Into Scandinavia: When Online Fatherhood Reflects Societal Infrastructures

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Denmark is a generous welfare state which provides resources and legal means for fathers to take their parental role seriously and engage with their children. In this paper, we explore the relation between Danish fathers' interaction online and the societal, legal, and economic infrastructures in which they are situated. By focusing on how fathers living in Denmark make use of the Internet and social media sites to facilitate their role as parents, we are able to explore how online engagement is shaped by the different societal 'norms' of parenting. Our research outlines the ways in which societal infrastructures influence how fathers perceive, and subsequently make use of social media in relation to child-caring. We find that fathers discuss their experiences of legal inequities and stereotypical discrimination on social network sites like Facebook. We also study fathers' online reviews of a Danish parenting App, FAR, designed specifically to support fathers. By analyzing social media discussions around fatherhood in Denmark, we found connections to the ways in which the current political climate shapes and influences fatherhood in Denmark, as they reflect the societal infrastructures which situate fathers in contemporary Denmark. Further, we found a strong political interest for collective action to transform the societal infrastructures to support legal equality for child caretaking across genders. This strong political motivation is distinct from existing studies exploring how fatherhood is displayed on social media in other countries such as the USA. On this basis, we argue that research exploring social media use in institutions which are strongly shaped by societal norms, must explicitly consider the role which society takes in shaping such institutions, and include these aspects into the analysis. Our data show that fathers use social media sites as platforms to produce a fatherhood more in line with their lived experience of parenting, and that they advocate for collective political action to strengthen fathers' legal rights.

CCS Concepts • **Human-centered computing**; Collaborative and social computing

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1 INTRODUCTION

Technology mediates work and everyday life in important ways, and it is a core interest for HCI research to unpack the role which technology has in shaping the societal context of the everyday life of people. We know that different societal infrastructures create different

conditions for work, life, and technology-use depending on geographical, historical, and political contexts [11, 34]. However, we know little about the relationship between societal infrastructures and the lived experiences by people which emerge in the everyday technology-mediated mundane activities. The family structure in specific societies are enacted through legal, financial, and societal infrastructures, and thus reflects the specificities of that particular societal context. This makes 'the family structure' a central analytical starting point if we want to understand the societal infrastructures and their relation to technology. While the family structure can take many different forms – parenting remains a core social role. Understanding the role of social media in shaping parenting is an emergent topic for HCI research [52]. While prior research has analyzed the dynamics that arise in multicultural families using social media [56] and technology [42], little research has focused on parents' online self-presentation in relation to local societal, legal, and normative elements which shapes the institutional entity of parenting. Parenting is often referred to in terms of motherhood and fatherhood, and the majority of research in HCI has focused on the multiple online representations of motherhood [6]. Our work focuses on online representations of fatherhood [2], placing particular focus on the following research questions:

> **RQ1**: What entails the relation between fathers' technology interactions and the societal infrastructures in which they are situated?
>
> **RQ2**: How do fathers make sense of technological affordances in relation to their embedded social role as fathers within the unique Danish societal infrastructures?

In this paper, we explore the representation of fatherhood as it appears online in Denmark. Investigating fatherhood in Scandinavia (including Denmark) is especially interesting because Scandinavian welfare states provide generous services for parents in the early years of the child's life. This situation makes online fatherhood in Denmark an interesting case in comparison with existing research around online fatherhood in the USA. Historically, daycare institutions emerged as a core infrastructure of Danish society [16] as women entered the workplace back in the late 60's early 70's. Today, the majority of Danish children (aged 0-5) spend 5 days a week in daycare between 8:00am-5:00pm and both parents work outside the home [41]. Once the children start attending school, after-hour care programs and activities are available and the expectation is that parents continue to work outside the home. These initiatives are financed and formalized by the Danish government to incentivize both parents to quickly reenter the workforce after having children.

Traditionally, as in the rest of the Western World, fathers in Denmark were seen as distant, stoic, primary breadwinners. Today, most Danish families are dual-earner families where fathers take an "active part in childbirth preparation, birth and childcare" ([49] cited in [25]) [14]. Denmark's "family/father friendly" welfare policies present 'a promising context for upsetting conventional gendered care norms' ([8] cited in [28]). In other words, the expectations to enact 'nurturing fatherhood' [28] successfully in Denmark provides fathers with the infrastructures that allows them to better combine the traditional role of breadwinner with 'caring masculinity' as caregivers. Increasing divorce rates are another example of social change in Denmark [15]. This change gave rise to new family structures in which children from earlier relationships are brought together into large families.

If we are to understand how contemporary fatherhood is practiced in Denmark, the Internet offers an excellent platform for investigating fatherhood in Denmark. Social networking

technologies offer a unique window for insight into how present-day fatherhood is perceived and performed by fathers.

In our analysis we rely on three sources of data. These include the complete set of messages posted in the period between February 9th 2018 and April 23rd 2018 on the public Facebook group called 'Foreningen Far' (Danish for Association for Danish fathers, abbreviated FF). Additionally, five interviews with Danish fathers were conducted by recruiting father-bloggers and by posting advertisements to the FF Facebook group as well as other father and paternal leave groups. We also examined the online reviews of the App 'FAR' (translates to 'DAD'), a smartphone application designed for fathers in Denmark. By combining these different types of data sources we are able to identify and compare cross-thematic categories. This in turn allows us to understand the relationship between online interactions producing fatherhood and the societal infrastructures in which fatherhood norms they are situated.

We found that fathers share online their experiences with legal inequity and discrimination based on gender stereotypes and old fashion norms in the context of divorce and custody openly on the FF Facebook forum. These discussions centered around fathers' experiences of the legal frameworks shaping their parenting relationship with the child and their partners. Specifically, fathers focused on the inequities of family law in Denmark that reduced their capacity to act as primary caregivers, despite their interests in being active figures in the children's lives. Similarly, fathers critiqued the traditionally masculine tropes used in a new App designed for fathers in Denmark. In effect, Danish fathers produced masculinity in new ways through their interactions on the FF Facebook group.

Concretely, participants explain how *not* taking responsibility for caretaking of your own children is *less* masculine, and thus equal engagement with their children is a necessity for them to see themselves as *masculine fathers*. In our analysis, we investigate how fathers discuss the legal constraints which clash with their perspective on fatherhood. Throughout this process we found that, while fathers see themselves as active caretakers, societal norms still [31] portray fathers primarily as breadwinners and helpers for mothers. Thus, fathers in Denmark use social media for collective action in order to promote and advance men's legal rights as fathers, especially in the case of divorce and custody battles.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. First, we revisit prior research on online parenting and fatherhood to situate our work. This is followed by an introduction to our method, data collection, and data analysis. Then we present our results, divided into sub-sections that focus on legal issues, gender stereotypes, and online interaction. We then discuss our results and compare our findings to research on fatherhood in American-English speaking families – considering the relationship between the production of fatherhood and the societal infrastructures. Finally, we suggest that future research focusing on the use of social media for cultural institutions (like parenting) must consider the particular societal infrastructure, which shapes the online participation.

2 INFRASTRUCTURES & ONLINE FATHERHOOD

In this section, we focus on two areas of literature around fatherhood. The first section reviews social infrastructures for Danish fathers. In the second, we review past literature on the use of social media by fathers. Finally, we summarize earlier findings and how they have a bearing on our research questions.

2.1 Social and Legal Infrastructures for Fatherhood in Denmark

In Denmark, fathers were traditionally seen as primary breadwinners while mothers were seen as the main caregivers [16]. However, this social view of fathers as the traditional authoritarian patriarch has changed, and since the early 2000s Denmark has witnessed an increase in fathers involvement with their children [23]. In fact, fathers spent as much as 190% more time with their children today than Danish fathers did in 1989 [13]. Reforms in the legal structures for parental leave are also slowly increasing the number of Danish fathers who take parental leave, yet they are still lagging behind mothers in Denmark [16, 24]. Families in Denmark have 52 weeks of paid parental leave. Of the 52 weeks, the mother is required to take 2 weeks immediately after giving birth and has the right to take fourteen more weeks afterwards. Fathers have the right to two weeks of paternal leave immediately after birth. Both parents can together decide on how to share the remaining 32 weeks [16].

While social and legal infrastructures in Denmark are moving towards a more balanced perspective of parenting norms as they apply to mothers and fathers, Danish fathers still experience legal inequities in family law [54]. In a qualitative study of Danish fathers, Westerling documented how Danish fathers found the family court system to be biased against fathers. In essence, mothers are still viewed as the "child's best caregiver by default" [54]. Additionally, Madsen found that many fathers felt that they were not directly addressed by health staff (e.g., doctors, nurses, and midwives) during pregnancy [33]. Similarly, Noergaard et al. found that fathers were less involved in the care of a child in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) [37] and suggested that medical staff, and especially the NICU nursing staff should attempt to engage fathers and show them that they are equal co-parents with their partners.

There are a number of different social and organizational actors involved in defining the role of fatherhood in Denmark. These include consecutive Danish governments, labor unions, health services, and non-governmental organizations [13, 16]. One such NGO is Foreningen Far (FF). Foreningen Far was founded in 1977 and is one of the world's oldest fatherhood organizations dedicated to advocate:

> "That children can to the greatest degree possible have close contact with both parents, and that both parents can maintain influence over their children's upbringing – even when the parents do not live together. Furthermore, to ensure the rights of children and parents in society by the fact that parent are equated through legislation, judicial and administrative practices, and as far as possible to support relevant research in the field of children and family" [39].

In 2002, FF witnessed a 400% increase in advice center visitors, with approximately 200,000 yearly visitors from diverse cultural and societal backgrounds. This influx in activity corresponded to the organization's increased focus on influencing public opinion, politicians, and other stakeholders in the Danish society. This work has placed the legal uncertainty for fathers in their relations to children on the political agenda. In correspondence with the changed perspective emphasizing fathers' capacities as care-takers, FF has been met with increased responsiveness from the public and is an important voice in the gender equality debate in Denmark, and in 2011 they established a public Facebook group.

The initial political motivations for improving paternal leave largely focused on ensuring fair working conditions for women so they could easily re-integrate into the labor market after giving birth [44]. The father's role in the gender debate was primarily portrayed as the mother's assistant. This focus on women as the primary beneficiaries to change had the undesirable effect

of keeping fathers locked in the helper role as a parent, rather than having them participate as equal parenting partners [24].

The legal and healthcare infrastructures set the scene for Danish fatherhood in certain ways. To fully understand contemporary fatherhood in Denmark, we need to understand how fatherhood is experienced by Danish fathers – and we do this by exploring how fatherhood is produced online.

2.2 Fatherhood Online

The majority of research investigating online parenthood focus on mothers (e.g., [20, 36]) and fathers in the *English-speaking US context* (e.g., [6]). These studies have documented how mothers lead in managing online family disclosures including posting child-related pictures and milestones to social media as well as negotiating what is appropriate to post with family and friends [6, 30]. Fathers, however, have been found to be hesitant about sharing family content with members of their networks who might be professional colleagues [1]. Further research has shown that fathers did not discuss parenting issues like sleep training or vaccines on social networking sites like Facebook. Instead they preferred pseudonymous social media sites like Reddit to discuss circumcision, sleep training or divorce and custody issues [2]. Here, fathers asked questions about other dads' experiences in divorce. They especially focused on hardships they face as fathers in the family court system [3]. Other parents on Reddit gave them advice from their own experiences [2,3]. Some of the users, being lawyers, also provided technical legal advice for others. Different social media sites provide parents with different affordances [6]. For example, Reddit allows users to create pseudonymous (and even more anonymous throwaway accounts) while sites like Instagram allow parents to focus on sharing pictures of the more normative image of the family [32]. Fathers preferred discussing their parenting experiences on Reddit where they were anonymous and less likely to face judgment from other parents and acquaintances in their near social networks [2, 6, 47]. Due to the platform affordances that allow for sharing posts widely, parents of children with special needs used Twitter and public Facebook pages when advocating for social change [1, 5]. However, they used closed Facebook groups when looking for information and support from other parents of children with special needs since they provided a higher level of privacy control.

Fathers use parenting online spaces to access support from other fathers, specifically fathers who have gone through similar parenting experiences [2,6,12]. This is especially true for stay-at-home dads (SAHDs) who face more isolation than other parents as they find it difficult to take part in activities of parenting groups dominated by mothers [5].

Prior work explored blogging by and for *Nordic fathers* [15, 16]. Blogging allowed first time expecting Swedish fathers [7] to explain how they see the pregnancy period as an emotional roller coaster. Young single fathers in Sweden used blogs to make sense of their parenting identity and challenges they faced as parents [27], and new Swedish fathers discussed their concerns and supported each other using an online forum [17]. More broadly, another study described how new fathers discussed their concerns and supported each other using an online forum [17]. Nordic fathers were specifically looking for experiential information from other fathers [17]. For example, fathers discussed being left out of healthcare parental support (HCPS) services in comparison to mothers.

Online communities [45] provided a space for fathers to support each other especially in the earlier stages of childhood [45]. Research on online communities by fathers in Nordic countries (e.g., [19, 21, 43, 50]) showed that these communities provided support for fathers and were used by fathers from various socio-economic groups [46]. Although parents access information

online [29] they might find it difficult to determine the provenance of the information. Earlier research suggested that the dearth of parenting communities for fathers might reinforce traditional gender roles that paint fathers as secondary care-givers [6]. Given the centrality of the cultural, economic, and historical contexts of different societies when defining the role of fatherhood [48], and the importance of online communities in reframing parenting identities (e.g., [3]) and advocating for their change (e.g., [6, 12]), it is critical that we consider the societal infrastructures which shape fatherhood when studying fathers' social media use.

2.3 Summary

The normative concept of fatherhood throughout the West is being redefined. Danish Governments, in tandem with other organizational forces (e.g. unions, and non-governmental organizations) have set out to provide more egalitarian services for both fathers and mothers. Given the particularities of the social infrastructure for fathers in Denmark, we analyze how fathers use social media to (re)produce fatherhood in RQ1.

Given that different social media sites and parenting Apps have different affordances, in RQ2, we explore how fathers use different affordances as they make sense of, and produce their identities as parents.

3 METHODS

To investigate the relation between fathers' interaction online and the societal infrastructures in which they are situated, we needed to find different types of data sources which provided insights into online interactions as well as allowing us to situate our observations in relation to the societal infrastructures of Danish society.

Our starting point was to focus on the public Facebook group for 'Foreningen Far', since this is the largest non-governmental forum for fathers in Denmark. After gaining their permission, following the ethical guidelines of the university, we collected the complete set of posts between February 9th and April 23rd and began analyzing these in detail.

From this analysis we discovered a recent release of the smartphone application 'FAR' (DAD); the first App designed for and advertised to Danish fathers as the target group. Following our discovery of this App, we noticed detailed debates by users in the AppStore review forum. Therefore, we analyzed these reviews of the new App in order to determine how fathers, the target users for the App, viewed its design.

Finally, we decided to gain additional qualitative insights concerning fathers in Denmark and recruited via the FF Facebook a group five fathers who agreed to be interviewed in person. The data in which our work is grounded comes from these three different sources, thus allowing us to triangulate our analysis in order to identify cross-data patterns and understand the empirical situation in more detail. The data sources were deliberately picked to portray different aspects of contemporary fatherhood in Denmark. By using the posts on FF's Facebook page as data source, we gain insights into the interaction between fathers online and the topics and agendas they share. Combining these insights with the reviews of the 'DAD' smartphone App provided insights into the various conceptions of father roles which co-exist in contemporary Danish Society. The way App reviewers positioned themselves in relation to the content on the App can be interpreted as a comment on how contemporary fatherhood is perceived by Danish fathers. Finally, interviewing fathers recruited from the Facebook group provided a more detailed understanding of the context in which the interaction online takes place. By analyzing all of the materials across these sources we were able to develop a nuanced and holistic understanding of what constitutes fatherhood online in Denmark.

All data were collected in Danish and then translated to English by the first author. Below we provide more details about the data sources as well as the processes of data collection and analysis.

3.1 Data Sources

Foreningen Far (FF) is Denmark's largest non-governmental organization for children and fathers that works to promote fathers' rights by focusing on activities, advice and parenting knowledge [51]. They bear kinship to organizations like the UK Fatherhood Initiative and National Fatherhood Initiative in the US. As an organization, FF is largely volunteer-based with emphasis on informing its members about activities, advice, and knowledge sharing on parenthood issues. Throughout Denmark, they have advice centers, organize self-help groups, and host a call-line. All these initiatives serve the function of offering free support for fathers. FF also strives to assist fathers on the political level by engaging actively in the public debates through influencing policy-making and legislative actions relating to fatherhood in Danish society. Given the centrality of this organization in raising awareness of fatherhood issues in Denmark, their Facebook group is a central site in which Danish fatherhood is produced online. The public Facebook group is driven and moderated by administrators from the organization.

The Facebook group was created in April 2011 and, at the time when we conducted our research, the group had 12,200 followers. The group receives on average between 3-4 posts a day from group members. Additionally, the site administrators post information about political debates and current events relevant to their members and act as moderators. Although FF is not an organization for single fathers only, this specific demographic group was overrepresented. One can assume their increased involvement in paternity rights is a result of their newfound situation as single men where gender inequalities are more pronounced and an important part of their lived experience. It is important to include this group of fathers as they are more exposed to structural injustice than fathers still in relationships. We focused our analysis on the 160 posts which were posted in the period February 9th and April 23rd 2018 by group members. We wanted to perform a detailed qualitative analysis on a set of posts which could be combined with other data sources (online reviews on the FAR App and in-person semi-structured interviews). Thus, while our data from FF is from a particular time period, we situate our findings in the larger contextual situations of the infrastructures in Denmark. In this way we are able to gain a contemporary insight into how fatherhood is produced online.

The 'DAD' smartphone application is developed by the Danish Committee for Health Education in collaboration with the Danish Physiotherapists Association. The App's content is largely written by a Danish dad-blogger, who felt that there was a dearth in parenting information specifically aimed at fathers, especially content in Danish language. Besides child-related information, the App also offers suggestions to physical activities for the child and father as well as more practical information like the location of local child-friendly cafés and playgrounds. In the AppStore, since its launch in April 2016, this App received 1,600 reviews and has been downloaded 16,700 times. On Google Play, following its launch in June 2016, the App received 62 reviews and has been downloaded 3,000 times. The App has an average score of 4.4/5 on App Store and 2.9/5 on Google Play, which suggests that generally the users were positive of the App. However, the reviews are polarized with some fathers giving the App a lower score. Additionally, the contents of the reviews were more nuanced as fathers discussed what they liked and disliked about the design of the App. It is important to notice that reviewers of the 'DAD' App also included positive reviews. This mix of reviews show that contemporary fatherhood in Denmark is multi-facetted and different perceptions of how

paternity can be performed coexists. The reviews about the design of the App is an important data source that allow us to triangulate our data from FF and the interviews.

To gain more qualitative insight into the production of fatherhood online in Denmark we interviewed five of the fathers that engaged in the FF Facebook group. One of the interview respondents is the main content provider for the DAD App discussed above. In this way, we sought to have our three types of data sources overlap in a meaningful way to ensure congruency between results. The recruitment message focused on better understanding how fathers used social media sites and followed the interview protocols used in a previous study of English-speaking US fathers [6]. We conducted five semi-structured face-to-face interviews with fathers about their use of digital technology and social media. All interviews were conducted in Danish, transcribed fully and translated into English by the first author. Two of the interviewees were recently divorced, while two were in a relationship with the mother and one was living-apart-together. All respondents agreed that child-rearing was a common responsibility – ideally shared equally among both parents.

F01 and F02 who both had children attending elementary school told us how they would access the school's intranet website to get information about upcoming school activities. Both fathers had shared custody over their children and, as they now lived alone, they would have to take care of all household responsibilities and child-related activities when their children lived with them. F01, F03 and F05 had split the parental leave equally. All of our interviewees took their paternal leave at the time the child was six months old.

Table 1. Interviews: Participant and partner demographics.
*Number of children. **Ages of children. ER: Ended Relationship; Cert: Certificate. CO: Co-Occupant.
CE: College Education; GS: Graduate School; HS: High School; FT: Full-Time

	Marital status	Degree, Employment		Partner Degree, Employment		*	**
F01	ER (split custody)	HS	FT	N/A	FT	2	6, 22
F02	Divorced (split custody)	HS	FT	Cert	FT	3	14, 16, 26
F03	CO	GS	FT	CE	FT	2	1, 3
F04	Married	GS	FT	GS	FT	1	2
F05	CO	HS	FT	GS	FT	1	1

3.2 Data Analysis

All the data collected from the three data sources (FF Facebook group, Reviews of the DAD App, and the interviews) were imported into the qualitative data analysis program Nvivo. We conducted thematic analysis [22], carefully examining the complete dataset to identify emerging themes in a inductive fashion [35]. Starting from FF's Facebook group posts, codes were applied as they developed progressively during the initial round of the analytical process where the first author went through the data set iteratively. After the initial coding process, emerging themes were discussed and considered in relation to the complete data set. The first author continued the coding process until saturation of categories. A number of themes resulted from this process. The results were then discussed between all authors to ensure congruency in the findings and the larger themes were applied to the complete data set. In table 1 below, we have

highlighted the emergent themes and how often these themes were encountered from this analysis across the FF Facebook group.

Table 2. Emerging themes from the 'Foreningen Far' FF Facebook group analysis.

Themes	Number of posts	Themes
Questions about legal matters & policy-making	62	Questions concerning legal matters; distribution of children; rights in divorce cases; questions to legal policies
Questions about divorce & children	39	Questions concerning child responsibilities; advice in divorce cases, not related to legal matters
Questions about parenthood	13	Questions concerning general advice on child-rearing; sharing of experiences; giving advice to other fathers
Frustration with parental role	32	Expressing frustration with unequal/unfair parental roles
Positive stories	14	Affirming stories; support to other fathers; humor; positive advice

4 Results

Based upon the above themes (Table 2), we identified four main topics which produced fatherhood online, namely: 1) Feeling lost in legal disputes; 2) Parenting clichés and stereotypes; 3) Responsible parenting as masculine, and; 4) Fathers managing privacy boundaries online. Below we expand into each of these topics in turn.

4.1 Feeling Lost in Legal Disputes

We found that 63% (101 posts) of the discussions on Foreningen Far's (FF) Facebook group focused on legal questions, policy-making, seeking advice in divorce situations and how to deal with feelings of powerlessness. Only 11 % (14 posts) of the total number of posts were affirming in nature, where fathers would discuss activities, share positive stories concerning their own divorce, and generally encourage other fathers to be more engaged with their children despite the challenges of divorce. The rest of the posts referenced the challenges fathers faced especially when they experienced family court throughout divorce and/or custody battles.

A debate on gender inequality was clearly present in the posts. In the Facebook group, fathers expressed how the legal inequities frame their parenting roles. In particular, they discussed experiences of being perceived as assistants to the mothers as opposed to be co-parents especially when they meet the legal system. The following statement exemplifies a father's frustration after his encounter with the legal system when going through a child custody case:

> "I'm devastated... Frustrated with the State Administration. Duplicity and foul play. I was of the belief that the *Statsadministration* [Danish for State Administration which is the Danish legal entity which oversee custody and divorce cases] were there to help me and my daughter to get closer to each other again. I'm empty. I feel like I've lost my daughter in a way. The title of dad... I was only allowed to be a father in short periods of my daughter's life. I want to scream out all my anger, frustration and sadness" [P66, Facebook Entry, Foreningen Far, March 9th, 2018].

Multiple fathers echoed this frustration with the current legal and political landscape surrounding fathers' rights to custody of their children in divorce situations. This was evident in our data through participants' expression of fears and discouragement related to their interactions with the State Administration, as expressed here:

> "Is it really true that everyone has such a bad experience [with the State Administration]", "It's pure hell", and "Men have no right", [P33, Facebook Entry, Foreningen Far, February 18th, 2018].

Fathers expressed how they were reframing norms that portrayed them as 'helper[s] to the mother.' Analogously, they vented about legal mechanisms governing divorce and custody, in which mothers are still considered primary caregivers despite the recent changes in society where fathers are seen providing more childcare. In essence, fathers experienced the family law to be rigid, "*biased and discriminating towards men.*" [P130, Facebook Entry, Foreningen Far, April 22nd, 2018]. This view was echoed throughout multiple posts by fathers on FF Facebook group.

Fathers would ask specific questions and advice about their current legal dilemma in family court, giving detailed descriptions of their personal experiences. For example, a father asked about paternity leave for non-cohabiting fathers:

> "Question. I have talked to my trade union about having 2 weeks paternity leave when the baby is born. They were not sure about my rights, as the mother and I are not currently living together. Has anyone here had similar experiences?" [P32, Facebook Entry, Foreningen Far, February 18th, 2018].

As a way of managing the legal inequities they perceived in Danish family law courts, fathers used the social media as a source for support. One father says:

> "I wish there was a place where I and others like me could go to for help... get help and support. But as a man, who do you turn to?" [P66, Facebook Entry, Foreningen Far, February April 4th, 2018].

The FF Facebook page also presented a space for collaborative efforts to organize and advocate for political, societal, and legal change. For example, fathers discussed staging demonstrations in front of the State Administration in order to counter the current legal system and its effects on Danish fathers. In the below example a father is trying to encourage other fathers to take collective legal action against the State Administration for the perceived injustice they feel subjected to:

> "Anyone here want to get in on prosecuting the State Administration, so that our case will stand stronger? I want to base the case on the way the State Administration treats fathers and how they delegitimize and ridicule the importance of fatherly contact for a child. Serious comments only... " [P83, Facebook Entry, Foreningen Far, March 20th, 2018]

The legal concerns about custody and divorce were echoed in our face-to-face interviews. Our interviewees expressed the need to see their roles not only as helpers to mothers but also primary caretakers. For example, one of the interviewees commented on taking paternal leave, saying:

"I think it is a little weird if the responsibility is not shared fifty-fifty among the father and mother. I don't get why men would want to have children if they don't intend to show them any interest, to be with them" (F05, April 9th, 2018).

Fathers on the FF Facebook group and in our interviews were occupied with voicing concerns about the potentially diminishing role in their children's lives, if the mother was given full custody as part of creating their own parenting role.

4.2 Fatherhood Clichés and Stereotypes Online

Fathers face stereotypes and clichés on a daily basis, which is exemplified within the online reviews of the DAD App. The DAD App is designed to provide fathers with advice and information, such as step-by-step instructions for changing diapers (see Figure 2 below). From the description of the DAD App in the AppStore, it is described as follows:

"[The] information you need to get through maternity leave, baby care and baby food. The App guides you through [parenting, and] provides lots of advice, facts and inspiration [relating] to everything from work-out with baby, cafe visits and conflict management in your relationship [AppStore and GooglePlay, August 15th, 2018]".

The DAD App is highly rated in the Danish AppStore, both under the general categorization of Apps but also under health-related Apps [18]. The DAD App uses informal language and humorous communication that portray fathers as a stereotypical secondary caregiver. For example, the App suggests that, in cases of messy diapers, the father should consider 'call[ing] the mom.' In the reviews of the App, several of the reviewers explicitly noted how this kind of 'advice' relegates fathers to the status of a helper rather than a co-parent. Reviewers expressed their disapproval of the written content and choice of jargon, and found the language to be condescending towards men, as these below quotes demonstrate:

"The language is disgraceful - its speaks to you like you are some brute on steroids, who can only understand Mars bars as units of measure. The fact that this App is recommended at the first visit to the doctor's office is downright embarrassing" [FAR App Review from GooglePlay, October 7th, 2017].

"Comparing the size of the fetus with the size of a steak at an expensive restaurant is just a stark example of a way of speaking about these things that are just a few decades behind when it comes to clichés and stereotypes about what interests men' [FAR App Review from AppStore, May 25th, 2017].

The nature of masculinity as it relates to parenting emerged as a theme across all our data sources. Discussions around this issue focused on equal parental participation in everything related to child-rearing. In all our interviews, having a shared responsibility for children was a given. Further, one of our interviewees expressed that he perceived fathers, who did not take full responsibility in caring for their offspring as being *less masculine'* (interviewee F01, April 1st, 2018).

However, other users of the DAD App applauded the attempt to make issues around pregnancy and child upbringing more interesting for fathers. One reviewer, indicating that he appreciated the informality of the language employed in the App, wrote the following:

"Very good App to keep track of what's going on with the misses while the little one is baking in the oven. Written with humor." [FAR App Review from AppStore, November 23rd, 2016].

Several reviewers also backed up statements like the above, praising the informal tone with its many references to football and hip-hop slang, stating this was exactly what got them so engaged in the application in the first place:

"Finally an App for dad!! We have waited a long time for this. I'm especially excited about the informal language which makes it all really laid-back and humorous" [FAR App Review from AppStore, June 19th 2016].

The mixed reviews suggest that some fathers struggle with preconceived stereotypical conceptions of the incompetent father. While others embraced their role, as being fundamentally different from women, without any negative connotations. This is the first App in Denmark marketed specifically for fathers. The attempt to engage men in the early stages of parenthood seem appropriate. The fact that the DAD App is one of the most highly rated Apps in Denmark, and that its use opens up debate about the role of fathers in Denmark, are both good signs about how social technology can motivate discussions around parenting norms.

Figure 1. This is a screenshot from the DAD App. This screenshot shows a step-by step guide on how to change a diaper.

4.3 Self-disclosure Online

All fathers interviewed were Facebook users. However, many of them remained skeptical when it came to sharing information about their children on the platform. They acknowledged the extent of Facebook's centrality in the social media ecology, however they were explicitly articulating its shortcomings, especially in the areas of context collapse and privacy boundary regulation. For example, one of the interviewees said:

"Of course Facebook is the more popular platform, it's there you get more discussions going, which is why. In my opinion it's also there the discussions get more... Inappropriate" (F03, April 5th, 2018).

Our interviewees recognized that when sharing posts related to parenting, these posts might be viewed by acquaintances from their professional social networks (e.g., their colleagues at work) which might be deemed socially inappropriate. While they had used Facebook to announce milestone events, like posting pictures of their newborn right after birth, they were careful about what they posted. One of the interviewees had largely switched his primary social media platform from Facebook to Instagram, as he felt the media is better suited to:

"filter out stupid comments and other more or less pointless stuff" (F03, April 5th, 2018).

The interviewee found Instagram more appealing as it was more image-centered as opposed to *'discussion-oriented'* (F02, April 3rd, 2018), which allowed him to just share *'pictures from everyday life and pictures from holidays'* (F03, April 5th, 2018) instead of having to engage in parenting discussions which might be uncomfortable. The interviewees also described how they had changed their sharing behavior. In one example, the interviewee shared pictures of his first-born son's birth on Facebook, but with time he started to share less on Facebook and relied on Instagram to share more pictures of his children. F03 noted that:

"Facebook has got kind of like.. What is the right word for it? It has become a media for grandparents and the elderly. The ones of my friends who post in there are my aunt and my uncles. And meanwhile the debates on Facebook are simply awful. So, this is why I have switched to Instagram because it is primarily a picture and video driven service" (F03, April 5th, 2018).

The first few months of the child's life are difficult for fathers as they try to make sense of their identity in relation to the child. The implicit 'bystander-role,' which fathers often take during the initial phases of parenthood risk fathers to become insecure and makes it difficult to embrace their identity as fathers (F02, Aril 3rd 2018). For example, during breast-feeding, women are placed in intimate situations with the infant child. Fathers lack that kind of intimate interaction with their child. It is one reason fathers gave for their infrequent posts about their children on social media. For example, one father explains:

"Women develop a closer connection in the beginning and are more inclined to show how much they love their children. It might be... because it is still sort of taboo for a man to show affection to one's children the way a woman does" (F05, April 9th, 2018).

Interviewees explained how men would experience prejudice if they were too in touch with their emotions, and thus would not post too intimately about their children and might even engage in 'self-discriminating' by not engaging fully. However, he did notice a shift in attitude and with the use of the internet:

"It's obvious that with the increased use of social media or the Internet at large it became much easier for men to gain insight and clarification [on child matters]. However, I do think a lot of men are still holding themselves back a bit. Exactly because men are somewhat in the background still when it comes to parenting." (F05, April 9th, 2018).

Several of the interviewees explained how they had actively searched for father groups online, but had failed to find appropriate information:

"Yeah, that was something I was actively searching for, but I wasn't able to find any [experienced-based] information written in Danish that appealed to me. But in reality, that was probably something I could have made really good use of" (F03, April 5th, 2018).

One of the fathers suggested that the disproportionate distribution between parental leaves taken by men and women explained the lack of online support for fathers:

"[...] [Fathers], they generally don't take as much leave as women. Maybe because it is still a bit transgressive for men to share their experiences. Because there aren't that many groups for men [only]" (F04, 7th, 2018).

One of the interviewees created his own dad-blog. He explained how it catered to the needs of fathers by conveying personal fatherhood experiences.

"That was kind of what we wanted to do with daddyo. To create a space that did not only show that life as a stay-at-home dad was all about changing diapers and watching day-time TV. People really enjoyed watching how other fathers went about their role as parent" (F03, April 5th, 2018).

The respondents were generally interested in reading other parents' posts about their children. However, they would often be hesitant to share content themselves. One father stressed that it was critical for him that online parenting groups were either closed or anonymous to safeguard his privacy as well as that of his children. He had limited his parenting-related posts on Facebook for similar reasons. Another suggested,

"I do consider what I share online and more specifically what I exhibit on behalf of my children."(...) "The stuff you put online. Is it going to be forgotten? When is it forgotten? Can it forever be traced back to them? So, based on this uncertainty I don't wish to share any type of information about my children that could ever potentially be misinterpreted later" (F01, April 1st, 2018).

It was important for all the interviewees to protect the privacy of their children, specifically focusing on how information posted online now would affect their children's future.

"Can any of this information come to harm her later in life? If she were to become… Let's say Prime Minister. Could it in some way expose her, be used against her? This is something that is completely out of my control" (F01, April 1st, 2018).

Fathers largely agreed that content shared online should primarily bring about positive connotations, mostly through humor. The example below shows how F03 thinks men rationalize and prioritize when they share content online:

"[...] we are of course very proud about the fact that we have children, but we do also like to bring some humour into play as well. Yes, so I think that dads strive to make posts which have something that is humorous and with a bit of pride in there as well." (F03, April 5th, 2018).

Interviewees were concerned with sharing too much content, *"prior to the child actually being able to give their consent,"* since children themselves should have a say in what is posted about

them online. All our respondents expressed that they were most uncertain about matters related to child-rearing during the first year of their child's life. The first months of parental leave (F04, April 7th 2018) represent one of periods when fathers have lots of questions about parenting. When looking for parenting information, our interviewees focused on finding information from well-renowned organizations or government entities. Interviewees explained how they did not hesitate when contacting their general physician or other members of the medical team. Because Danish universal health care services provide access to medical professionals and government-organized father/mother groups (with health care professionals in attendance), parents have quite a few professional avenues to access information. One interviewee noted that healthcare professionals in these groups *answered* all his parenting questions, *"both practical and emotional"* (F05, April 9th 2018).

Interviewees were hesitant to use social media to seek advice about parenting issues. One father suggested that child-rearing was too "*detailed and nuanced,*" and anyone not intrinsically familiar with the child would not be able to give adequate advice. Further, he asserted:

> "[…] essentially, you don't know who answers you on the web and you have no way of knowing if their profiles are real or not" (F02, April 3rd2018).

Fathers also noted that there were disadvantages to searching for information using search engines (e.g., Google). One father suggested, '*often times, you can misinterpret what you read online and, in many cases, you will read about worst case scenarios"* (F04, April 7th, 2018).

5 DISCUSSION

Based upon our results, we found that the social interaction online mirrored the current cultural and infrastructural situation of the Danish society related to the family. There are strong relations between how fatherhood is produced online and the contemporary infrastructures related to legal frameworks for custody after divorce, as well as the universal healthcare infrastructure. Those fundamental infrastructures for society matter if we are to understand the specific use of technology by fathers living in Denmark.

5.1 Constesting Cultural Fatherhood Norms

We found that a key concern for fathers engaging on social media in Denmark was to renegotiate contemporary fatherhood and masculinity stereotypes. As evident in our data from the reviews of the DAD App, a group of fathers did not identify with the ways in which fatherhood was represented on the platform. They expressed explicit disapproval of how the DAD App reproduces the conventional gender tropes that portray men as less suited to providing care for children when compared to mothers. They ground their critique by pointing to the wording and phrases used in the App design. By voicing their critique of the DAD App, fathers actively seek to challenge current stereotypes of fatherhood by highlighting inconsistencies between these stereotypes and their actual lived identity.

Similar views on the normative lag [9] between the lived experiences of fathers and the normative views of fatherhood have been echoed by fathers in prior work [5, 6]. Discourses about parenting Apps presented in our analysis are echoed in earlier work on the reviews of Apps for fathers. For example, Thomas et al., of whom used critical discourse analysis on pregnancy App reviews, argue that *"many Apps also condescend to expectant fathers and trivialize their role, assuming that they need entertainment, humor and encouragement to promote their involvement"* [19]. As society's expectations of men in their fatherhood role has changed to incorporate concepts of 'active fathering', men are struggling to include these aspects to their

identity both as fathers and men [19]. The dissonance between lived experience and society's attitude towards fathers are then magnified by the ostensible structural constraints fathers encounter as parents.

DAD App reviews demonstrated how masculine subjectivities can be multiple and fluid. The DAD App received high ratings and had a large number of downloads. However, this can be interpreted in different ways. Fathers were either affirmative of the content used in the DAD App or simply grateful for finally having a parenting App designed for fathers. Either way, traditional modes of fatherhood co-exist in the content of reviews for the DAD App for Danish fathers. Furthermore, we found that the ways in which men were opposing traditional stereotypes mirrored the contemporary societal debate and discussion concerning parenthood in Denmark.

This political debate about the nature of fatherhood was also prominent in the FF Facebook group where fathers discussed the inequities they perceived in the Danish Family Law. Those inequities were built on traditional views of fatherhood and masculinity which many of the FF Facebook group members were attempting to redefine. While some of the tropes used in the DAD App might be aligned with the traditional views of fatherhood, the existence of the App, and fathers' discussions around it, may itself provide a site for reimagining the fatherhood role.

The FF Facebook group and the DAD App provide new social infrastructures that fathers can use to redefine their roles in Danish society. In essence, debates on the FF page, and reviews of the DAD App provide a space for reframing "conventional gendered care norms" [28]. English-speaking fathers (mostly in the US) used conventional masculine tropes to legitimize engaging in traditionally feminine tasks [3]. Our results made visible the existing infrastructural societal debates related to parental leave for men as a way to push towards more gender equity – a more "caring father" who shares domestic burdens *because* he is a man [28].

5.2 Political Advocacy: Fighting Gender Inequality

Both the reviews of the DAD App and FF's Facebook group interactions showed that fathers were currently renegotiating the normative view of parenting. However, since political advocacy and collective action was a core element, the interaction online did more than just contest the cultural norms for fatherhood. Our data demonstrates how Danish fathers are actively trying to influence legal policies concerning their parental role through active involvement with the FF's Facebook group.

Earlier work suggests that social media can promote civic engagement and collective action [38]. This is what we encountered when exploring online fatherhood in the Danish context. The use of digital media allowed fathers to interact, creating strong connotations to political movements that utilize the internet to organize and perpetuate their ideas of change. Comparably, this political movement is similar to other social movements like #OccupyWallStreet in how they utilize the internet to organize and share ideas [50], as well as how Palestinian activists make use of social media to disseminate information about political ideologies and events relating to their cause [55].

Historically, 'Foreningen Far' (the association of dads) was a political movement created long before the emergence of social media. However, with the introduction of social media, they were able to mobilize a larger population in the Danish society and in that way be able to have greater political influence. Moreover, redefining the role of the new father can be made more legitimate through a discourse led by fathers (grassroots) instead of organization leaders.

Data from FF's Facebook group shows that members made collaborative efforts to propagate their interpretation of fatherhood, as they strived to be recognized as equals in parenting, even after separation or divorce. In this way, their political agenda is supported by digital media. We found that fathers are utilizing the technology to discuss and influence legal frameworks as well as policies advocating for fathers to be co-parents, not bystanders. While earlier work argued that fathers used pseudonymous social media sites like Reddit to discuss divorce and custody problems [2], Danish fathers in our study discussed these issues on an open Facebook group set up by an organization advocating for social, legal, and policy changes that redefine the role of fatherhood in Denmark.

This advocacy echoes the advocacy work by parents of children with special needs as they engage in networked empowerment [4]. In both cases, parents were facing social, political, or legal inequities and attempted to push for social and political change to address these inequities. The stereotypes which exist in the society motivate parents to find others facing similar challenges. Our respondents are attempting to make sense of their involved roles as fathers by discussing their views about the meaning of fatherhood in the context of the society by finding others with similar experiences in the family legal framework allowing them to better understand the legal framework. By interacting collaboratively, fathers teach each other about access to resources. For example, one of the fathers asked about his rights as a non-cohabiting father and how his union can be involved in getting him paternity leave.

Members of the FF Facebook group also organized to advocate for social, and legal change as they attempted to change the negative contexts affecting them and their children. Much like parents of children with special needs, Danish members of FF's Facebook group collaboratively identified problems they were facing as part of transitions like divorce and organized to advocate for changes in social norms and policies. For example, some fathers on the FF Facebook group discussed demonstrating the "State Administration" to have more egalitarian outcomes for fathers – thus engaging in self-advocacy.

Fathers also advocate for change through concrete manifestations of their relationships with their children. Their social media interactions with other fathers display fathers' concerns and interests in having shared lives with their children. This was evident in the cases where fathers explained how they would share pictures on Instagram. This behavior mirrors how LGBT parents become incidental advocates since their portrayal of simple daily family life is a way to advocate for the normalcy of family life for them and their children as a family [12]. Through sharing pictures about their interactions with children in mundane daily routines, fathers in our study act as incidental advocates for a more egalitarian fatherhood role.

5.3 Fathers and Disclosure Management in a Danish Context

Ammari et al. concluded that fathers' motivation for using social media was to document their parenting experiences, and learn to be better fathers [6]. However, fathers were reticent to share information, especially when they thought that members of their professional networks might be reading their updates [2].

Danish fathers in our study used social media in similar ways. They archived their children's lives. For example, F03 shared pictures of his first child soon after birth. However, he decided to continue his parenting self-presentation on Instagram because while he wanted to share pictures of his children and their development, he did not want to engage in contentious debates by others in his network. Instagram for him was less of a discursive environment, which allowed him to share posts about the family without discussions. In essence, fathers in our study decided to manage family privacy boundaries using the affordances of different social

media sites. In the examples of Instagram, by focusing on more mundane posts on image-focused social media sites like Instagram, to produce a more idealized view of the family without engaging with others on parenting questions [32].

The rules that parents set when sharing information online are fluid, changing as the needs of the family change [40], and prior work point out how fathers, who experience interactions with their network as contentious might reduce their online content practicing self-censorship [53] or post to other social media sites. The Instagram case from our data demonstrate similar behavior.

Earlier research on the use of online communities by fathers in Nordic states showed that they used blogs and online forums to support each other and discuss their parenting experiences [17, 19, 45]. Our results show that fathers used public Facebook Groups to discuss legal and social issues relating to their roles as parents, especially in reference to divorce/custody issues. However, fathers were less inclined to share posts about their children on social media sites like Facebook. One of the reasons for this disparity might be in the affordances of social media sites like Facebook introduce problems like context collapse [26, 53]. Context collapse makes parenting discussions on social media sites more complex when compared to regulated/moderated parenting forums.

Fathers also noted that they did not want to share information about their children given that their children do not have the capacity to make an informed decision about whether they would want to share anything about themselves. Fathers did not want to negatively affect their children's future ("what if they were running for prime minister?!") by sharing content when their children were younger. In essence, fathers saw themselves as "privacy stewards" for their children [20]. When fathers take on the responsibility for maintaining their children's privacy, they manage "boundary turbulence" throughout their online interactions; taking seriously how children's privacy needs at younger age might be misaligned with their future self-disclosure decisions [41].

Previous work point out how fathers look for support online [47], especially from other fathers who have faced similar circumstances. For example, stay-at-home dads (SAHDs) who could not find support in mother-dominated parenting groups looked for other SAHDs living in the same area [5]. Fathers also discussed their experiences of divorce and custody on pseudonymous social media sites like Reddit [5]. Doing so allowed fathers to ask questions of other fathers who had gone through the divorce and custody process, especially that many perceived inequities in family court.

Danish fathers in our study are similarly looking for support, especially as they experience difficulties of staying in the role as a caretaker for their children in family court disputes. Due to the available public Facebook Group presence sponsored by an NGO that has had a long presence in advocacy for fatherhood, fathers interacted with others facing similar issues, asked questions, built their definitions for the fatherhood role, and even organized with other men to demonstrate the government organization central to their parenting issues. Much like Twitter and public Facebook groups afforded parents of children with special needs a chance to imagine and advocate for social change [4], the FF group in our study provided similar affordances for fathers.

6 CONCLUSION

Prior research on fatherhood online focus on English speaking and particular American parenting norms and only few studies focus on online fatherhood in societies with different societal norms for parenting, such as Scandinavia [23]. We thus extend prior research on the

intersection between fatherhood and technology by adding in the Danish perspective. Arguably, the definition of what fatherhood entails is a multi-faceted societal question; as societal norms are different across contexts. The societal context matters for what is perceived as the 'proper' and 'appropriate' behavior. What we have shown in this paper is how fatherhood online is produced by local societal infrastructures and contemporary political agendas. The current debates in Denmark concerns aspects such as equally shared parental leave and fatherhood online displays a concern about the ways in which the legal framework reproduces gender stereotypes in situations of divorce.

In this study, we found that the relation between fathers' technology interactions and the societal infrastructures in which they are situated entails an intertwined connection by which the political circumstances becomes reflected on the social platform. Further, we found that fathers in our study made sense of the technological affordances by experimenting on how these technical infrastructures could further their political agenda by renegotiate parenting stereotypes, which currently exist in contemporary Denmark. In particular, we saw how the members on FF Facebook seek to define fatherhood as 'co-parenting' versus fatherhood as 'by-stander'. Further, we found that interactions on the FF Facebook group are not about individualistic performance of fatherhood as is the case in the US, but instead about collaborative political activism. Thus, the performance of fatherhood online depends upon the societal contexts making fatherhood different across countries. If we are to understand family structures and how they produced through digital technologies, we need research diverse geographical and societal contexts as we center the translocality of social, political, and legal contexts [10]. Surely, there is not only one 'type' of fathers and multiple father roles co-exist within the same geographical locations, nevertheless, we found distinct differences between how fatherhood is produced online in Denmark compared to the US. We argue that the ways in which fatherhood is displayed online is mirroring the contemporary societal debates on family structures in that current geographical location.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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