

Conflicting Policy Feedback: Enduring Tensions over Father Quotas in Norway

Anne Lise Ellingsæter  *

This study aims to advance the understanding of drivers of fathers' parental leave rights—a new political field and a main area of leave policy debate. Theoretically informed by the policy feedback literature, this case study of father quota policy in Norway demonstrates how conflicting political feedback processes over a quarter of a century, reflected in reforms by shifting government coalitions, have sustained tensions over the policy. The polarized public debate following an extension in the father quota in 2018 suggests that countermobilization via social media may play a new role in magnifying conflict and destabilizing post-reform processes.

Introduction

Paid parental leave is the “staple of the modern welfare state,” concerned with “supporting parental employment, child well-being, and (on the paper at least) promoting gender equality” (Moss, Koslowski, and Duvander 2019, 1). Leave policy reforms are prevalent, but many countries stay on the same path, reflecting different national contexts and understandings about childhood, motherhood, and fatherhood (Moss and Deven 2015). Nevertheless, policies designed to make fathers take more leave is a notable trend (Moss and Deven 2015). This includes nontransferable leave entitlements given to each parent to encourage a better sharing of caring responsibilities. Testifying to this is the Council of the European Union's 2019 adoption of the Directive on Work–Life Balance for Parents and Carers, with an individual right to four months of paid parental leave, from which two months are nontransferable between the parents.¹

Fathers' parental leave right is a new political field and a main area of debate relating to leave policy reform. The aim of the present study is to advance the understanding of drivers of fathers' leave rights. In this endeavor, the comparatively long-term experiences with nontransferable father quotas in the pioneering Nordic countries are of particular interest. While there is a comprehensive research literature describing Nordic leave policies and father

Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo
*a.l.ellingsater@sosgeo.uio.no

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quotas and analyzing their impact on fathers' leave take up, gender equality, etc. (cf. Eydal and Rostgaard 2016), studies of the politics of policy formation are less developed.

Norway was the first country to introduce an earmarked father quota of four weeks in 1993, and the year after Sweden followed suit with a “daddy month.” However, in both Norway and Sweden further expansions of the father quotas have been slow—it took more than two decades to achieve quotas of about three months. In Norway, right from its enactment, the father quota policy has been contested, acting as a major vehicle in family policy struggles between the political left and right (Ellingsæter 2016). The Swedish trajectory reveals shifting support among political parties, and that internal party conflicts have stalled quota expansion (Bergqvist, Bjarnegård, and Zetterberg 2015; Chronholm 2009). Developments of father quotas in Finland have been even slower; labor market concerns and cost containment have been more important than the aim of gender equality (cf. Lammi-Taskula and Takala 2009).² But in 2020, a reform with the aim of making parental leave “gender neutral” was announced.³ However, Iceland has followed a swifter route. A three-month father quota was instituted in the early 2000s, and the country has taken further steps in extending the father quota by reforms in 2020 and 2021.⁴ By contrast, Denmark is at the other end, the two weeks quota instituted in 1998 was abolished after only four years, motivated by the concern for parental choice in the distribution of leave (Borchorst 2006).

Diverse policy dynamics apparently have formed Nordic father quota policy. To advance the understanding of these dynamics, national case studies going beyond the structural and the institutional to the processual and the political are essential (cf. Moss and Kamerman 2009). The principal question of this case study of the Norwegian father quota policy is how conflicting policy feedback has shaped, and continues to shape, this policy. The policy feedback literature, devoted to explain the ways in which policies once enacted shape subsequent political processes (Béland and Schlager 2019; Béland, Rocco, and Waddan 2019; Pierson 1993; Skocpol 1992), is well suited to help identify driving mechanisms. Through the analytical lens of policy feedback, the following processes are investigated: First, the long-term reform trajectory, from the enactment of the father quota in 1993 to the quota extension from ten to fifteen weeks in 2018; second, the 2018 quota reform's effects on the public debate; third, the post-2018 reform feedback effects on the political parties.

Analytical Lens: Father Quotas and Policy Feedback Mechanisms

Feedback effects of reforms on policymaking are crucial in understanding policy dynamics (Seeleib-Kaiser 2016). Policies feed back into the political

system, by altering (or upholding), not only the capacities, interests, and beliefs of political elites, such as elected politicians, but also those of the members of the public (Campbell 2012). The present study of drivers of father quota policy leans on an analytical framework drawn from the policy feedback literature, elaborating four mechanisms.

First, conflicts over father quota policy imply that feedback effects can be both positive and negative, thus potentially both self-enforcing and self-undermining. While the feedback literature has accentuated the self-reinforcing effects of policies, “the ways in which policies bolster their own bases of political support, yielding either policy stability or an expansionary dynamic over time,” both self-reinforcing and self-undermining feedback processes are not uncommon, often flowing simultaneously from the same set of policies (Jacobs and Weaver 2015, 441). Thus, political processes also yield consequences that may undermine their bases of support over time, both at elite and mass levels. Long-term self-undermining effects can explain why reform may return to the policy agenda time and again. “Immature” programs are more vulnerable to retrenchment and dismantling than programs that have been around for a long period of time, at least when these more established programs produce positive, self-reinforcing feedback effects (Béland, Rocco, and Waddan 2019). Nevertheless, self-undermining feedback effects may operate over extended periods of time and increase the strain on status quo, and interest groups and electoral coalitions pushing to roll back or reorient current programs may expand (Jacobs and Weaver 2015), or organize/mobilize in new ways.

Second, policy feedback processes are affected by changes in contextual conditions, including shifting windows of institutional opportunity; policies can, for example, destabilize because of shifts in governing coalitions. Since father quotas in Norway have been contested along a left–right axis, shifts in government are of particular relevance. Also, other aspects of the institutional and organizational context may generate pressures on governments to either maintain or revise existing arrangements (Béland, Rocco, and Waddan 2019; Jacobs and Weaver 2015). Long-run feedback effects and windows of institutional opportunity interact (Jacobs and Weaver 2015). Conflicting feedback processes, as they interact over time, can make policies vulnerable to future contestation, even if not entrenched (Béland, Rocco, and Waddan 2019). Many longer-term processes frequently drive shifts made possible by the opening of new opportunities (Jacobs and Weaver 2015). These processes may have reshaped the underlying distribution of interests and policy preferences among politicians and the public.

Third, policy feedback on the public varies across policy types because policies are encountered in different ways by different publics (Soss and Schram 2007). Policy visibility and proximity condition what feedback effects are likely. Visibility involves the degree to which a policy is salient to the public, while proximity concerns the direct versus distant form in which a policy is encountered, the extent to which it will affect people’s lives in immediate,

concrete ways (Soss and Schram 2007). Due to political conflict and direct effects on prospective parents, the father quota is likely to be high on both visibility and proximity. Reform proximity may mobilize constituencies with incentives to protect their rights and benefits (Campbell 2012). However, mobilization may also be set off by people's "sense of entitlement," expectations shaped by national contexts of what is perceived to be fair, which may differ from, although influenced by, legal entitlements (Brandth and Kvande 2019; Lewis and Smithson 2001). Policy visibility and proximity are conditioned on information reaching citizens, in this interest groups play a role in informing and alerting the public (Campbell 2012). Mobilization processes are increasingly likely to be affected by digital communications technologies, giving rise to new forms of political and public engagement through social media, to shifting formations of non-institutionally-aligned political publics (Higgins and Smith 2014). Social media facilitate countermobilization, representing conflictual and often antagonistic constellations in the formation of publics and polemical engagement with political elites, contributing to an antagonistic public discourse (Lünenborg 2020). Social media may represent patterns of information sharing that reinforce pre-existing beliefs by limiting exposure to opposing political views (Bail et al. 2018). New digital and traditional offline media interact in complex ways, and political activists may "hybridize" old and new media logics to influence the political agenda (Chadwick 2013).

Fourth, the feedback literature emphasizes ideas and symbols attached to policies (Béland 2010). Perceptions of the set of social consequences of policies are a key driver of policy-ideational development (Jacobs and Weaver 2015). Hence, perceived social consequences of father quotas are crucial in policy feedback processes. Perceptions are filtered through cultural categories grounded in national culture and political repertoires (Lieberman 2002). Certain ideas and symbolic categories can influence reform outcomes, empowering or weakening the actors who draw on these ideas (Béland 2010). Accordingly, ideas and cultural categories associated with social consequences of (longer) father quotas may constrain or enable reform, constricting/widening the range of acceptable debate and decision-making (cf. Lieberman 2002).

Material and Analytical Approach

The empirical analysis is a document-based study, structured in three main parts. Each part is assigned to the three processes stated in the introduction, and how these processes feed into each other.

The first part is a historical account of the political feedback processes since the enactment of the father quota in 1993, including the process leading up to the extension of the quota in 2018. This part emphasizes the importance of studying feedback effects over an extended period of time, demonstrating both self-reinforcing and self-undermining effects and mechanisms operating

through changing windows of institutional opportunity, that is, shifts in government coalitions. The analysis is based on government and parliament documents and secondary analyses.

The second part investigates the feedback effect of the 2018 quota reform on the public, addressing mechanisms connected with the reform's visibility and proximity, the mobilizing role of social media and perceptions of the reform's social consequences. The main empirical source are newspaper articles extracted from an electronic full-text archive (A-tekst).⁵ The content analysis based on this archive centers on the public's perceived social consequences of the reform, distinguishing between perceptions among reform opponents, opposing the father quota reform, labeled "reform antagonists," and perceptions of reform supporters, labeled "reform protagonists." Perceptions of social consequences contained both normative and cognitive ideas—expressing values and attitudes versus assumptions of cause effects, that is, concrete policy effects (Campbell 1998). A wide range of different actors participated in the public debate—media actors (editors, commentators), professional associations, interest organizations and researchers, and last but not least, individual women, including mothers with young children—but few men and fathers. Not all individual women participating stated their family/employment status, but many of those who did, were on parental leave/employed in middle-class occupations; this applied to both antagonists and protagonists.

The third part looks into the effects of the public debate on the political parties, comparing positions on parental leave/father quota policy in election programs for the 2017–2021 period with 2019 party convention resolutions.

Stability, Expansion, and Retrenchment: Reform Trajectory Since 1993

From 1993 to 2018, father quota reforms were distinguished by different phases, involving both stability, expansion, and retrenchment (cf. table 1). Rivaling perceptions of social consequences surrounded the reforms, mainly following a left/center versus right divide. Self-enforcing dynamics involved perceptions of father quotas' positive effects on gender equality in the family and working life and the early establishment of father-child attachment, while self-undermining dynamics entailed perceptions of negative impact on parental choice in diverse families.

Enactment and Stability 1993–2005

Fathers were given the right to care in 1978 when paid maternity leave was converted into paid parental leave, introduced by a minority Labour government.⁶ Then the leave stood still for almost a decade, before a new minority Labour government started a series of leave extensions from 1986. In 1993,

Table 1. Paid parental leave reforms in Norway from the introduction of the father quota, 1993–2019

Year/type of government	Total weeks, 100 percent wage compensation	Total weeks, 80 percent wage compensation	Weeks joint part, 100 percent wage compensation	Weeks joint part, 80 percent wage compensation	Weeks reserved for mother—"mother quota" (from 2012)	Weeks reserved for father—"father quota"	Total weeks available for mother, 100 percent/80 percent wage compensation
1993 Labour, minority	42	52	29	39	6 (+3 prior to birth)	4	38/48
2005 Right-center, minority	43	53	29	39	6 (+3)	5	38/48
2006 Red-green, majority	44	54	29	39	6 (+3)	6	38/48
2009 Red-green, majority	46	56	27	37	6 (+3)	10	36/46
2011 Red-green, majority	47	57	26	36	6 (+3)	12	35/45
2012 Red-green, majority	47	57	20	30	12 (+3)	12	35/45
2013 Red-green, majority	49	59	18	28	14 (+3)	14	35/45
2014 Right-wing, minority	49	59	26	36	10 (+3)	10	39/49
2018 Right-center, minority	49	59	16	26	15 (+3)	15	34/44
2019 Right-center, minority	49	59	16	18	100 % 15 (+3)	100 % 15	80 % 19
							34/40

the leave was extended to forty-two/fifty-two weeks, with 100 percent/80 percent wage replacement rate. A four weeks nontransferable father quota on a use it or lose it basis was part of this reform. Few men took any parental leave, and the goal was to redistribute care from the mother to the father in the family and to strengthen fathers' place in their children's lives.⁷ The reform passed with the support of the Socialist Left Party, the Centre Party (agrarian base), and the Christian Democratic Party. The Conservative Party and the Progress Party (a hybrid between a populist radical right party and a traditional conservative party, cf. [Jungar and Jupskås 2014](#)) opposed the quota because it limits parental choice and "punishes" parents who do not use it.⁸ After the 1993 reform, ten years of stability followed.

Incremental Expansion 2005–2013

Stability was replaced by nearly ten years of incremental expansion in the father quota. While the quota had led to a rapid increase in fathers' take-up of leave, few took more than the four weeks; mothers took most of the shareable part of the leave. This generated a mounting pressure to increase the father quota. A center-right minority government (Christian Democrat Party, Conservative Party, Liberal Party, 2001–2005) initiated the first extension, one week added to the total leave in 2005. This was an "attitudinal support" to parents who wanted "further distribution" of the leave period, also considered to increase parental choice.⁹

The aim of the succeeding majority center-left government coalition (Labour Party, Socialist Left Party, Centre Party, 2005–2009) was to extend the father quota to ten weeks, all to be added to the total leave. One week was added in 2006. Better opportunities to combine work and care and better use of fathers' "care potential" were among the rationales.¹⁰ All parties in Parliament supported both the previous and this extension, except the Progress Party that opposed leave extensions in general, and quotas in particular—parents should decide themselves how they wanted to distribute the leave between them.¹¹ The re-elected center-left coalition (2009–2013) achieved its aim of fourteen weeks' father quota in 2013.¹² The motivation was that good leave arrangements are important to secure contact between child and parents in the child's first year of life, but out of concern for the father's contact with the child, leave extensions should be reserved for the father. It would also make young women and men's relations to the labor market more equal.

Then, since 2005, the total leave had been extended from forty-two to forty-nine weeks (100 percent compensation alternative), all seven weeks were due to father quota extensions. In addition, three weeks had been transferred from the sharable part of the leave to the father quota (cf. [table 1](#)). The Liberal Party and the Christian Democratic Party supported only quota extensions

added to total leave, not those transferred from the sharable part of the leave; but for the latter party, a ten-week quota was long enough.¹³

Retrenchment 2014

In 2010, the Conservative Party had joined the Progress Party in its goal to abandon the quota altogether, albeit against the will of the party leadership.¹⁴ According to these two right-wing parties, the quota demonstrated the great divide between the left and the right—the quota was a “socialist straitjacket” of unwanted state interference in family life.¹⁵ The child would suffer if the father could not take up the full quota—the child had become a tool in the struggle for gender equality.¹⁶ Hence, quota expansion was broken when these two parties formed a minority government after the election in 2013. While the preference of the two parties was to abolish the quota, in a cooperation agreement with the Christian Democratic Party and the Liberal Party the quota remained, but was cut from fourteen to ten weeks in 2014.¹⁷ One argument was that fathers should be trusted—they would continue to take just as much leave with a shorter quota.¹⁸ The center-left parties opposed the cut, claiming that it would affect fathers’ take-up of leave negatively.

Reversal/Expansion: The 2018 Reform

The 2014 cut in the father quota did result in a decline in father’s take-up of leave. Over time, most fathers, 70 percent, have taken only the quota, whatever the quota length.¹⁹ The quota cut and its effects caused strong criticism. For example, the main employer federation (NHO) claimed that there were parts of the political milieu that “put brakes” on gender equality in the parental leave arrangement.²⁰ The Christian Democratic Party and the Liberal Party reconsidered their positions and supported a reversal of the cut, while the Conservative Party replaced its aim of abolishing the quota by keeping the existing ten weeks. Only the Progress Party still rejected quotas.

In 2017 then, there was a parliamentary majority in favour of reversing the cut, and this majority requested the re-elected minority right-wing government to present a bill increasing the father quota to the previous fourteen weeks, in order “to give children and fathers time together and to contribute to gender equality in working life.”²¹ In early January 2018, the government announced that such a bill would be presented to the Parliament in the spring.²² However, in late January, the Liberal Party joined the government.²³ After negotiations, the Liberal Party’s leave model became part of the new government platform: A three-part division of leave, with fifteen nontransferable weeks each for the father and the mother (plus three weeks before birth for mother) and sixteen weeks that could be shared as parents prefer (100 percent compensation). “Not something we

would have prioritized, but this is cooperation,” commented the PM (Conservative Party).²⁴ The reform bill was to be presented to the Parliament at “express speed” by the Minister of Children and Gender Equality (Conservative Party).²⁵ At an open hearing in the Parliament with invited representatives from the NHO and a men’s interest group (Mannsforum), the reform received strong support. The NHO even indicated that they wanted to go a step further, toward a two-part division of leave.²⁶

The government’s proposal put the political conflict over the father quota out of play. All parties in Parliament voted for the reform (in effect from July 1, 2018), except the Christian Democratic Party which thought it was too “rigid”, it would, for example, hinder mothers who wanted a longer period at home for breastfeeding. The Progress Party was explicit about voting “for something that we really oppose”—the party believed in “freedom for families,” but “when you enter a coalition, you have to give and take in a continuous process.”²⁷ In the fall of 2018, the 80 percent compensation alternative was changed accordingly—nineteen weeks each for the father and the mother and twenty weeks for parents to share as they prefer.²⁸ A written hearing disclosed support from 22 organizations/institutions, while eight were negative.²⁹ With the new model, the mother would get a maximum of thirty-four/forty weeks (mother quota plus sharable part of leave, 100 percent/80 percent compensation) (cf. [table 1](#)). The motivation of the bill stated that Norway has one of the world’s most generous parental leave arrangements, contributing to children getting necessary care and attachment to both parents in its first year of life.³⁰ It was underscored that mothers could breastfeed according to recommendations—six months of full breastfeeding and partial breastfeeding at least until the child is one year old—with both the 100 percent and 80 percent compensation alternatives.³¹ Mothers returning to work have the right to one hour paid breastfeeding per day until the child is one year old.

In early 2019, the Christian Democratic Party entered the government. This secured the government parliamentary majority. However, the parental leave arrangement was not mentioned in the new government platform.³²

As background to the public debate of the 2018 reform, it should be added that parental leave access and compensation (up to ceiling) are conditioned on prior employment and earnings.³³ Moreover, fathers’ parental leave rights are partly derived from mothers’ rights: To be eligible for the father quota, both the father and the mother have to fulfill the requirement of prior employment; the father can only take up the shareable part of leave if the mother after birth is employed or in education at least 75 percent of full-time. Leave take-up is flexible; it may be used in one or more blocks on a full- or part-time basis, until the child’s third birthday. After parental leave, all children aged one to five have the right to a place in publicly subsidized childcare services.

“The Leave Debate”—“A Red-Hot Wasp Nest”

The 2018 reform was a cross-party compromise, and the father quota was only one week longer than the fourteen weeks instituted by the red–green government in 2013 (cf. [table 1](#)). The latter reform caused only modest public commotion. As late as in May 2018, a newspaper op-ed contended that “[T]here is no longer any live political debate about the father quota. Experiences are too solid for that.”³⁴ Moreover, an increasing majority of parents have been supportive of father quotas; according to a 2017 survey, 89 percent of fathers and 83 percent of mothers were in favor of a father quota, with a preferred quota length of 15 versus 13.4 weeks, respectively ([Schou 2019](#)). Against this background, the extensive polarized public debate erupting was somewhat puzzling.

However, in response to the announced reform a countermobilization took off in social media in the spring of 2018. The campaign’s negative perceptions of the reform were eventually widely circulated in conventional media and were a main driver of the public debate. The debate climate evolving in what was called “the leave debate,” or the “leave rebellion,” was characterized as a “red-hot wasp net”: “[L]ittle else than the father quota turns the emotions more around among women and feminists.”³⁵ For example, a female reform antagonist claimed that women skeptical of the reforms that had weakened women’s parental leave rights for a long time had got so little attention that it was close to “no-platforming,” and this “silent gang” was likely to constitute the majority of women.³⁶ By contrast, under the heading “Norwegian parental leave – an abuse?,” a mother and reform protagonist commented ironically on the rhetoric of “internet mummy groups,” according to whom

... the First of July [2018] was one of the worst days of Norwegian women’s history ... Because this day the government built down women’s rights under the cover of gender equality. Mothers are “trampled on.” It is “horrific,” “disgraceful” and “madness” ... The legal change is simply “insane”.³⁷

Reform Antagonists: Negative Consequences for Families and Mother–Child

When the quota reform was announced early in 2018, a group including pregnant women who expected their baby in July, right after the reform was expected to be effectuated, launched an internet petition campaign³⁸: “We are mobilizing resistance on the internet because this is an uncertainty we should not have to relate to. A parental leave is planned a long time ahead.” Not knowing how the leave would be “is disrespectful of workers and our

employers . . . We are frustrated, we are sorry and we are angry.”³⁹ In June 2018, when the reform bill was passed by Parliament, the campaign was extended with a public Facebook group, organized under the name “The leave should parents divide (Permisjonen Burde Foreldre Fordele).”⁴⁰ Later the hashtag #leave rebellion (#permisjonsopprøret) was added.⁴¹

Reform opposition concerned perceived negative social consequences for families, women, and children (cf. [table 2](#)). Parental choice was emphasized both as a normative value and as a necessity for families in different situations, thus resonating with the long-standing political conflict over father quotas. “Forced sharing” of leave is “illiberal and unnecessary state management of families.”⁴² To “lock in” greater parts of the leave is a step in the wrong direction.⁴³ A (longer) father quota is too “too rigid”, some fathers’ will not be able to take up the longer quota, and leave would be lost to the family. Frustrated parents reported stories of fathers who could not take up fifteen weeks of leave due to various job-related constraints. That the family would lose out economically with a longer father quota also was brought up. For example, one mother maintained that in many families the mother has a considerably lower income than the father, and when the father earns more than the ceiling, the family is forced into a difficult financial situation.⁴⁴ However, this was not among the most prominent issues, maybe because the majority of employees are guaranteed full income compensation beyond the ceiling through collective agreements ([Dale-Olsen 2018](#)).

Some women embedded their reform opposition in a general normative critique of the family policy model: “To me, the norm about equal division of leave and full-time work for both parents and all one year olds in kindergarten is a family and women hostile policy.” When was gender equality reduced to a discussion about the number of weeks the father shall be on leave? ⁴⁵ It was contended that gender equality was confused with the “work line,” aiming at getting mothers back to work early. “Forced equal sharing” was to make women “more attractive to employers.” Moreover, there was no supportive evidence of longer father quotas strengthening gender equality in working life.⁴⁶ One commentator asked where the aim of the women’s movement of the seventies—to give care values and women’s chores greater place and status in society—had gone.⁴⁷

Lack of recognition of women’s biological role in the reproduction process constituted another normative critique. Politicians have introduced a leave arrangement that does not take into account feelings and biology; they should value the heavy job the mother does by being pregnant, giving birth, and taking care of infants. Allegedly, mothers were reduced to a “birth machine,” who do all the hard work.⁴⁸ Gender equality was rejected as a legitimate aim at this stage of parenthood—gender equality should not be promoted at the expense of biology: “Yes, mother and father are just as important for children’s upbringing, but one cannot equalize the fact that

Table 2. Perceived social consequences of the 2018 father quota extension

Cognitive	Normative
Reform antagonists	
<p>Too “rigid” for diverse families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The family loses leave when father’s work situation hinders leave uptake • The family loses out financially when father has to take longer leave <p>Negative for mother’s health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too little time for mother, not ready to go back to work • Mothers take more unpaid leave, losing rights <p>Negative for child’s physical and psychological health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothers stop breastfeeding earlier • Disrupts mother–child dyad the first year(s), child’s separation anxiety at seven to eight months, when the father takes over 	<p>Illiberal role of the state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricts parental choice, families should decide themselves <p>Gender equality illegitimate aim in early stage of parenthood:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not acknowledge biological differences • Lack of recognition of women’s role in reproduction • Critique of the “work line” • Women losing rights: Reversal of gender equality • Father quotas not necessary for fathers to care <p>Counteracts the child’s needs</p>
Reform protagonists	
<p>Fathers take only the allotted father quota, longer quota increases father’s time with the child</p> <p>Longer quotas balance concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help fathers get leave vis-à-vis employers • Quotas let fathers be care persons without the interference of mothers 	<p>Legitimate role of state regulation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim of gender equality legitimate within a generous leave scheme • Parental leave decisions not only private, affect whole society <p>Father quotas counter traditional stereotypes related to early parenthood:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual care rights recognize fathers as able carers of young children

Continued

Table 2. *Continued*

Cognitive	Normative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother can breastfeed according to recommendations, paid breastfeeding breaks facilitate mothers' return to work • Flexible take-up rules facilitate needs of diverse families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equalize expectations toward young women and men as employees • Mothers must let go of their traditional responsibility
Fathers develop early father–child bond	Secures the child's interests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children get attached to both parents

children are born through a woman's body and that only mothers can breastfeed their children."⁴⁹

Breastfeeding was a main cognitive argument against a longer father quota. The claim was that it prevents mothers from breastfeeding according to recommendations, a concern also raised in previous father quota debates (cf. Ellingsæter 2012). The reform was rejected on this ground by the National breastfeeding competency service and the Midwives Association.⁵⁰ A mother maintained that "I read page after page about mothers who are in despair over this change for breastfeeding ... Professional arguments against the change have been ignored. It is outrageous."⁵¹ Longer father quotas were considered "taking rights away from mothers"—mothers had over the years lost several weeks of "their" leave, and longer father quotas forced an increasing number of mothers to choose unpaid leave.⁵² Mothers on unpaid leave forego social rights, like statutory paid sick leave—hence this implied a "reversal of gender equality." Some attacked "the elite" (politicians) who actually have a choice about taking unpaid leave, while other women felt lucky that they could afford to take unpaid leave, but worried on behalf of less fortunate mothers who could not afford it.⁵³

The needs of the child were highlighted, it was argued that it was seldom asked whether "sending back mothers to work so early will have negative consequences for the baby."⁵⁴ Not only the reform's consequences for the child's access to mothers' milk but also for the child's psychological health. Infants need more time with their mothers at their start of life—brain research and psychological attachment theories support that the mother–child dyad is important. Politicians want the mother to leave her child in the most vulnerable attachment phase (when the child is around seven to eight months), which entails separation anxiety, while experts maintain it is a bad idea to replace the primary caring person, usually the mother, at

this time.⁵⁵ A father who opposed the reform did not want “to separate the child from its mother in a period when it needs an enormous amount of security.”⁵⁶

Reform antagonists attributed little value to the father quota effects on men’s caring role. That dads become more engaged with children serves most of us, but “not in this way,”⁵⁷ it should not be at the expense of the child’s time with the mother in its first year of life.⁵⁸ Though some women acknowledged fathers’ importance and also supported father quotas as such, fathers’ leave should be shorter/at a later stage of parenthood. Some thought that although the father–child attachment is important, there is no need for a quota to achieve this. Few fathers expressed themselves in the debate. Some who did were met with suspicion from reform antagonists for promoting their own interests. Men’s interests were discarded as illegitimate: it was “deeply ironical that some male debaters portray it [the debate] as if it primarily is about their own rights, abilities and sensitivity against feeling hurt as fathers,” and not about the child’s needs.⁵⁹

Reform Protagonists: Positive Consequences for Society and Father–Child

In contrast to the building up of the antagonistic social media campaign, the public climate for extending fathers’ rights was very positive in early 2018. This was apparent in the Gender Equality Ombud’s response to the planned reform, calling for a debate about even taking a step further, toward a two-part division of leave. This call was supported by the NHO and by the youth organizations of the Labour Party and the Liberal Party.⁶⁰ A supportive editorial in the newspaper *Dagsavisen* (social democrat) maintained that traditional thinking facilitating the mother to step in if the father cannot take his part of leave, should not be supported, “then we make neither men nor work life accountable, but the women . . . Some changes must be forced through. A two part division of leave should not be stopped by fears that fathers will not take responsibility.”⁶¹ However, the Minister of Children and Gender Equality, promoting the reform as “the most offensive, gender equal parental leave” ever, rejected a two-part division of leave as “too rigid”—children and families are different and have different needs.⁶²

The reform received strong support from central societal actors and institutions, including the main employer/employee federations and national newspapers. Reform protagonists emphasized its positive normative effects on fighting traditional gender roles and contribution to gender equality in family and working life (cf. table 2). Quotas were seen as necessary for fathers’ caring rights, “even if many had hoped that gender equality had come so far that quotas were unnecessary, actual experiences show that men take the weeks

they get allotted, not much more.”⁶³ It was stressed that individual caring rights for fathers secure children’s attachment to both parents.

A prevalent attitude was that the transfer of large sums to families with children gives the state a legitimate right to regulate the uptake of leave, supported by editorials in all the large newspapers. *Aftenposten* (conservative), referred to the waves of criticism against the reform, including the social media campaign, but it was time “to take a step back and look at what changes we are talking about. The leave has steadily been expanded and parents can stay quite long at home with the youngest children. It is so long that it is legitimate to justify parts of it with gender equality. If the aim of gender equality is removed, the leave also should be cut.”⁶⁴ It is not the role of the state to solve any family logistics in the transition from parental leave to the child entering kindergarten. *Dagbladet* (social liberal tabloid) also referred to the resistance against state regulation from several quarters, but “[w]hen the state first is to use billions of kroner on generous arrangements, it is fully legitimate than one uses the money in a way that achieves important goals of gender equality in society. If parents want to share differently, they can do it at their own expense, and not the community’s.”⁶⁵ *VG* (tabloid) argued in a similar vein that “Within a long and generous leave, it is reasonable that society puts down some guidelines, the current arrangement balances this well against the concern for the individual family’s wishes.”⁶⁶ *Vårt Land* (Christian democrat) commented that the important thing “. . . is the child. That both mothers and fathers must take their part of the leave, and stay at home with children, is entirely a benefit for them. The arrangement entails coercion, in that one loses the weeks not used. But it is most of all a right that fathers deserve.”⁶⁷

Several reform protagonists contended that a longer father quota would counteract discriminatory social structures.⁶⁸ According to a female commentator, in a society that formally is equal, we have to “poke into” what happens to women in their thirties regarding wages and career, and thus it is “worthwhile to have a try at more leave for father, even if it hurts for some.”⁶⁹ The choice argument was criticized—whatever unique reasons families have for their choice, the answer is always the same: the sharable part of the leave is the mother’s.⁷⁰ Mothers also must let go of what traditionally has been a women’s arena.⁷¹ To let the mother take as much of the leave as she wants, aka “what suits our family best,” has large societal consequences.

Reform protagonists underscored that fathers deserve extended caring rights and to be recognized as able carers. The father should have a right to participate actively as a care person in the child’s first year of life. It is more important “to secure that all fathers and children have good time to get to know each other, in everyday life and on their own premises without mother’s interference, than to give a small group more freedom of choice.”⁷² There are still gender-stereotyped expectations toward parental leave take-up, and it is good for society that fathers take part in the caring for the youngest children.⁷³ A mother was glad “that we as society make arrangements for father to

come more along in the care for children.”⁷⁴ According to another mother, reading posts under #permisjonsopproeret2019, made her “... even more convinced about why daddy leave is important! One would not believe that there was a single man in the country with the ability to take care of and love a seven months old baby. Luckily, I have found one who can and will.”⁷⁵

The absence of fathers in the debate was commented. The debate only promotes protests from mothers who feel that their time with their child is being “stolen,” the debate has not heard from fathers who finally “rejoice” over getting more time with the child. A mother wrote:

[W]e hear from women. The mothers. Midwives. The Breastfeeding Helper. All who think that women should demand a larger part of the leave, and it is our biological right to do that ... What kind of society do you want, then? I want a society where ... the mother’s job is as important as the father’s job ... where men also are acknowledged as care persons of full value.⁷⁶

Several claims from reform antagonists were rejected, with references to other facts/research. Mothers are not increasingly taking unpaid leave as a result of longer father quotas.⁷⁷ Psychological attachment theories and the benefits of full breastfeeding until the child is six months old are disputed.⁷⁸ It was maintained that the flexibility in the leave scheme allows mothers to breastfeed according to recommendations. According to the main employee federation (LO), with this three-part division of leave model mothers can be on leave until the child is about seven months, thereafter employees have the right to five weeks’ annual holiday. If the mother then goes back to work, the child will be 8.5 months, and then there are one hour daily paid breastfeeding breaks.⁷⁹

Post-2018 Reform Politics

All political parties arranged party conventions in the spring of 2019.⁸⁰ Instigated by the public controversy, almost all conventions debated the parental leave model. Being a local election year (in the fall every fourth year), the public debate put a particular pressure on the parties’ positions. Proposals that demanded a reversal of the reform had been submitted also in pro-quota parties, and media commentators referred to the “new rebellion” about the division of leave in many parties.⁸¹

The status after the party conventions was that three out of the four government parties had adopted resolutions aiming to reverse the three-part division model (cf. Table 3). The Conservative Party’s “long-term” aim is that parents should decide themselves how to divide the leave, but quotas will remain for some unspecified period of time. The party’s Women’s Forum’s proposal to evaluate a reversal from fifteen to ten weeks father quota thus was rejected. The Christian Democratic Party vindicated their previous position of

Table 3. Party positions on the father quota. Election programs for 2017–2021 and party convention resolutions 2019

Political parties	Election program 2017–2021	Party convention resolution 2019
Labour Party (AP)	Increase the father quota to at least fourteen weeks and arrange for a three-part division of the leave	Keep existing father quota and the three-part division of leave. Open up to improvements, effects of existing arrangements should be investigated
Progress Party (FrP)	Abolish legal formulations that impose quotas	Abolish the three-part division of leave, full freedom for families
Conservative Party (H)	Prolongation of existing distribution of parental leave time (ten weeks father/mother quota)	Long term goal: parents should divide the parental leave themselves
Christian Democratic Party (KrF)	Increase total parental leave with four weeks and increase the father and mother quota by four weeks (to fourteen weeks)	Reserve ten weeks after birth each to the mother and the father. Parents should distribute the remaining weeks themselves
Center Party (Sp)	Reinstate fourteen weeks father quota as a step toward the establishment of a three-part division of leave	Six weeks after birth should be reserved for mothers before dividing the leave into three parts
Socialist Left Party (SV)	Reversal of the cut in the parental leave. The mother and father quota shall increase by four weeks (to fourteen weeks)	Men’s right to parental leave must be strengthened, promote leave arrangements that strengthen gender equality in the family
Liberal Party (V)	A three-part division of leave where both parents get fifteen weeks each while sixteen weeks can be distributed freely with gender equality as point of departure	A three-part division of leave where both parents get fifteen weeks each while sixteen weeks can be distributed freely

ten weeks father quota, rejecting proposals from county-level party associations claiming full abolishment because “a longer father quota is at the expense of the mother’s leave.”⁸² One of the reform antagonist delegates credited the social media campaign for putting the matter on the agenda: “We have had this debate at the convention before, and we who want to abolish the quota have lost. But the ‘Leave rebellion’ has had a lot to say, it has become clear that the father quota is a challenge to people.”⁸³ In line with its long-standing position, the Progress Party’s resolution was to aim for full parental freedom.

Proposals to reverse the reform were rejected at the conventions of the Labour Party and the Liberal Party. The Labour Party would investigate why mothers choose unpaid leave. At Labour’s convention, there were also proposals to introduce a two-part division of leave.⁸⁴ But the Liberal Party’s previous strong advocate of a two-part division of leave backed down—this model would be “too rigid”.⁸⁵ The Centre Party proposed a revision that secured more weeks for the mother. This was to facilitate breastfeeding according to recommendations, but also as part of a package intended to remedy low fertility rates.⁸⁶

After the party conventions, the Gender Equality Ombud feared that the three other government parties would overpower the Liberal Party and scrap the reform altogether. To the Ombud, it was surprising that the three parties wanted to reverse a recent parliamentary decision.⁸⁷ The Ombud contended that while some women found the new arrangement difficult, many key actors supported the reform, and she asked since when did one start changing laws based on stories from organized pressure groups. Both the PM (Conservative Party) and the new Minister of Children and Families (Christian Democratic Party) reassured that the leave model would stay in the remaining government period (until the 2021 parliamentary election).⁸⁸ The PM acknowledged that some families lose out, but this has to be accepted when one tries to create social change. However, quotas should not last forever, the freedom of families should have more weight. But then we must have “come further,” it must be more natural for fathers to take up leave.

Conclusion: Enduring Tensions

Through the analytical lens of policy feedback processes, this case study advances our understanding of mechanisms that have formed fathers’ parental leave rights in Norway, adding insights to the politics of policy formation.

While much research on policy feedback has identified more or less pure cases of self-reinforcing or self-undermining processes (Béland and Schlager 2019), with its quarter-century history, the Norwegian father quota policy demonstrates how long-term conflicting feedback processes generate enduring tensions over a rather “mature” policy. Perceptions of the necessity of father

quotas to achieve gender-equality aims, promoted by the left and supported by parties at the political center, have generated self-reinforcing feedback effects that have stabilized or fostered quota expansion. But, more or less in parallel, the political rights' perceptions about negative consequences of quotas for parental choice and practical problems for diverse families have produced continued long-term self-undermining feedback, challenging the length of father quotas, as well as the existence of quotas as such. Changing institutional opportunities represented by shifts in government coalitions have made the quota policy vulnerable to contestation, negotiation, and change, having both reinforcing and undermining effects. The prominent role of father quotas in government negotiations signifies the status of the policy as an important ideological marker.

The political conflict over the quota was at its lowest historical point in 2018, when a father quota extension, in effect a reversal of a previous cut, negotiated as part of a new government platform, received cross-party support. Father quotas were also supported by a large majority of parents. However, as maintained by the policy feedback literature, stability of post-reform politics can be broken by interest groups, with consequences for partisan politics (Béland and Schlager 2019). The present study suggests that social media may be acquiring a new and significant role in policy feedback processes among the public. The social media-driven countermobilization was decisive for the polarized and emotionally charged public debate evolving.

Social media countermobilization was conditioned on the father quota scoring high on policy proximity and visibility. The reform affected prospective parents' lives in immediate, concrete ways, which was further accentuated by the speedy implementation of the reform. Some of the pregnant women starting the social media campaign would have to change plans about the sharing of leave with their partners. Social media heightened the visibility of reform opposition substantially. Moreover, activists' comprehensive political activities, exemplifying the hybridization of use of new and traditional media, were reflected in the public Facebook group's status report in June 2019, when signatures had gathered to a "fantastic 32,000."⁸⁹ The group had produced an "impressive" number of signatures, published an "enormous" number of articles in all newspapers, appeared in television and radio news, been heard and had success with the party conventions of Conservative Party and the Christian Democratic Party (uncertain of the Centre Party), met politicians in Parliament, sent letters and emails to central and local politicians, participated actively in social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Conflicting perceptions of the reform's social consequences was the normative engine of the public debate, mirroring ideas at the heart of the long-term political tension: divergent perceptions of parental choice versus state regulation, and of biological gender differences versus gender equality as the basis of parents' rights (Ellingsæter 2012, 2016). Reform antagonists criticized the reform for having negative social consequences for individual families'

choice, while reform protagonists defended positive consequences for gender equality in society as a whole. Mothers and fathers as citizens deserving particular rights were set against each other: Reform antagonists claimed that mothers deserve recognition for their reproductive work and thus need longer parental leaves. Reform protagonists contended that fathers deserve recognition as able carers for young children and thus need extended individual leave rights. Underpinning these positions were disparate perceptions of the role of mothers and fathers in the early stage of parenthood. Reform antagonists emphasized biological differences and the importance of the mother–child dyad in the child’s first year of life, while reform protagonists considered counteracting traditional gender patterns at this early stage as vital for gender equality in later stages of parenthood. Cognitive claims substantiated these normative positions. Prominent on the antagonist side was the claim that mothers over the years had lost several weeks of “their” leave and increasingly were taking up unpaid leave in response to longer father quotas. On the protagonist side, fathers’ reduced take-up of leave that followed the previous cut in the father quota substantiated the claim that fathers take only the leave allotted to them.

Ideas embedded in particular national symbolic categories grounded in policy legacies were evident in the public debate. As the father’s parental leave rights in part are dependent on the mother’s, the state has signaled that fathers are expected to use the quota period, but not necessarily share the rest of the leave equally (Bergqvist and Saxonberg 2017). The shareable part of the leave thus has become perceived and practiced as “mummy leave.” This is why opponents framed the 2018 father quota extension as taking leave away from mothers. This may also be the reason why fathers more or less were absent from the debate. Studies indicate that fathers have an ambivalent sense of entitlement to the shared part of the parental leave, they see it primarily as mothers’ entitlement (Brandth and Kvande 2019). Moreover, the call for a maternalist turn underpinning some of the reform antagonists’ arguments may be linked to a historically strong undercurrent of difference feminism in Norway (cf. Sainsbury 2001). But the emphasis on biological differences now appears in a modernized form, the psychosocial mother–child dyad is legitimated by brain research and psychological attachment theories.

Although the “leave debate” involved few new arguments, the comprehensive countermobilization from some groups revitalized the father quota as a public arena of political struggle. The countermobilization also fed back into the partisan environment. In light of the long-term conflicting feedback processes, the 2018 reform rested on a political compromise. The high pressure from the public debate was evident in the party conventions in the spring of 2019. Reform opposition legitimated the reversals of political positions, mainly based on “old” arguments about parental choice and breastfeeding. The compromise was destabilized, and the historical tensions were restated. One may ask where this leaves the future prospects of fathers’ leave rights in Norway. The father quota as such is not likely to be abolished in the near

future. Moreover, the national discursive space of parental leave model debate has significantly widened over time—today ranging between quota abolishment and a legislated fifty–fifty division between the mother and the father. Also, as indicated in the introduction, the strengthening of fathers’ individual parental leave rights seems to be gaining political momentum in the EU and in some other Nordic countries. Nonetheless, since national dynamics play such a vital role, the tensions in Norwegian father quota politics will probably linger on for some time.

Notes

Anne Lise Ellingsæter is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Oslo. Her fields of research include family policy, work–family issues and fertility.

1. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/06/13/better-work-life-balance-for-parents-and-carers-in-the-eu-council-adopts-new-rules/>.
2. A conditional “father month” was instituted in 2003. Since 2013, fathers have had nine weeks individual right to leave.
3. According to the proposal, fathers’ leave will be extended to 6.6 months (164 days), in line with maternity leave, where about half (sixty-nine days) can be given to the other parent. https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset_publisher/1271139/perhevapaauidustus-tahtaa-perheiden-hyvinvointiin-ja-tasa-arvon-lisaamiseen.
4. The leave will be extended to twelve months, the length of the father quota was not decided at the time of writing, but will be at least four months.
5. National newspapers, search period 1 January 2018–1 August 2019. Archive search terms: foreldreperm* (parental leave) OR fedrekvote* (father quota). Irrelevant articles were omitted manually.
6. The total leave was increased from twelve to eighteen weeks; six weeks after birth was obligatory for the mother, while the rest could be shared as parents preferred (Ot.prp. nr. 15 (1976–1977): 5).
7. St. meld. nr. 70 (1991–1992): 30–31.
8. Innst. O. nr. 34 (1992–1993).
9. Ot.prp. nr. 98 (2004–2005): 4.
10. Ot.prp. nr. 70 (2005–2006).
11. Budsjett-innst. S. nr. 2 (2005–2006): 31.
12. Cf. St.meld. 8 (2008–2009).
13. MP Christian Democratic Party, S.tid. May 7, 2013, 3289.
14. “Høyre-topper mot fedre-kvote kutt,” *VG Nett* January 19, 2010.
15. Innst. 354 L (2010–2011): 3, MP Progress Party, S. tid. May 30, 2011.
16. Innst. 279 L (2012–2013).
17. Prop. 40 L (2013–2014).
18. S. tid. May 10, 2014, 3278.

19. <https://www.nav.no/no/NAV+og+samfunn/Statistikk/Familie++statistikk/Nyheter/7-av-10-fedre-tar-ut-nøyaktig-fedrekvoten>.
20. NHO Director, “Mother and father must share leave equally,” *Dagsavisen* (October 26, 2017).
21. Anmodningsvedtak no. 4, October 11, 2017 (Meld. St. 12 (2018–2019)).
22. *Aftenposten* January 1, 2018. The mother quota would be extended accordingly.
23. From January 17, 2018.
24. “Trines tøffeste uker,” *Dagbladet* (January 15, 2018).
25. “Helleland varsler ny foreldrepermisjon i ekspressfart,” *VG* (February 7, 2018).
26. May 3, 2018. The main employee federation, LO, was also invited, but could not attend. <https://www.stortinget.no/no/Hva-skjer-pa-Stortinget/Videoarkiv/Arkiv-TV-sendinger/?mbid=/2018/H264-full/Hoeringssal1/05/03/Hoeringssal1-20180503-125525.mp4&msid=1775&dateid=10004188>.
27. MP Progress Party, S.tid. June 6, 2018.
28. Prop. 4 L (2018–2019).
29. Prop. 4 L (2018–2019).
30. Prop. 4 L (2018–2019).
31. Innst. 44 L (2018–2019).
32. However, the Christian Democratic Party achieved an increase in the child allowance and the lump sum paid to mothers not entitled to paid leave, and prolongation of the cash for childcare benefit.
33. Employment in six of the ten months prior to take up with an income equivalent to half the National Insurance basic amount, 1BA = approx. 10,000 euros.
34. “Gubber og kjerringe, troll etter troll!,” *Aftenposten* May 25, 2018.
35. “Lite setter mer følelser i sving hos kvinner og feminister enn fedrekvoten,” *Minerva* October 11, 2018.
36. “Våre elskede språkløse,” *Klassekampen* July 26, 2019, 26–27.
37. Norsk foreldrepermisjon—et overgep? *VG* July 31, 2018.
38. https://www.opprop.net/la_familiene_beholde_bestemmelsesretten_til_fodselspermisjonsfordeling.
39. February 23, 2018, Internet petition: https://www.opprop.net/la_familiene_beholde_bestemmelsesretten_til_fodselspermisjonsfordeling.
40. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2105830609674655/>.
41. Public Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2105830609674655/> Twitter: #permisjonsopproeret2019.
42. “Økt pappakvoten—likestillingstiltak som skyter seg selv i foten?,” *Aftenposten* (December 17, 2018).
43. Signatures received by the end of October 2018 were handed over to the Parliament’s standing committee on family and culture, but it was reported that because of “a growing engagement” the lists were still open for new signatures.
44. Petition, quote from pregnant woman.
45. “Det er mange av oss opprørte,” *Klassekampen* (October 15, 2018).

46. "Må pappa tvinges i permisjon?," *Aftenposten* (February 21, 2019).
47. "Kvinner endrer maktens ansikt, men endre de noe bak fasaden," *Morgenbladet* (February 2, 2018).
48. "Tredeling foreldrepermisjon:—Mor som fødemaskin," *VG* (March 13, 2019).
49. Kristine Karoliussen og terminggruppe juli 2018.
50. Written hearing on the 80 percent compensation alternative, Prop. 4 L (2018–2019).
51. "Det er mange av oss opprørte," *Klassekampen* (October 15, 2018).
52. The relationship between actual breastfeeding patterns and the length of the father is uncertain. Few women—less than 10 percent—breastfeed exclusively until the child is six months old, despite the long leave most mothers have been taking up ([Norwegian Official Report 2017](#)).
53. "Det er mange av oss opprørte," *Klassekampen* (October 15, 2018).
54. "En ideologisk tredeling," *Klassekampen* (November 22, 2018).
55. "Tredeling foreldrepermisjon:—Mor som fødemaskin," *VG* (March 13, 2019).
56. "Barnets beste: en fars innspill," *Klassekampen* (October 30, 2018).
57. "Pappa, pupp og penger," *Dagsavisen* (July 31, 2018).
58. "Hvor er samfunnsøkonomien?," *Dagbladet* (October 29, 2018).
59. "Våre elskede språkløse," *Klassekampen* (July 26, 2019).
60. "Vi trenger todelt permisjon, ikke mindre fedrekvote," *Dagbladet* (February 19, 2019). A government advisory committee, led by the author, proposed a two-part division of leave in 2017 ([Norwegian Official Report 2017](#)).
61. "Mor skal ikke dekke opp for far," *Dagsavisen* (January 26, 2018).
62. "Historisk likestilling," *Dagbladet* (April 10, 2018).
63. "Nederlag for likestillingen," *Dagbladet* (April 29, 2019).
64. "Tredeling," *Aftenposten* (February 16, 2019).
65. "Et nederlag for likestillingen," *Dagbladet* (April 29 2018).
66. "KrF og familien," *VG* (April 29, 2019).
67. "Snu-operasjon," *Vårt Land*, (January 18, 2018).
68. "Permisjonsdebatten:—Tredeling angår ikke bare nybakte foreldre," *VG* (March 13, 2019).
69. "Lite setter mer følelser i sving hos kvinner og feminister enn fedrekvoten," *Minerva* (October 11, 2018).
70. "Norsk foreldrepermisjon—et overgrep?," *VG* (February 7, 2019).
71. "Ber mødre skjerpe seg," *Dagbladet* (April 10, 2018).
72. "Derfor bør pappa-permen bestå," *Dagbladet* (May 4, 2019).
73. "Litt mindre skam i monitor, takk," *Klassekampen* (July 6, 2019).
74. Norsk foreldrepermisjon—et overgrep?, *VG*, July 31, 2018.
75. #permisjonsopproeret2019, (February 3, 2019).
76. "Permisjonsdebatten: Hvor er alle fedrene?," *VG* (February 22, 2019).
77. This claim is not supported by surveys showing that in 2008, when the father quota was 6 weeks, 29 percent of mothers chose 100 percent compensation, while this had increased to 69 percent in 2017, when the father quota was 10 weeks ([Schou 2019](#)). In 2008, 18 percent of those

- mothers chose some unpaid leave in addition; in 2017 this had increased to 31 percent. This was in part an adaptation to the take-up rules which makes this particular combination financially more profitable.
78. "Permisjonsdebatten:—La tredelinga bestå," *VG* (February 16, 2019).
 79. "Delt foreldrepermisjon er riktig medisin," *Dagbladet* (March 11, 2019).
 80. Liberal Party 8.—March 10, 2019, Conservative Party 15.—March 17, 2019, Centre Party 22.— March 24, 2019, Labour 4.—April 7, 2019, Socialist Left Party 23.—April 25, 2019, Christian Democratic Party 26.—April 28, 2019, Progress Party 3.—May 5, 2019.
 81. "Velger bort kranglesaker," *Vårt Land* (April 26, 2019).
 82. "KrF til kamp mot dagens pappaperm," *Aftenposten* (April 26, 2019).
 83. "Vil fedrekvoten til livs," *Klassekampen* (April 25, 2019).
 84. "Sakene som skaper strid i AP," *Dagbladet* (April 1, 2019).
 85. "Vil ikke lenger ha todelt foreldrepermisjon," *Dagbladet* (February 7, 2019).
 86. "Senterpartiet vil kutte i fedrekvoten," *Nationen* (March 19, 2019). "Vil ha fødevennlig politikk," *Klassekampen* (March 25, 2019).
 87. "The Gender Equality Ombud wants to retain three part division of leave," *Tidens Krav* (May 5, 2019).
 88. "Erna Solberg ser utløpsdato på fedrekvoten," *Dagsavisen* (March 7, 2019). When the Christian Democratic Party entered the government in 2018, the Ministry for Children and Gender Equality became the Ministry of Children and Families, the portfolio for gender equality issues was moved to another ministry.
 89. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2105830609674655/> (June 1, 2019).

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