's much of a difference between us... maybe that I'm... No, not really, I can't actually see any significant differences between me and my father... No, I'm trying to think... No, not really.

(Tore, 20s father)

The above is an excerpt from the interview with Tore, one of the participants of the 20s group. He is the father of two young children, and has suggested we do the interview in his home while his youngest, whom he is currently at home on parental leave with, is down for his morning nap. Like the opening excerpt from Gabriel in the previous chapter, the above is his answer to the opening question of the interview – how do you see yourself as a father compared to how you experienced your dad as a father when you were young? Where Gabriel and the rest of the 90s group very quickly established themselves as different from their fathers, Tore appears to lean in the opposite direction. While their fathering practices were not exactly the same, this is not his main takeaway from how he sees his fatherhood in relation to that of his father – on some fundamental level, he and his father are more alike than they are different.

This feeling of some sort of underlying likeness between their and their fathers' fatherhood was strikingly consistent across the 20s group. Where the 90s group's stories were told within a larger story of difference, the 20s group all appeared to tell theirs from a point of similarity. It wasn't that differences didn't exist – in fact, many of the

---

same differences were brought up across both groups, such as Tore's example of working hours. However, where the 90s group focused on these differences between them and their fathers as a way to contrast themselves and the previous generation, the 20s group did not view them in the same way. Rather, while societal conditions for fatherhood might have meant that their father's practices might have looked different in some ways, the group strongly identified with their fathers' foundational projects: they saw their fathers as emotionally involved in the same way they strived to be themselves. When asked how he and his father might have experienced fatherhood differently, Petter, whose father worked a job that demanded a lot of his time when Petter was young, tells a story of how his father stood up to his boss in order to prioritize family:

I think my dad had more of a struggle with work, for example. There is still talk about my dad's boss back then, that he commented, clearly wasn't happy when my dad suddenly became less available, and he said to my mom that she was lucky to have a father [for her children] who helped at home and such. [...] I think he felt more like a trailblazer, in a way. [...] Other than that, emotionally and attachment-wise, I think he felt it pretty similarly. That it was more the society that was a bit different back then.

(Petter, 20s father)

The story of his father being at odds with his boss in choosing to split his priorities away from work in order to be more at home is a running one in the family still today, with his father prioritizing family over work being more progressive than what was to be expected at the time. While his father was not as physically present in the family as Petter, he understands this as more to do with the societal situation than his father's own wishes and priorities. Given the chance, Petter's father would have been more similar to Petter in his fatherhood, because somewhere deep down, removed from what society demands, they are more similar than they are different as fathers. It seemed to him that the basic, emotional aspirations of fatherhood were the same, and the main difference was the societal landscape at the time.

This idea that fatherhood somehow felt similar between the two generations was apparent throughout the group, even in the stories where differences were more

---

prominent, such as the case of Martin. The idea that all the responsibilities of raising children should be shared equally between partners is an important ideal throughout his interview, and he reflects that he might have seen his father as more similar to him in this respect than he actually was. Even so, he takes care to point out the way his father *felt* about fatherhood as part of this reflection, framing this as an important part of the comparison between them:

I guess I've always kind of thought that he was like me. But I've realized as an adult, and even more in more recent years, that he probably had... I mean, that he does have his, let's call them demons, not anything serious, but more things that maybe I don't feel as much. So I think... It's possible that I've idealized a bit how I saw him as a father. But maybe he wasn't as... What should I say? Maybe he left more to my mom than I had imagined. But I'm absolutely convinced that he enjoyed being a father, and I also see that now in how he is as a grandfather to my children. And that's when I see how I remember him as a father back then. [...] I'm convinced he got a lot of joy from us children, and he's been very vocal about that, saying explicitly that he was very happy to be a dad and to spend time with me and my sister.

(Martin, 20s father)

Though he had realized he and his father might not be as similar in certain areas of their fatherhood as he previously thought, this emotional involvement in fatherhood was still there as a crucial point of likeness.

This feeling of similarity rather than difference between the generations was then one of the most explicit things that separated the 90s group and the 20s group. Being an involved and child-oriented father was what made the 20s group the same as their fathers, not what made them different:

---

I think it's pretty similar at the core, because... I always remember him as very involved in my upbringing. So I guess that's... That part, I think, is very similar.

(Lars, 20s father)

Rather than being the pioneers and “trailblazers” of involved fatherhood themselves, they were forming their fatherhood from an understanding that their fathers already established this as the norm. In spite of the ways they were not the same, this perception of being similarly emotionally involved and interested in their family seemed more important to the men in the 20s group than differences in fathering practices.

## 6.2 Parenthood as a collective project

This is not to imply that the 20s group did not emphasize and recognize differences between themselves and their fathers at all. Kristian, though he does emphasize how he and his father are similar as described above, expresses that he and his partner are raising their children in ways that he and his father don't always agree is the best way:

The only thing is if my dad comes out with some half-thought-out remark on how he thinks I should do things. Then I can get a bit irritated. "You don't know what you're talking about. It's been almost 40 years since you changed a diaper, and [when we were kids] I don't think you were the one changing the most diapers, to put it that way. You don't have the same experience and background." And I say that with respect so I don't sound like a twat, because he's the one who raised me, I know that [laughs]. But I say it like, "I hear what you're saying, but we're doing it this way now." [...] And I also say that it's not just me who decides in this house. I mean, me and my partner have to be consistent together. Because I can't run a solo show. That doesn't work.

(Kristian, 20s father)

---

He comes back to this a few of times throughout his interview. While he draws on many similarities in how his father raised him and how he is raising his children, he also says that there are times when he feels he has to put his foot down and tell his parents “I know more about this than you [...] when it comes to my own children”. This is reasoned both as him personally disagreeing with his parents at times, but also to emphasize the importance of him and his partner figuring out how to parent together, rather than his father being the only influence on how he is a father:

[There are some things I do that] I think reflect some of what he has done. Based on the values and foundation [from my father] that I have cherry-picked, ‘I’ll take these parts with me’, and then of course, my partner should have a say in this too, right? She has her own background, her upbringing, and all of that, so it's like, we have to figure this out together, how it's going to work for us.

(Kristian, 20s father)

He emphasizes that raising their children is something he and his partner are doing together. He brings something from how he was raised, she brings something from how she was raised, and together they turn that into something that works for them. This sense of parenthood as a collective project, as something both parties take an equal interest and space in, was important for several of the 20s fathers. As mentioned above, this was an important ideal to Martin. However, he didn’t feel that this was always respected as it should be:

I can tell that there are certain attitudes that are still there in society, that sit in the walls of the school and kindergarten. That there are some questions that get directed at the mom rather than the dad. We're usually both present for all follow-ups and parent-teacher meetings and that kind of thing, and some of the staff in the kindergarten or elementary school, they tend to address mom. And I don't like that. If both mom and dad are there, we’re there as equal partners, and then I expect the staff to treat us as equals in raising the children, which I am just as invested in as mom.



---

(Martin, 20s father)

He is clear that he and his partner are equal as parents, and he finds it frustrating when society assumes his partner is the one to turn to in conversations about his children. His role as a caregiver to the children should count for just as much as that of his partner.

Petter expresses a similar position but is also worried about falling into this 'trap' himself. Early in the interview, he recalls how his father would often step down to his mother when they disagreed on things about the children:

I've seen a lot throughout my childhood how my mom had the final say in most things, kind of... It's always her word that counts. And then my dad yields. I don't think, I hope at least that I can... I don't know, be there on equal footing. That it's kind of, my mom had veto power over most things. So I hope I can [counteract that].

(Petter, 20s father)

He returns to this later, talking about how he's worried that if he isn't actively conscious about this, he might end up doing the same thing:

For me, it's completely natural to comfort and change diapers and be an equal in this infant care we've been through. Yeah. So that... I don't think that's a problem. I think I'll have more trouble with what I talked about not wanting to carry on from my father about giving mom the final word in everything. That... I think maybe it's ingrained in me that the mother is the primary caregiver, so... It has to be something extraordinary, I mean, if I'm going to cut through... That's going to be a problem. [...] Like if she gets to go on that trip with her friend or whatever else, and if mom then says yes or no, and I have a different opinion, I think it's going to be mom that... I have to work on myself to not just think that it's natural for mom to have the final word, at least. (Petter, 20s father)

---

Taking part in the practical care work of their daughter is not something he's worried about living up to, but sticking to his guns as an equal in caregiving decisions might be something he has to work actively at. Breaking with the idea of the mother as the primary caregiver in this capacity is "going to be a problem", but it's something he thinks is important to try to do.

This feeling that it was important for the father to claim his space as an equal caregiver to the mother was something Martin pointed out as well:

The mother kind of has the physical burden of being pregnant, and the physical burden of giving birth. And often, in addition to that, the... The first part of the parental leave, that first connection, that initial closest care when the father is back at work after a couple of weeks. I think that kind of basic physical difference means that being a mother and a father transpires very differently, maybe especially in the beginning. [...] You have that purely, like physical, literal connection to the child that the father doesn't have. That the father needs to make sure to establish, especially early on, if he wants that connection. [...] As for the time beyond that, right after the birth and that, then... Then there's also the aspect that it's kind of connected to the parental leave time, mom knows the routines, knows how everything should be. And... Again, the father needs to take an active role to kind of take ownership, of being a father. It can very easily end up like "No, you know what, this... You know how to do this, you do it best, you take it, I'll take those weeks [only the father quota], here you go", kind of. But if you have a more active attitude that 'this is just as much mine as yours', both the child [laughs], but also the responsibilities, I think that being a father and a mother becomes more and more alike. But in the beginning, there are significant differences, I think.

(Martin, 20s father)

---

Similarly to Petter, Martin is very aware that if you as a father do not actively take ownership over the role of caregiver on equal premises as the mother from early on, it's easy to slip into a dynamic that reproduces the idea of the mother as "knowing best" and referring back to her as the primary caregiver. The general feeling of the group seemed to be that it was important that parenthood was something you did together, as equals. Both parents had to be on the same page, and both parents should have a say in how their mutual parenthood was done:

One thing is to be a father, but just as much that we, as parents together, can then... You kind of can't really raise someone if you're not doing it together. At least if you live together and are together. That's what I think is important, that you have some kind of common platform, or a common approach to it. That's really the most important thing.

(Tore, 20s father)

Parenthood was generally seen as something you did as a unit, and both parties should have, and actively choose to take up, an equal claim to the caregiving role.

### 6.3 Personality, not gender

When asked about possible differences in being fathers or mothers, the 20s fathers tended to agree that while there were biological differences in the beginning, personality and practicality mattered more, or at least should matter more, after the children were past the breastfeeding stage. Several of the dads in the group tell stories of how demanding births and breastfeeding made it a necessity for the mother to be the primary caregiver for the first period of the children's lives, and then falling into a seemingly gender-neutral way of arranging things. A good example of the overarching theme here is Kristian's answer to whether or not he thinks there's a difference between being a mother and being a father:

Yes, I think so. We are biologically different, after all. But as caregivers, there's less of a difference, I think. I mean, from the moment you wake up

---

in the morning, or at least from when the kids wake up until when the kids go to bed, at least at this stage of life, all the same things need to happen. The kids need diapers changed, they need to be bathed, they need to be fed, they need to be dressed, that's not always easy [laughs]. They need to be brought to daycare, they need to be picked up from daycare, they need to be cuddled, and they need to be raised. There are a bunch of things that need to happen, and whether it's mom or dad doing it, at least in how we've chosen to try to be pretty consistent, you'll get the same answer from mom as you get from dad. So in that area I think it's quite similar.

(Kristian, 20s father)

He has no hesitation about the fact that biology creates a difference on some level, but this does not necessarily translate into any real difference as the kids get past a certain stage. The children need what the children need, and parenthood is about providing that care, regardless of which parent you are.

That is not to say that the group didn't think the parents could not cater to different needs. Rather, it seemed to be a point of pride to most of the informants that the division of responsibility within their parenting was based on what fit the individual personalities of both parents and what was practical for their family. Personal preferences largely took the place of gender in the stories of role arrangements:

I would say that there shouldn't be, I mean, I don't see any reason there should be any significant difference between mom and dad. I think it's more important that I focus on those things in my relationship with the children that I have knowledge of, joy in, an interest in, and a desire to include them in, rather than doing things that might be more typically 'dad things'. And that my wife does the same, that we divide responsibilities in that way rather than following a gender role pattern. So, there can certainly be differences between mom and dad, but I don't think gender roles themselves should dictate what those differences should be. I think it's more important to focus on the things that make the family work best and

---

ensure that the children are doing well, and that the parents are actually doing well too [laughs].

(Martin, 20s father)

The way Martin puts it, the key to how he and his partner parent their children is based on what fits their personal interests and competencies. There can be differences in what the father's role and the mother's role in a parenting unit entails, but this should be based on the individuals involved. The 'typical' division between 'mom responsibilities' and 'dad responsibilities' should not play into it. Rather, differences should make sense for that specific family.

This way of thinking was apparent in most of the interviews in this group. The interviewees agreed that individual differences were part of parenting responsibilities, but took care to make clear that these should not be based on gendered expectations, though they sometimes fit into them. When pointing out things that may fall more into more stereotypically gendered patterns, this was explained as having to do with the individuals, not with gender:

When we make decisions, we do it based on what is practical and not practical, and not anything to do with roles, or like gender roles. Or, we probably have some in our heads that we follow and aren't conscious of. [...] [But] I wouldn't be able to put words on what that would be [that is not the same]... It's kind of like, mom buys clothes. I have bought a lot of hardware, car seats, strollers, and such. [...] [But] I think that's interest-based.

(Petter, 20s father)

Although they acknowledged that certain gender-based patterns could be influenced by gender norms, these were still mostly understood and explained as individual personalities and interests.

---

## 6.4 Gender equality as an ideal outside the home

Where gendered patterns within the home were framed as more to do with personality than gender, the group seemed to see more traditionally gendered patterns outside the home as less reconcilable with the ideal of gender equality. As we saw with the 90s fathers, working hours were a big deal in the stories about the present father when talking about the previous generation. This was also brought up by all the interviewees in the 20s group as something that was different between themselves and their fathers; they spent less time at work, and more time at home than the previous generation.

Tore talks about how both he and his partner had intense careers that required putting in many hours before they had children, and how they both cut back to make the kids a priority after they became parents. He also talks about how he was ready to cut his hours even more if she had wanted to focus more on her career:

My partner, she used to work as a business lawyer in one of those law firms, where you can work like 100 hours a week, if you want. So I told her, if you want to do that, and have a career plan that involves becoming a partner and such, if you consciously want to do that, then I'm absolutely on board to adjust accordingly, you know. It would have meant that I had to take more responsibility at home. Now, she doesn't want that either, because she also really wants to see these guys [laughs]. But... If she was clear that that was something she wanted, to put in that effort, I was ready to adapt accordingly.

(Tore, 20s father)

Though he was ready to adapt to his partner prioritizing her career, it's clear throughout his interview that he would not have considered this priority for himself. This is not explicitly said to be less acceptable than the other way around, but there was a sense throughout the stories in the 20s group that conforming to more stereotypically gendered patterns outside the home was harder to negotiate as personality-based than seemingly gendered patterns within within the degendered parenting role.

---

Lars, the youngest father in the study, seemed to feel more pressure around performing both in his career and as a caregiver. He was still in the beginning of his career, and admits to having struggled with finding a balance between what he felt was expected of him as a father and a drive to do well in his work:

The capacity that's required [to do both], like, just being parents is exhausting. But then in addition to that you're supposed to be able to perform well in many other things, and I do wish I didn't have to do that. But that would be more that I could, that I didn't have to put in so much at work, that would have been nice. Spending time with the family is nicer than working, of course. At the same time, I also have a drive to do well in that area, so I do want to prioritize it, right.

(Lars, 20s father)

He is also the main provider while his partner is a student, and expresses throughout the interview a difficulty with feeling like his role is to provide, while at the same time living up to the ideal of being a gender-equal partner at home. He thinks figuring out how to be a father today is probably very different, and a lot less clear-cut, than it was a couple of generations ago:

It's a lot easier to say, "Okay, I'm a father, so my job is to go out and earn money, and that's what I'll do." That's a fairly simple state of being, while now there's an expectation that you need to contribute, you basically get that effect where everyone is running as fast as they can on all fronts. [...] As a father, you're kind of supposed to both provide and keep up with those expectations [of providing]. At the same time, you should be gentle and calm, and you should contribute and show that you are a partner who succeeds in gender equality in the home. Where earlier generations could maybe have a more specialized focus, you now have to be a good all-arounder, in that part of life. [...] And that's something that affects everyone [both mothers and fathers] because you have to have a nice job, be able to pick up your child from daycare at four o'clock, and... But the

---

sum of it doesn't really add up unless one of the parties takes on more than the other in one of the arenas. So I think that part is a bit more challenging today, that you can't just say, "I'm the one who does this part, so then you do everything else." Many people probably do it that way, but it's not an ok way to do it, seen from... from how I perceive society [laughs].

(Lars, 20s father)

It was clear that being the father who prioritizes being the provider over the caregiver was not something that he felt would be seen in a good light by the society around him. While he by necessity was the main provider, he also felt the pressure of showing that he was “a partner who succeeds in gender equality in the home”, and to take on an equal role as caregiver to his partner. Anything less was clearly not acceptable in the eyes of society.

While others in the group didn't seem to grapple with it in the same way, this societal ideal appeared across several of the group's interviews. There seemed to be a strong sense that the ideal of gender equality meant either achieving a baseline of 'sameness' or subverting the idea of the father as the main provider and the mother as the main caregiver by doing the opposite. This was not limited to the provider/caregiver roles either, but extended to general time-consuming identity projects outside of the home:

I mean, the societal ideal is kind of that they [father and mother] should have the same role. Part of the ideal [for dad] is also, I guess, to take on care of the children to give mom the opportunity to work and pursue her hobbies, and so on. Like, you know, the 53-year-old dad who trains endless amounts and hours for Birken<sup>6</sup> is kind of laughed at a little. The ideal, or at least what's closer to an ideal, is that he sets it up so that his wife can train for Birken.

(Petter, 20s father)

---

<sup>6</sup> Annual Norwegian skiing competition.



According to Petter, there seemed to be a basic expectation of both parents, regardless of gender, taking on equal roles in parenthood. Second to that, he describes an ideal specifically aimed at the father, being encouraged to take on more childcare duties and allowing mothers to pursue other activities beyond caregiving. This was not necessarily about swapping the provider/caregiver roles, but about personal projects that give fulfillment, be that career or hobbies. This seemed to be understood as the main contemporary societal ideal to the group, as the underlying norms that the participants were telling their personal stories against. However, the ideal seemed to coexist with another public story, namely that contemporary fatherhood was not a monolith and other forms of fatherhood could also meet the children's needs in an adequate way.

Where Lars felt that these ideals as promoting one specific way of 'correct' fatherhood that he struggled with not fitting in with, they did not seem to conflict with a principle that other ways of doing fatherhood should also be seen as acceptable and valid in the rest of the group. Those who did frame their fathering practices as in line with the larger ideal of sameness in the caregiver role were very vocal about not judging fathers who organized their fatherhood in other ways:

I've never really made my mind up of a specific idea, like, "this is how you should be." I don't feel like I look down on those who choose to prioritize their careers, for example, over... Or, not over, but who choose to have a job that requires working 100 hours a week.

(Tore, 20s father)

In general, the group didn't insist on their personal way of parenting as the only acceptable way of being a good father to your children. Similarly to the 90s group, the opinion was that as long as the child's need was properly met, it didn't matter that much who met those needs and in what ways in relation to the child specifically. However, not taking on the role as an equal primary caregiver did contradict the collectively strong ideal of gender equality between the parents:

So, for the child, I wonder if it's a bit like, if you look past the ideology or the importance of having a mother's role and a father's role and all that, that as long as they receive care and support from some kind of figure, whether it's mom and auntie or just mom, or... And then dad is the kind of figure who flies around from meeting to meeting. So it may not be that important for the child, but I think it is important in a relationship. And for the mother it is important that the father's role is expanded. So I guess the child's needs can be fulfilled in many ways, even with a father who is not so present.

(Petter, 20s father)

While the story of a generally flexible view of fatherhood was present, the group expressed a clear, shared ideal of the father as present, caring, and equal to the mother in his responsibilities of the caregiver role. To those who did not necessarily feel that they fit into that role, such as Lars, this story seemed to fall through. The stronger message was clear: Both parents should hold the same role in the upbringing of the child.

## 7. Discussion

### 7.1 A changing sense of fatherhood

As described in the two previous chapters, one of the clearest differences between the two groups was how they presented themselves as fathers in comparison to their own fathers. The 90s group built up their stories around the idea that they were distinctly different from their own fathers in both their fathering practices and in how they viewed fatherhood. This difference was treated as an established fact – there was a separation between them and their fathers. The 20s group, on the other hand, tended to focus more on similarities, setting the tone of the interviews by emphasizing this from the beginning. For a majority of the men differences were something they had to think about, appearing as not something they consciously considered to a great degree in daily life. In spite of the similar elements and themes in their personal stories, the two groups seemed to be placing these in very different stories about the generations. Both groups brought up differences between them and the previous generation in many of the same areas, such as working hours and gender roles within the home. However, the presentation of these differences was clearly different. It seems that with the 20s group, these are presented as differences *in spite* of the more important similarities between themselves and their fathers, whereas with the 90s group, they're presented as *examples of* the differences between their fathers' generation and their own.

For the 90s group, it's easy to recognize the public story of the 'new' fathers as described in Chapter 2 in their descriptions of themselves and their own fatherhood. Their personal stories were largely characterized by belonging to a different generation than that of their fathers. However, while there was definitely a level of criticism of their fathers, the 90s group would also fondly refer to the ways their own fathers were both present and modern compared to the rest of their generation. While the previous generation on whole was painted as old-fashioned and distant, most of the 90s group's descriptions of their own fathers held more nuance. They were certainly more critical of their own fathers than the 20s group, but the stories of their fathers as both criticized for

---

being old-fashioned and praised for being modern for their generation were told parallel to each other. For example, Ole tells the story of the realization that his doctor father did in fact prioritize his family more than Ole had assumed when he was younger after a conversation with his father's colleague later on. This was a side of his father he hadn't considered before, and his father comes out of the story appearing old-fashioned compared to Ole's own priorities and practices, yet modern and involved compared to others in his own time. Many of the stories the 90s group tell about their fathers as ahead of their generation are in some way similar.

It should be considered here that personal stories and perspectives are continually being interpreted and reinterpreted as your experience is added to. Ole's story is a very definite example of this, but this is also the case without your specific interpretation having to be explicitly challenged. It's very possible, and likely probable, that the 90s groups' perspectives and interpretations of their fathers might have changed over time, as Ole himself points out:

I would probably have answered quite differently ten years ago, to those questions, I would imagine. [...] It would probably have to do with my relationship with my father, as it is now. That I believe that... That some, well many things are reinterpreted when you are in the present time.

(Ole, 90s father)

Perspectives change over time, and it's not difficult to see how this would result in different answers in different times and societal conditions. This has indeed been the case in other generational studies where the same subjects have been interviewed about the same experiences at different points in life (Nielsen, 2017; Aarseth, 2011). While I cannot conclude whether or not the 90s group may have viewed the differences between them and their fathers more similarly to the 20s group when they were at the same point of fatherhood as the latter, that does not seem to be their perspective today.

As I stated in Chapter 5, the bigger story about the differences between the 90s group and their fathers' generation seemed more important to the bigger picture than the personal differences between themselves and their fathers. This also showed in how the

participants reflected on how their fathers, who were very different to them at the time they were fathers in, might have been more similar as fathers if they were part of a different generation. The 90s group still held fast to the identity of being the new fathers with all that entailed, but this appeared to be more of a societal perspective than a personal one. This goes hand in hand with their reflections that their fathers might have been different had they been fathers in a different time. Rather than being different in some essential, personal way, their differences were seen as more to do with the culture of fatherhood being different between the generations.

Following this progression, I feel confident in claiming that, though my two groups were interviewed in different contexts and times of life, there was a clear difference in how the 90s group and the 20s group saw their fatherhood compared to that of their own fathers. Where the new fathers of the 90s, both as seen in my participants and in previous literature, were focused on the differences between them and the previous generation, the participants in the 20s group were more focused on the similarities between them and their fathers. Like the 90s group, the 20s group's stories of their fathers also depicted differences based on societal factors, such as Petter's story of how his father's boss was not on board with his prioritizing his family and children in the ways he did. Petter then also identifies the differences between them (him and his father) as having not to do with his father, but with what society allowed for at the time. However, this is not to be confused with the 90s fathers' reflections that their fathers might have been different in a different time. Petter's impression was that how fatherhood *felt* and was experienced was the same on some foundational level, despite differences in society surrounding it. There is a clear impression that he and his father experienced the same *feelings of fatherhood*, even though they were fathers in different societal conditions.

This might be an important foundation to how the majority of 20s fathers consistently opened their stories of comparison with some iteration of "I think it's pretty much the same". When describing differences, a lot of the time this goes back to their fathers' work and how they might not have been as physically present by some necessity coming from outside the family, not because they didn't *want* to be there in the same capacity the 20s fathers want to be. Their fathers are described as just as emotionally

---

present, even when pointing out that they couldn't be as much at home physically. Several of the fathers in the 20s group bring up their fathers working longer hours or having a longer commute to and from work, but this is again presented as a difference in spite of similarities.

In general, the 20s group didn't seem to focus as much on differences between them and their fathers. This took form in the more obvious ways, like focusing more on similarities when asked directly, but also in their interviews being characterized more by their own ambitions of parenting, gender arraignments with their partners, and so on. Although they do bring up generational differences at times, this does not seem to be given the same weight as in the 90s group. Where the 90s group would often compare themselves to their fathers as a mean of comparing generations, the 20s groups seemed more interested in what they themselves were experiencing and choosing to do by themselves.

It's possible that this had something to do with the different stages of fatherhood the two groups were interviewed in. The participants of the 20s group were at the time of the interviews very much in the middle of toddler parenthood, none of them having children older than 6 years old and all of them having at least one child of 3 years old or younger. They were very aware that they were still in the 'figuring it out'-part of fatherhood, and often pointed out that these were all predictions for what might or might not happen when asked to compare themselves to their fathers. Those in the 90s group were in a different situation. Some of them still had children in their late teens at home, but all of them had been fathers for a minimum of 24 years. When reflecting on their fatherhood, they were looking backward rather than looking at right now or making predictions. They were more reflectively interested in how fatherhood changes over time, being in a position to compare their own experience and priorities to both their own fathers and the fathers of the next generation. It would make sense that the 20s group, who were still 'in the middle of it', would be more focused on the here and now, while the 90s group, who had mostly been through fatherhood already, would have had a tendency to reflect more broadly.

---

Still, based on the participant's own stories, coupled with the picture painted by previous research on the 'new' 90s father (Brandth & Kvande, 2003; Holter & Aarseth, 1993; Aarseth, 2011), it seems likely that the men in the 90s group were more preoccupied with being the new fathers at the time of having small children in a way that was not reflected in the interviews of the 20s group. In some cases it seems that the two groups had opposite realizations about their fathers as they grew up, for example in the cases of doctor's son Ole (90s father) and museum manager's son Martin (20s father). As we saw earlier, Ole tells the story of how he realized in adulthood that his father actually did prioritize being with his family more than Ole was under the impression of as a child and teenager. Martin had the opposite experience, relaying that he realized in later years that his father might have left more of the responsibilities within the family to his mother than he might have thought earlier.

It seems, then, that this is not a difference that can be explained by having different perspectives at different times in life alone, but rather by working from different interpretations of 'the way things are' rooted in different senses of fatherhood. The 90s fathers focus on themselves as having a view of fatherhood that breaks with the cultural understanding of fatherhood before their generation. Their need to differentiate themselves from the previous generation of fathers in their ways of fathering is clear; *they* were absent, not involved, "fathers by virtue of being so" (Johan, 90s father), *we* were present, caregiving, actively choosing to take part in fatherhood. Both their understanding of fatherhood as a generation and their personal fathering practices appear as a shared, conscious effort to break with the traditions their fathers were part of. The 20s fathers don't appear to have the same need to break with an 'old' way of fathering, because they interpret fatherhood as looking relatively the same for them and their fathers. Although fathering practices may have changed and individual differences are present, the experience and contents of *fatherhood* seemed the same. When talking about changes in fatherhood, this was not specifically tied to a shift between one generation and the next, but rather an abstract shift that had happened at some unspecified point in the not too far past. In this way, the two groups seem to be interpreting fatherhood and doing fathering from different horizons, or from different senses of fatherhood. As the 90s fathers formed their fatherhood in opposition to their interpretation of the shared sense of fatherhood they felt belonged to their fathers, this

---

appears to have given the next generation of fathers a new “point of departure” (Nielsen, 2017, p. 11) for *their* sense of fatherhood. In this way, it appears that the image of the new father is not so new anymore, but has rather become a pervasive story of fatherhood firmly established within the 20s groups’ shared sense of fatherhood and pre-reflective horizon of interpretation.

While the 20s fathers did not seem to consciously reflect much on how fatherhood might have changed between their fathers’ generation and themselves, the 90s fathers were clear that they saw further changes in the culture of fatherhood continuing into the next generation. While they had been the pioneers of the past, breaking with and challenging traditional expectations of fatherhood, they also saw their fatherhood project continue to develop past their own time. As Gabriel expressed it in his story of the young fathers on the tram, casually practicing fatherhood in a way he experienced himself as one of the first in: “And it was nice, because it felt like a generation of fathers getting involved had passed”. He sees a shift in the norms surrounding fatherhood that were not a given in his time, describing a new generation of fathers who are thriving in doing what he was working for as the lonely father striving take up his space in a world of caregivers that was mostly meant for mothers. The project of the new fathers has continued past the pioneers of the 90s group and is now the starting point for a shared sense of fatherhood with broader possibilities and new expectations for the new generation, to the point where some of the 90s fathers feel a little bit ‘old-fashioned’ themselves by today’s standards.

## 7.2 Parenthood versus fatherhood and motherhood

One thing that appears to have changed between the two groups is the degree to which taking on the role as a primary caregiver rather than being a supporting caregiver was felt as an option or an expectation. It’s clear that both groups felt a certain expectation of the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ ways of arranging responsibilities within the family. A majority of the 20s fathers mainly told stories about themselves and their partners presenting a united front, stories where they arrive at values and practice together, not with one side being more influenced by the other and vice versa. It was a goal in itself to



---

truly be a primary caregiver on the same level as the mother, both in being recognized as such by the outside world and in insisting upon it within their own family. They were very aware of how easy it could be to slip into a dynamic of ‘mother knows best’ and thus become secondary. This was important to avoid. The father not only could, but *should* take steps to ensure that physical differences that might make a difference in the beginning did not influence the roles as caregivers past a certain point. Parenthood was something that should be developed together, with both parties referring to each other and having the same say in important (and less important) decisions. Active fatherhood was not just taking part in the practical aspects of care, it was also about insisting on your role as an equal caregiver with all that entailed; “this is just as much mine as yours” (Martin, 20s father).

Interestingly, this insistence on opposing identified gender norms seemed to exist simultaneously with narratives where gendered patterns in everyday family life were played down. Rather than focusing on gendered patterns in the mother/father roles, the 20s group’s arrangements were explained as to do with personality and practicality. They did not shy away from acknowledging differences in the roles and responsibilities of the two parents, but they opposed the idea that gender should determine these differences: “there can be differences between mom and dad, but I don’t think the gender roles in themselves should dictate what that difference should be ” (Martin, 20s father).

This sense of degendering was present even in talking about actively opposing gendered preconceptions, such as the mother as primary caregiver. As we saw with Petter, he found it necessary to take an active stance against his own pre-reflective perception of the mother as primary caregiver, and the possible instinctive response of giving in to disagreements on caregiving decisions in the future. He identifies this as a norm he doesn’t think is fair, and as something he doesn’t want to reinforce to himself or his family. Yet, while he recognizes that this is a gendered pattern, he explains this too as partially to do with personality when asked *why* he thinks he might default to let his partner “have the last word” in the future:

---

It *could* be the personalities of me and my wife. That she is a very strong-willed person. A kind of opinion machine who has an opinion about everything, while I just shrug my shoulders and think that there are surely many things that can be good.

(Petter, 20s father)

It seemed that personal family practices were told about through a degendered lens, while still being connected to gendered patterns when applied to societal structures outside the individual family. In general, the 20s group's individual family lives were treated as less to do with gender, and more to do with personality and practicality. Although they were very conscious of gendered patterns when it came to parenthood 'out there' in society, seemingly gendered differences in their own individual parenting practices were explained as 'just making sense' for their family, and not to do with gender roles.

While the 90s group also saw parenthood as a collaborative project, many of the fathers' personal stories involved being influenced by their partner having a very strong opinion on how to divide responsibilities. The degree to which their personal stories of parenting aligned with or opposed what they saw as more 'old-fashioned' views of fatherhood by today's standards varied, but what they had in common was a referral to the mother as setting the standard for gendered expectations in their personal fathering practices.

Gabriel and Kalle, who were very different in their approaches to what role gender played in their personal parenting, both told stories of being influenced by their partners in this area. Gabriel, who's views of fatherhood was similar to the 20s group's degendered approach, felt very strongly that the mother being able to 'let go of her role as overseer' was important for this to be able to happen. His partner had actively pushed him to take on an equally caregiving role to her from the very beginning, and he points to this as vital in the development of their personal parenting practices. Kalle, who self-proclaimed his attitudes as more traditional, had much faith in his partner as a good mother, and while he saw himself as an active and present father he did not want to 'get in the way' of her parenting unless it was about something very important. In general,

---

the mothers appeared to be the culturally implicit primary caregivers, and it was up to the individual family to form their own parenting practices thereafter. In their generation, the gendered arrangements within the family appeared to “depend a lot on the mother and the situation” (Johan, 90s father).

This is not to say that the 90s fathers weren’t passionate about the fact that the father *could* be just as important of a caregiver as the mother. On the contrary, they all took care to point this out, making it clear that their way of fathering was not the only way of fathering no matter where they fell on the spectrum. Openness to alternative ways of doing fathering (or parenting in general) was an important value for both groups. They all took care to express that they believed that single parent or non-heterosexual families, as well as endless other constellations of families, did not become less appropriate or lacking in something for the children involved simply because they didn’t have a mother in the role of mother or a father in the role of father. The difference seemed more that the 20s group were preoccupied with *parenthood* rather than motherhood or fatherhood, and would remove gender as an influence in favor of emphasizing individual personality and preferences when talking about the differences within said parenthood. With the notable exception of Gabriel, who very explicitly expressed a degendered approach to parenthood, the 90s group clearly saw fatherhood and motherhood as gendered categories with different responsibilities. However, while most of the 90s fathers did see a difference in the *role* of mother and father, they were adamant that this did not necessarily mean that the role of ‘father’ could only be filled by a father and the role of ‘mother’ could only be filled by a mother. At first glance, this may seem similar to the 20s fathers’ degendering of parenthood, but the 90s group’s descriptions of fatherhood and motherhood were distinctly gendered in a way that did not align with the 20s group’s shared narrative.

The 90s group’s views on fatherhood and motherhood were not replaced by an ideal of degendered parenthood, but the practices connected to these need not be done by the ‘correct’ individual. The 90s fathers describe this as a positive development, both between their fathers’ generation and their own, and as continuing between their generation and the next. Both ‘father’ and ‘fatherhood’ still existed as something distinct from ‘mother’ and ‘motherhood’, but who could fulfill the needs they

---

represented was more flexible when it came to gender. You might say that you don't have to be a father to *do fathering*, and you don't have to be a mother to *do mothering*. The change they describe is not one where gender is removed, but rather an openness to the idea that fathering and mothering can be done by a variety of people. The most important thing was that someone was doing the fathering and mothering, thus making sure both were covered in relation to the children: "it's not so important who takes on the what role, or what those relations are, as long as the children live in an environment where they are loved and cared for." (Erik, 90s father).

Again, it's important to keep in mind that the two groups were telling their stories from different points of fatherhood. The 20s group was speaking from a point of early fatherhood, and appeared in many ways as relaying personal ideals they found desirable to shape their fatherhood around. The 90s group was looking back on their experiences, describing their ways of doing fatherhood from the perspective of retrospection. It is impossible to know how the 90s fathers would have responded back then, or how the 20s fathers will reflect on their experiences in thirty years. What we can do is attempt to say something about how the implicit feelings of gender, or feelings of fatherhood, may have looked different in the shared sense of fatherhood in which the two groups shape (or have shaped) their individual fathering practices. It seems that the 90s fathers were becoming fathers in a shared sense of fatherhood where the mother was seen as the primary caregiver, making it important to establish that the father *could* be a caregiver on the same level. This appears then to already have been firmly established within the 20s group's shared sense of fatherhood, making it more their project to claim that the father *should* be the caregiving equal of the mother.

### 7.3 Sameness as the dominant form of fatherhood

Though the 20s group was characterized by a degendered view of personal parenting practices, their stories of gender dynamics outside the home held very clear gender equality-based ideals. In fact, playing into your own personal interests and abilities within the family was largely equated with being conscious of gender equality, as long as effort put into chores and care-work felt fairly and equally divided:

I am very concerned with gender equality, and... In every way, it means that there should be, in a way, a... In family life, at least, there should be... We contribute according to our abilities and receive according to our needs. It's not like I do more of the traditional "housewife tasks" in big quotation marks, but if... I cook, she takes care of all the clothes, for example. So we have a pretty active attitude towards gender equality.

(Martin, 20s father)

The degendered parenting practices of the 20s fathers were largely constructed as a symbol of egalitarianism within their parenthood. Their parenting practices were equal in their degenderedness because they were caregivers on the same level. An important part of this seemed to be an awareness of not confirming to 'traditional' gender roles that did not align with the dual earner/dual carer-model. If anything should not be the same, it should be that the traditional gender norms should be flipped on their head. The idea that personality and practicality trumped gender seemed less in line with dominant fatherhood ideals if you felt that you fell outside of the ideal, such as with Lars. His impression seemed more that there was a very strict trajectory to follow when it came to doing fatherhood 'correctly' in the eyes of society. Arranging caregiving in a more traditionally gendered way was "not an ok way to do things [...] the way I understand society".

At the same time, the 20s group also referred back to the 90s fathers' narratives of a more flexible father role. As mentioned, a defining change the 90s group pointed to was not necessarily a replacement of one dominant fatherhood ideal with another, but rather an expansion of accepted ways of doing fathering. This was mirrored when the 20s group were asked what they thought a father should be – they identified societal ideals to do with gender equality, but made sure to point out that they themselves were open to there being many ways of fathering that could be equally good [legg inn i kap 5].

---

In this way, there seemed to be two pervasive stories about dominant fatherhood within the shared sense of fatherhood of the 20s group. On the one hand, there was a clear ideal of a gender-neutral father who shared equal responsibilities with the mother within the household or even took on more traditionally maternal responsibilities, challenging gender norms. On the other, there was the narrative that many different forms of fatherhood should be valid and accepted, including those that confirmed to more traditional models, such as the father being the main breadwinner and thus less involved as a caregiver in daily life. It seemed that as long as the fathers felt they were living up to the ideal of the gender-equal partner and caregiver, uniting these two pervasive stories were not a problem. Negotiating between the two proved harder when you felt you were not living up to the what you perceived as the accepted ‘right’ way to do things, while still keeping to a narrative that it is up to each person and family to figure out what parenting practices were right for you.

One of places this became visible was in the case of Lars. Lars was younger than the others in the 20s group, and was beginning his professional life at the same time as being the father of a toddler. Where the older fathers in the 20s group described becoming fathers as hard, but something they were ready and “very motivated” for, Lars described struggling to figure out how to balance his own drive to do well in his career with being “a partner who succeeds in gender equality in the home”. While he on one hand alludes to the fact that dividing care responsibilities in a more traditionally gendered way is not felt as accepted by society, he also places the responsibility of finding himself in the position of being expected to be an “all-rounder” on himself:

L: Det jeg har slitt veldig mye med er at det er jo jeg som har valgt å ha det sånn. Men du kommer til et punkt hvor du ikke kan snu, da. Du må alltid klare det, ellers så går ikke ting rundt, og det skulle jeg ønske jeg slapp. Selvfølgelig.

I: Men føler du at du lever opp til de her forventingene [av å være en all-rounder]?

L: Ja, alt er jo satt av meg selv, da.

**L:** What I've really struggled with a lot is that it's me who's chosen to have it this way. But you get to a point where you can't turn back. You always have to be able to manage it, otherwise things won't work out, and I wish I didn't have to do that. Of course.

**I:** But do you feel like you live up to these expectations [of being an all-arounder]?

**L:** I mean, they're all set by myself, I guess.

Feeling as if he's not living up to the ideal of the gender-equal partner then becomes his own fault, because of the pervasive story that it is accepted that everyone should be able to form their own fatherhood or parenthood in the ways that suit the individual family even though this seems to be in conflict with the expectations of resisting traditional gender roles.

Erik, the youngest of the 90s fathers, remembered similarly struggling with finding a balance between being a caregiver and being his own person. He also reflects that while there is supposedly more room for different ways of fatherhood today, he wonders if being a younger father might be harder now than before because there are fewer who have children earlier in life:

Even though we're now talking a lot about this flexibility, and that you can define your own roles and identities and so on, there may not be as many people who know parents that are 25 years old or younger, as there were back then. And if you feel that you're very different or on the outside, you still feel it just as strongly even if people say it shouldn't be that way in principle.

(Erik, 90s father)

Erik's reflection seem to describe Lars' frustrations very well. He's having to navigate two pervasive public stories at the same time: one that allows him and his family to organize family life in whatever way suits them, and one that is clear in which of those

ways is the correct one. The pervasive public story that fatherhood is more open and flexible now than before seems to co-exist with very strong norms regarding what type of father is accepted – you should be able to be any father you want to be, but you should also be the kind of father who opposes the old male-breadwinner model of fatherhood. In this way, the two pervasive public stories seem to be at odds with each other. However, this does not appear as a contradiction until you find yourself in a position where you do not fit in with the dominant ideal, or metanarrative, of the new father.

We can then recognize the metanarrative of the new father as perhaps even stronger in the 20s groups' shared sense of fatherhood, though they in many ways appear less preoccupied with establishing themselves as such than the 90s group. In many ways, the 20s group appears less concerned with gender than the 90s group did. The ideal parenthood seems one where the mother and father can be constructed as degendered parents that play to their personal interests and strengths, while still keeping up the ideal of the new father precisely because gender shouldn't matter.



## 8. Chapter 8: Conclusion

### 8.1 Summary of the study

Going in to this thesis, I wanted to investigate the differences between fatherhood as experienced and given meaning between the original ‘new fathers’ of the 1990s and their contemporary successors. Specifically, I was interested in how these differences looked in the context of a shared sense of fatherhood – a both subjective and social pre-conscious understanding of the social landscape of contemporary fatherhood. In order to explore the developments in this shared sense of fatherhood, I asked the following questions:

- How does the new father model appear within the shared sense of fatherhood between the two groups?
- How do the fatherhood projects of the two generations compare to each other?
- What has the ‘father revolution’ of the 1990s fathers done to the shared sense of contemporary fatherhood the new generation is starting from?

I approached these questions through personal stories about fatherhood as they appeared in my semi-structured interviews with fathers who can be said to represent the figure of the new father as constructed through pervasive public stories of new fatherhood. As I have stated throughout this thesis, the new father is much more than just a description of the fathers who entered the family as caregivers in response to changing gender relations. He is the representation of a normative shift in contemporary fatherhood, a story of a new way of doing fatherhood (Brandth & Kvande, 2003). The men in my 90s group can be said to be particularly emblematic of this story. Though only a small selection, they are recognizable from the story we already know about the new fathers – involved and child-oriented, claiming their roles as caregivers with pride in a rebellion against the old, absent father figure. They vocally distanced themselves from the generation of their fathers, proclaiming themselves ‘new’ in the ways they related to their children and prioritized family. While there was variety in their personal

---

stories of fatherhood, they all related back to and identified themselves as part of the ‘father revolution’ as referred to by Lorentzen (2012, p. 9). The men in the 20s group can be understood as the 90s group’s successors. They represent a small selection of middle-class fathers a generation later, and like the ‘original’ new middle-class fathers as described by Aarseth (2011), they were equality-oriented and emotionally present, viewing family life as an arena of self-realization and self-expression. However, the story of ‘newness’ was not apparent in the 20s group's identity as fathers.

In my analysis, I found that the ideals and practices associated with the new father model had a clear position in the shared sense of fatherhood in both my groups. However, this manifested itself in very different ways. In the stories of the 90s fathers, the story of the new father model was an explicitly stated project within their shared sense of fatherhood. There were clear stories about a new societal consciousness surrounding fatherhood, and this consciousness was a natural part of the stories of their own fathering practices. In the 20s group, the new father model seemed to take on a less explicit form. While the ideals and values of the new father metanarrative were clearly present in the group’s shared sense of fatherhood, they did not identify themselves as ‘new’ in their fatherhood. On the contrary, they strongly identified with their fathers, establishing themselves as more similar than different. They did not display the same need to distance themselves from the fathers of the previous generation, and personal stories of difference in practices were seen as having more to do with what society allowed for than with having different values and priorities in fatherhood. While societal conditions might have been different for their fathers in some ways, the core of their feelings of fatherhood seemed the same. However, while the 20s fathers did not appear to relate to the story of the new fathers through a need to be ‘new’, the new father model appeared to be very present in the 20s group’s shared sense of fatherhood as a normative pervasive story. As described in Chapter 2, the new father model can be recognized as a metanarrative of the culturally correct way of doing fatherhood, constructed around the father as a primary caregiver on par with the mother (Eerola & Huttunen, 2011; Farstad & Stefansen, 2015). This appeared in the 20s group in a much stronger way than in the 90s group. While the 90s group largely referred to the mothers as ‘setting the tone’ for the degree to which they asserted themselves as primary caregivers, the majority of the

20s group expressed that it was very important to them to establish themselves as equal caregivers to their partners.

It was clear that there was a change within the shared sense of fatherhood between the two groups. The core project of being the involved, care-oriented father that the 90s group explicitly identified as something that separated them from what came before was already established as the next generation came into fatherhood, appearing to the 20s fathers not as the project of their generation, but simply as part of being a father. The 20s group did not need to define themselves in contrast to their fathers, because their fathers' project of being the new, involved fathers had made this way of fatherhood the established norm, becoming the point of departure for the next generation coming into fatherhood. They saw parenthood as a shared, degendered project, and taking ownership of the caregiver role was crucial. While both groups referred to an understanding of a flexible fatherhood where the individual family was freer than before to organize family life as best suited their particular situation, this seemed in the 20s group to weaken in favor of a strong normative ideal that both parents should be primary caregivers on the same level. This makes apparent one of the biggest developments in shared projects between the two generations – the 90s groups' foundational project of 'we *can* be equal caregivers on par with the mother' appears to have laid the groundwork for the 20s group's project being 'we *are* equal caregivers on par with the mother'.

## 8.2 Further research

When conducting a qualitative study of a limited size, there is no doubt that the resulting analysis only covers a smaller excerpt of a much larger picture. This must be considered when applying the findings of the study to a larger context beyond the experiences and stories of the individual participants.

For one, my participants are only two very small selections of two large groups that will inevitably contain large variations that my limited data cannot be expected to cover. While I've attempted to identify the overarching (or, rather, under-arching)

---

shared sense of fatherhood that two groups of Norwegian middle-class fathers from different generations interpret fatherhood and do fathering from, this would likely benefit from a bigger selection in order to capture more nuance within this sense of fatherhood.

Secondly, the participants in this study were chosen because they can be said to represent one specific version of Norwegian fatherhood, and the shared senses of fatherhood and the fathering practices and meanings within them must be considered within their situation and context. There is something to be said for the influence middle-class fathering ideals have on Norwegian society as a whole. As Stefansen and Farstad (2010) conclude, middle-class fatherhood is largely taken as the implicit ideal fatherhood policies are shaped around, thus influencing policies that are intended to have a normative effect. While the policies may then be used in ways that make sense within other cultural models of care as well, it is undoubtedly the case that the fathering practices and dominant fatherhood ideals of the middle class do influence Norwegian fatherhood across the board in some way. However, while these can be argued as reasons to explore the fatherhood of the middle class specifically (Aarseth, 2011), this should not be assumed to be applicable to Norwegian fatherhood as one homogenous model. As I've referred to in Chapter 2, there is no one universal version of the new father. Assuming there to be so risks ignoring significant nuances within fatherhood at best, and invalidating the developments of other groups' fathering practices and meanings at worst (Farstad, 2016, p. 75).

What a project on this scale can do is to provide inspiration for further studies. The analytical framework as developed in Chapter 3 can prove useful in understanding how social change can happen in the intersection between the personal and the social, as subjective horizons of pre-interpretation interact with both the cultural stock of stories and the personal stories of others. The dialogical and social nature of stories is crucial not only in how we tell our stories to others but also in how we subjectively experience the world in the first place from a place of individual pre-understanding. In the context of this project, differences between how fathers belonging to two different generations interpret and talk about the landscape their fatherhood exists and has existed within may give us a feeling of how the shared and unspoken pre-conscious horizon, the shared

sense of life, has changed. The sense of life is both deeply subjective and deeply social. On the one hand, the sense of life is unavoidably a large part of your subjective horizon for pre-reflective interpretation, influencing your grounds for reflective interpretation. On the other, it is constantly influencing and being influenced by the social and cultural context it exists within. Through investigating how the shared sense of life appears through personal stories about both personal life and public stories, we may gain access to how subjective life projects develop on a societal scale in ways that emphasize the meaning behind them rather than the practices they are connected to, both relating to fatherhood and otherwise.

---

## Bibliography

- Alvesson, M., & Sköldbberg, K. (2018). *Reflexive methodology: new vistas for qualitative research* (Third edition. ed.). Los Angeles, California: SAGE.
- Brandth, B., & Kvande, E. (2003). *Fleksible fedre: maskulinitet, arbeid, velferdsstat*. Oslo: Universitetsforl.
- Brandth, B., & Kvande, E. (2013). *Fedrekvoten og den farsvennlige velferdsstaten*. Oslo: Universitetsforl.
- Brandth, B., & Kvande, E. (2014). Parental leave and classed fathering practices in Norway. In G. B. Eydal & T. Rostgaard (Eds.), *Fatherhood in the Nordic Welfare States: Comparing Care Policies and Practice* (1 ed., pp. 121): Policy Press.
- Brinkmann, S. (2020). *Unstructured and Semistructured Interviewing*. In: Oxford University Press.
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage.
- Connell, R. W. (1995). Ch.3. The Social Organization of Masculinities. In *Masculinities* (pp. 67-86). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender & society*, 19(6), 829-859.  
doi:10.1177/0891243205278639
- Eerola, J. P., & Huttunen, J. (2011). Metanarrative of the "New Father" and Narratives of Young Finnish First-Time Fathers. *Fathering* (Harriman, Tenn.), 9(3), 211-231. doi:10.3149/fth.0903.211
- Ellingsæter, A. L., & Kitterød, R. H. (2021). Den «uferdige» revolusjonen: Hva betyr utdanning for fedres familiearbeid? *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning*, 62(1), 27-50. doi:10.18261/issn.1504-291X-2021-01-02
- Ellingsæter, A. L., & Leira, A. (2006). Introduction: politicising parenthood in Scandinavia. In A. L. Ellingsæter & A. Leira (Eds.), *Politicising parenthood in Scandinavia: gender relations in welfare states*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Elliott, K. (2016). Caring Masculinities: Theorizing an Emerging Concept. *Men and masculinities*, 19(3), 240-259. doi:10.1177/1097184X15576203
- Farstad, G. R. (2016). Nye fedre - nye forskjeller: farskap i farsvennlige velferdsstater. (nr. 562). *Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi, Det samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultet, Universitetet i Oslo, Oslo*.

- 
- Farstad, G. R., & Stefansen, K. (2015). Involved fatherhood in the Nordic context: dominant narratives, divergent approaches. *Norma: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 10(1), 55-70. doi:10.1080/18902138.2015.1013348
- Gubrium, J., Holstein, J., Marvasti, A., & McKinney, K. (2012). *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft*(2 ed.). doi:10.4135/9781452218403
- Harme, K. (2017). Fedrekvoten – mer populær enn noen gang. Retrieved from <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/fedrekvoten-mer-populaer-enn-noen-gang--298200>
- Herz, M., & Johansson, T. (2011). *Maskuliniteter: kritik, tendenser, trender*. Malmø: Liber.
- Hobson, B., & Morgan, D. (2002). Introduction: making men into fathers. In (pp. 1-22): Cambridge University Press.
- Holter, Ø. G., & Aarseth, H. (1993). *Menns livssammenheng*. Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal.
- Hunter, S. C., Riggs, D. W., & Augoustinos, M. (2017). Hegemonic masculinity versus a caring masculinity: Implications for understanding primary caregiving fathers. *Social and personality psychology compass*, 11(3), e12307-n/a. doi:10.1111/spc3.12307
- Hänninen, V. (2004). A model of narrative circulation. *Narrative inquiry*, 14(1), 69-85. doi:10.1075/ni.14.1.04han
- Jamieson, L. (1998). *Intimacy: Personal Relationships in Modern Societies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Johansson, T., & Andreasson, J. (2017). Theoretical Explorations of Fatherhood. In *Fatherhood in Transition* (pp. 17-36). London: London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Johansson, T., & Ottemo, A. (2015). Ruptures in hegemonic masculinity: the dialectic between ideology and utopia. *Journal of gender studies*, 24(2), 192-206. doi:10.1080/09589236.2013.812514
- Jordan, A. (2020). Masculinizing Care? Gender, Ethics of Care, and Fathers' Rights Groups. *Men and masculinities*, 23(1), 20-41. doi:10.1177/1097184X18776364
- Langellier, K. M., & Peterson, E. E. (2004). *Storytelling In Daily Life: Performing Narrative*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- LaRossa, R. (1988). Fatherhood and Social Change. *Family relations*, 37(4), 451-457. doi:10.2307/584119

- 
- Leira, A. (2006). Parenthood change and policy reform in Scandinavia, 1979s-2000s. In A. L. Ellingsæter & A. Leira (Eds.), *Politicising parenthood in Scandinavia: gender relations in welfare states* (pp. 27-51). Bristol: Policy Press.
- Lister, R. (2009). A Nordic Nirvana? Gender, Citizenship, and Social Justice in the Nordic Welfare States. *Social politics*, 16(2), 242-278. doi:10.1093/sp/jxp007
- Lorentzen, J. (2006). Forskning på menn og maskuliniteter. In J. Lorentzen & W. Mühleisen (Eds.), *Kjønnforskning: en grunnbok* (pp. 121-135). Oslo: Universitetsforl.
- Lorentzen, J. (2012). *Fra farskapets historie i Norge : 1850-2012*. Oslo: Universitetsforl.
- Meretoja, H. (2017). Narrative Hermeneutics. In *Explorations in narrative psychology. The ethics of storytelling: narrative hermeneutics, history, and the possible*.
- Messerschmidt, J. W. (2016). *Masculinities in the making : from the local to the global*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Morgan, D. H. J. (1996). *Family connections: an introduction to family studies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Nielsen, H. B. (2017). *Feeling Gender: A Generational and Psychosocial Approach*.
- Ragin, C. C., & Amoroso, L. M. (2019). *Constructing social research: the unity and diversity of method* (Third edition. ed.). Los Angeles, California: SAGE.
- Ribbens McCarthy, J. (2022). Family sociology as a theoretical enterprise? A personal reflection. *Families, relationships and societies*, 11(2), 303-319. doi:10.1332/204674321X16449322694920
- Riessman, C. (2005). Narrative Analysis. In N. Kelly, C. Horrocks, K. Milnes, B. Roberts, & D. Robinson (Eds.), *Narrative, memory and everyday life* (pp. 1-7): University of Huddersfield.
- Riessman, C. (2012). Analysis of Personal Narratives. In J. Gubrium, J. Holstein, A. Marvasti, & K. McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft* (2 ed., pp. 367-379). United States: United States: SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
- Stanley, L. (2017). Preface: Telling Lives in Feminist Narrative Inquiry. In J. Woodiwiss, K. Smith, & K. Lockwood (Eds.), *Feminist Narrative Research: Opportunities and Challenges* (pp. vii-xvii). London: London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Stefansen, K., & Farstad, G. R. (2010). Classed parental practices in a modern welfare state: Caring for the under threes in Norway. *Critical social policy*, 30(1), 120-141. doi:10.1177/0261018309350811
- Saastad, A. (2022). *Usynlige menn - et nytt perspektiv på norsk likestilling*: Dinamo Forlag.



- Teigen, M., & Skjeie, H. (2017). The Nordic Gender Equality Model. In O. Knutsen (Ed.), *The Nordic models in political science: challenged, but still viable?* Bergen: Fagbokforl.
- Thompson, J. (2022). A Guide to Abductive Thematic Analysis. *Qualitative report*, 27(5), 1410-1421. doi:10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5340
- Tjora, A. H. (2012). *Kvalitative forskningsmetoder i praksis* (2. utg. ed.). Oslo: Gyldendal akademisk.
- Vasbø, K. B., & Hegna, K. (2023). Feeling close, disclosing feelings — family practices and practices of intimacy in youth–parent relations across three generations in Norway.
- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing Gender. *Gender & society*, 1(2), 125-151. doi:10.1177/0891243287001002002
- Aarseth, H. (2011). *Moderne familieliv: den likestilte familiens motivasjonsformer*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm akademisk.
- Aarseth, H. (2013). De nye barneorienterte fedrene. In B. Brandth & E. Kvande (Eds.), *Fedrekvoten og den farsvennlige velferdsstaten*. Oslo: Universitetsforl.

## 9. Appendix

### 9.1 Appendix 1: Information letter

Senter for Tverrfaglig Kjønnforskning, Universitetet i Oslo 2/11/2022

Til informasjon om prosjektet

#### **Farskap i Norge – en generasjonsstudie**

Dette prosjektet er en masteroppgave ved Universitetet i Oslo om utvikling og endring i norsk farsrolle. Prosjektet vil sammenligne fortellingene fra to generasjoner fedre, den ene med små barn i dag og den andre med små barn på 90-tallet, for å undersøke hvordan opplevelsen av å være far ser og har sett ut for begge grupper.

Dersom du er far til barn i barnehagealder i dag eller er far til barn som var i barnehagealder på 90-tallet, samt har mastergrad eller høyere og er oppvokst i Norge, vil jeg gjerne snakke med deg!

Dersom du kunne tenke deg å ta delta, ta kontakt på mail eller telefon (se nederst i dette skrivet). Deltagelse vil bestå av et intervju på ca 1 time. All personlig informasjon vil bli anonymisert, og du vil ikke være gjenkjennelig i den endelige oppgaven.

Takk for interessen,

Isabel Borrevik

Epost: isaberb@student.hf.uio.no Telefon: +47 930 67 794

---

## 9.2 Appendix 2: Interview guide

### Del 1

- Kan du fortelle meg om hvordan du opplever deg selv som far i forhold til hvordan faren din var far da du var barn?
  - Hvordan opplever du å være far?
  - Hvordan tror du faren din opplevde å være far?
  - Er det noe du tenker du gjør bevisst annerledes enn faren din?
  - Er det noe du har valgt å videreføre fra faren din til hvordan du er far?

### Del 2

- Hva bør en far være?
  - Hva er det viktigste ved å være far?
  - Hva tenker du har endret seg fra tidligere til nå?
  - Levde faren din opp til disse idealene?
  - Hvordan synes du at du lever opp til disse idealene?
  - Tror du det er noen forskjell på mor og far?
  - Tror du det er annerledes å være far til jente/gutt?

### Del 3

- Sjekkliste bakgrunnsinfo
  - Alder
  - Utdannelse, jobb
  - Hvor mange og hvor gamle barn
  - Forhold til mor (gift, skilt, samboere, ikke sammen etc)
  - Fars klassebakgrunn og evt kulturellbakgrunn

---

## 9.3 Appendix 3: Consent form

### Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

#### «Farsrolle i Norge – en generasjonsstudie»?

- 

- Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke utvikling og endring i den norske farsrollen. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

- **Formål**

Dette prosjektet er en masteroppgave om utvikling og endring i norsk farsrolle. Prosjektet vil sammenligne fortellingene fra to generasjoner fedre, den ene med små barn i dag og den andre med små barn på 90-tallet, for å undersøke hvordan opplevelsen av å være far ser og har sett ut for begge grupper.

#### **Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?**

Universitetet i Oslo er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

#### **Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?**

Oppgaven tar for seg 2 grupper fedre, hvor du passer i den ene: fedre med små barn i dag, og fedre som hadde små barn på 90-tallet. Begge grupper er fedre med høyere utdanning, og som er oppvokst i Norge.

- **Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**

Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer dette et intervju på ca. 45 minutter-1 time om din personlige opplevelse som far. Jeg tar lydopptak og notater fra intervjuet.

#### **Det er frivillig å delta**

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

#### **Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger**

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Lydopptak vil bli transskribert, med navn og personopplysninger anonymisert i transskriptet. Lydopptakene lagres og håndteres etter NSD sine regler. Du vil ikke kunne identifiseres utfra den endelige oppgaven.

#### **Hva skjer med personopplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?**

Prosjektet vil etter planen avsluttes ved innlevering 31/12/2023. Etter prosjektslutt vil datamaterialet med dine personopplysninger slettes.

---

## Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Oslo har Personverntjenester vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

### Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Universitetet i Oslo ved Professor Helene Aarseth (veileder):
  - Epost: [helene.aarseth@stk.uio.no](mailto:helene.aarseth@stk.uio.no)
  - Telefon: 22850511
- Vårt personvernombud: Andrew Feltham
  - Epost: [andrew.feltham@stk.uio.no](mailto:andrew.feltham@stk.uio.no)
  - Telefon: 22858936

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til Personverntjenester sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- Personverntjenester på epost ([personverntjenester@sikt.no](mailto:personverntjenester@sikt.no)) eller på telefon: 53 21 15 00.

Med vennlig hilsen

Isabel Rav Borrevik

(Epost: [isaberb@student.hf.uio.no](mailto:isaberb@student.hf.uio.no) Telefon: 93067794)

---

## Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «Farskap i Norge – en generasjonsstudie», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

---

---

----

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)