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Transnational Fathers' Activism:

A case study of Platform for European Fathers

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Abstract

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Shifting gender relations and family arrangements throughout the 20th and 21st century have led to the emergence of fathers' rights activism. Equipped with a seemingly simple call for justice, the fathers' rights movement has influenced family law, and have become part of the public consciousness. Due to their occasionally antagonistic relationship with feminism, a lot of academic literature has been focused on analyzing fathers' rights activism and its influence on family law. This thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of these groups through a case study of Platform for European Fathers (PEF), a transnational organization which represents a collaboration between several organizations that aims to work on a European policy level. To achieve this, the study made use of a qualitative thematic content analysis of PEF's social media. The results from the analysis of their social media rhetoric suggests a shift towards progressive coalition politics, mainly due to their focus on the well-being of children. However, anti-feminist politics still exists, predominantly in the parts of their social media rhetoric which serves to further polarize men and women. This means that while PEF's social media rhetoric suggest a change in fathers' activism, some of the criticism the groups have received are still relevant, albeit to a lesser degree.

Key words: fathers' rights activism, shared parenting, fatherhood, social media rhetoric

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On Monday 27th of June 2011, representatives from sixteen fatherhood initiatives and equal parenting organizations from twelve different European countries gathered in Brussels, Belgium to form Platform for European Fathers (PEF). A transnational non-governmental organization aimed at working towards equal parenting on the European legislation- and policy level (PEF, n.d. A). While their member organizations vary in their interest, PEF represents one of the biggest transnational collaborations concerning fathers' rights in Europe. Their goal is to work together to harmonize European social policies and promote father inclusiveness and equal parenting (PEF, n.d. B). The initiative started by PEF in 2011 is indicative of wider societal change. They are part of a history of fathers' rights activism which has emerged in the last four decades in the context of shifting gender- and familial relations (Flood, 2012). Fathers' rights activism is a broad term, used to describe a wide range of groups with varying aims and strategies. PEF represents groups that are not only striving towards fathers' rights, but also children's rights, and gender equality (PEF, n.d. C). So, while they are part of the general framework of fathers' activism, they also represent the complex and diverse nature of the phenomenon.

The shifting relations which paved the way for the emergence of fathers' rights activism are highly complex. Firstly, an increase in divorces and a decline in marriages have led to major shifts in household demographics. More fathers live apart from their genetic children, and the economic relationship between men and women have led to renegotiations of old family arrangements (Collier & Sheldon, 2006). Secondly, the expectations of fatherhood have evolved. The idea of men only serving as breadwinners have lost legitimacy and new expectations of a more hands-on and caring type of fatherhood has emerged. Lastly, the changing gender relations have led to new legislation and governance in relation to divorce- and custody proceedings, leading to a juridical dimension to an already complex shift in society (*ibid.*). Predominantly, these shifts in society are considered to be a positive change, however, they have naturally also come with a need for individuals and institutions to reassess established norms. This, in turn, comes with general problems and difficulties, and the need which some men felt to organize in fathers' rights groups is indicative of this.

Already, I have tried to express the complex nature of fathers' rights movements. Their inherent goal is seductively simple, gender equality and justice for fathers. This simplicity is what has allowed them to influence policy and contribute to shaping the debate about family law (Collier & Sheldon, 2006). However, to complicate the phenomena even further, due to their occasionally antagonistic relationship with feminism, and their attempts to overturn laws put in place to protect women and children from violent partners, fathers' rights groups have garnered a lot of criticism within academia (Dragiewicz, 2011; Flood, 2012; Rhoades, 2006). The literature on fathers' rights is enveloped in an underlying debate on whether the emergence of fathers' rights activism is a beneficial or a harmful development. Not only for society in general, but also for the purpose of adapting men to new social contracts.

Within the diverse and complex nature of fathers' rights activism lies the entry point of this thesis. Theorizing about men's social movements is nothing new within academia, however, most analyses do so from a non-European perspective. This leaves somewhat of a gap in the literature, which is where this thesis is situated and where my interest in the topic emerged. Furthermore, the chosen case for this thesis, PEF, not only represent a shift in fathers' rights activism, but they also act on a transnational level across Europe, which is a level of analysis that is practically unmentioned within the field. The problem at the core of this thesis is the complex and diverse nature of fathers' rights activism, but also the lack of reflection on different levels of analysis in regard to the phenomena.

In order to contribute to the understanding of fathers' rights activism, this thesis will employ a case-study design. Using empirical data gathered from PEF's social media, I will analyze and discuss implications of their social media rhetoric. I will use the stated main objectives of PEF to reflect on their social media rhetoric. I will analyze the data with the use of Messner's (2000) *terrain of the politics of masculinities*, which maps the field of men's activism by intensity in three different factors. Furthermore, to complement Messner's framework, I will use Wojnicka's (2016 & 2022) theoretical tool of classifying fathers' rights groups on a scale of *hard-line and soft-line*. By combining these two frameworks, I will analyze and discuss PEF's social media through a framework of discourse of politics of masculinities and fatherhood.

1:1 Purpose of research

The purpose of my thesis is to contribute to the understanding of European fathers' rights mobilization. By focusing on a contemporary group and shifting the level of analysis to a transnational level, I will examine and reflect on the phenomena of fathers' rights activism. Specifically, this will be done through a case study of Platform for European Fathers, which represents a collection of fathers' rights and children's rights initiatives in Europe.

1:2 Research Questions:

- How are the main objectives of PEF represented in their social media rhetoric?
- Based on PEF's social media rhetoric, what is the political discourse of masculinities and fatherhood of PEF?

1:3 Relevancy for Social Work and Human Rights

I argue that the future of family and custody laws are inherently relevant to both social work and human rights. The rhetoric of fathers' rights movements is reliant on a human right discourse, especially through their focus on custody arrangements and the rights of the child. Furthermore, within modern critical social work, there is a recognition of macro-social structures as being a shaping factor on every level of social life. Additionally, understanding organized responses to change those structures is vital to understand the context in which social work practice exist (Healy, 2014). PEF organizes on the basis of perceived unjust macro-social gender structures which violates human rights and the rights of the child. Therefore, to understand the nature of a group such as PEF, is to understand the context in which social work practice exist, and how a framework of human rights is used to legitimize their claims. This thesis will benefit the field of social work and human rights through an in-depth analysis of a movement that uses human rights rhetoric to act for change of macro-social gender structures.

1:4 Sub-project of research project

As part of writing my thesis, I have simultaneously been a research assistant to Associate Professor Katarzyna Wojnicka at University of Gothenburg. This thesis is positioned as a sub-project to her research project; *European fathers' rights movements: gender (in)equality*

discourses and politics (2019-2023). As her research assistant I have been able to take part in weekly meetings with a research team, and more importantly engage in sharing of knowledge and information. The aim is also to continue the work with this study after the submission of this thesis in collaboration with Wojnicka. Furthermore, any contact with PEF has had the purpose to both gather data for my thesis and Wojnicka's research project. This is important information to note for the purpose of transparency, but also due to developments during the methodological process which will be discussed in the corresponding chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 2: Background

Fathers' rights activism exists within a broader framework of men's activism, which has a long history of different groups and ideologies. For the purposes of this thesis, it is necessary to understand how fathers' rights groups came into existence and how they have developed, but also where they fit within the broader framework of men's activism. Thereby, it is possible to understand the historical context in which PEF exist.

2:1 Fatherhood and Fathers' Rights Groups

Throughout the 20th and 21st century, gender relations and family structures have been shifting. In much of Europe, the US, and Australia, divorce rates have risen since the 1960s, and is now around 50% (Berman & Daneback, 2020). Policy makers have recognized these trends, which has led to changes in custody and family laws (Crowley, 2006). Until recently, the most common arrangement after divorce was for the mother to be the primary care giver, and the father typically seeing their children every second weekend. However, due to developments in society, such as mothers' increasing role in the labor force, and a realization of fathers' role in care of children, new post-divorce arrangements has risen in popularity. Predominantly, there has been an increase in shared parenting arrangements. However, the change in policy is slow and definitions of what constitutes shared parenting varies country to country (Berman & Daneback, 2020).

Fathers' rights activism grew during the late 20th century. The United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom are predominantly viewed as the countries where fathers' rights activism has had the most presence, since these are the countries where the groups have been the most vocal (Dragiewics, 2011). In the United States, an increase in demand for child support led to divorced men voicing their grievances through fathers' rights groups. The demand for child support originated from cuts to welfare programs on which single mothers were reliant, coupled with an increase in divorce, cohabitation living arrangements, and a decrease in marriage (*ibid*). Canada saw a similar rise in organized response from fathers which led to fathers' rights groups having influence over Canadian divorce law (Boyd, 2006). In Australia, they emerged as a response to the changing family relationships, fertility patterns, and as a result of more fathers living separately from their children (Flood, 2010). In the United Kingdom, transformations of family practices led to a heightened politicization of

family relations. This, in turn, led to an increase in organized response from fathers' rights groups (Collier, 2006). While these countries vary in many facets of society, the response to shifting gender-, family-, and parenting relations in these countries during the late 20th century are viewed as the origins of modern fathers' rights activism.

While contemporary fathers' rights groups vary in their aims and strategies, a central claim is the unjust nature of family and custody laws. In their view, recent changes in the legal system, created by feminism, has led to the courts systemically oppressing fathers, and denying them custody of their children (Alscheck & Saini, 2019). Coupled with the fact that the men that reach out to fathers' rights groups often have experienced especially contentious divorces, (Flood, 2012), the claim that the legal system is inherently unfair becomes particularly powerful for mobilizing fathers. Collier and Sheldon (2006) point out that while the issue at hand is complex and diverse, the rhetoric of fathers' rights groups translates to a simple call for equal justice. It is this simplicity that has allowed them to enter the public consciousness and gain favor with policy makers.

The changing gender order and the development of shared parenting as the desired custody arrangement, sets the context for fathers' rights activism. Furthermore, fathers' rights groups are a highly diverse group of organizations. While they often maintain a seemingly simple request for equality, their occasionally antagonistic relationship to feminism, and a history of attempts to overturn laws put in place to protect battered women (Dragiewicz, 2011), has led to a great deal of criticism being pointed towards them. This criticism will be presented further in the literature review of this thesis; however, it is necessary to note it now, in order to understand fathers' rights activism as a phenomenon. Furthermore, fathers' rights activism is considered to be part of a wider history and framework of men's activism. This requires further explanation.

2:2 Men's Activism

Kimmel (2005) explains that, historically, men's activism was created in the context of female emancipation. White middle-class men experienced shifting gender relations as a crisis throughout the 20th century, which led to organized mobilization. He divides the responses of

men in to three categories. The first one is the *anti-feminists*. These men mobilized through their adherence to traditional ideals. They disliked the feminists' attempt to restructure the public sphere to allow women. Instead, they wanted women to return to the private sphere of the home. The second category is called *masculinist*. Their main aim was not to separate men and women in to the public and private sphere, instead, they worked to counteract what they saw as the feminization of the culture. They elevated masculinity to an almost spiritual level and worked for the preservation of it. Finally, the third category are the *pro-feminists*. They supported the struggles of the feminists and embraced the social reconstruction that they suggested.

Kimmel's understanding of men's activism is based in a long history of discourses in masculinities. In an exploration of contemporary men's activism, Messner (2000) identifies eight major trends and groups of men's activisms since the 1970s. These are: (1) men's liberation, (2) men's rights groups, (3) radical feminist men, (4) socialist feminist men, (5) men of color, (6) gay male liberationists, (7) Promise Keepers, a fundamentalist Christian group, and (8) the mythopoetic men's movement, a group focusing on men's rediscovery of a spiritual and essential sense of masculinity. Messner's mapping of contemporary men's activism reveals a highly diverse set of ideologies. Yet, they all embed masculinity in their discourses and strategies.

Seemingly missing from Messner's mapping of contemporary men's activism is the focus point of this thesis, fathers' rights groups. According to Messner (and the literature at large), fathers' rights groups are an offshoot of the men's rights groups. So, while it is necessary to understand the broad nature of men's activism, for the purposes of this thesis, specifically men's rights groups require further explanation.

The men's rights movements emerged as a male response to the women's liberation movements in the 1970s. They emphasized the costs of being born a male to a greater extent than the men's liberation movements, which emerged at the same time (Messner, 2000). Throughout its history, men's rights groups emphasized the costs of being a man more and more and modern men's rights movements now believe that the success of feminism, has led

to women having an unfair systemic advantage over men (O'Donnell, 2020). Due to the continued presence of gender on the global agenda, and their controversial stance on the topic, men's rights groups have risen to become the standout men's activism movement in the last twenty years (Palmer & Subramaniam, 2017). Referring back to the terminology of Kimmel (2005), men's rights groups are now considered to be the main example of an anti-feminist response from men.

Men's rights groups construct their rallying points based on the understanding that feminism exists as a plot which covers up men's oppression. Claims of oppression are based around topics such as men's health problems, their shorter lifespans, or military conscription (Messner, 2000). Furthermore, by appropriating the rhetoric of liberal feminism, men's rights groups have used gender equality language to lobby for change of legislation which they perceive as gender discriminating (Dragiewicz, 2011). However, the most successful and popular talking point of men's rights groups is that of family- and custody laws, which establishes fathers' rights as an offshoot of men's rights (Messner, 2000).

2:3 Introduction to PEF

Platform for European Fathers is a transnational non-governmental organization that was founded in Brussels, Belgium on June 27th, 2011. They serve as a platform for cooperation for fathers' or children's interest groups on a European policy level (PEF, n.d. B). While their member organizations vary in their interests and strategies, PEF represents one of the biggest transnational cooperation concerning fathers' rights in Europe.

The founding statements of PEF contains twelve main objectives. They are as follows:

1. To be active in the advancement of father's interests to the European parliament and on the EU policy level
2. To have the best interests and (human) rights of the children towards both their parents and extended families at the heart of all activities.
3. To promote involved fatherhood and an equality-based work-life balance regarding parenthood for working fathers on the EU social policy level particularly in reference to paternity and paternal leave

4. To seek and promote father inclusive policies in EU legislation and institutions and harmonization of European social policies and equal parenting legislation particularly referring to the implementation of a presumption of shared custody, care and residence.
5. To seek the implementation of all European Convention articles for Human Rights and the jurisprudence by the European Court for Human Rights in all European countries.
6. To seek the implementation of shared legal and physical custody and co-residence in EU legislation and social policies
7. To seek full gender equality in society, especially for fathers and fatherhood in the parenting and caring for children at home, in childcare and in education.
8. To be inclusive to all organization representing fathers with no gender discrimination
9. To better the unequal legal position of unmarried fathers in relation to their children
10. To further the interests of all fathers, with a particular emphasis on ‘low SES’ and immigrant fathers in EU legislation and social policies
11. To further the advancement and protection of the relations of bi- and transnational children with their fathers
12. To further research into and to promote measures to address the presently emerging “boys’ crisis” in education as potential future fathers.

(PEF, n.d. D)

The main objectives as presented above provides a diverse set of goals. While the main focus is seemingly on fathers and fatherhood, there is also a heavy focus on children and their rights. Gender equality is mentioned throughout their main objectives and there is an understanding of the particular vulnerability fathers from low socioeconomic families might experience. The objectives also present shared parenting as an important goal, which will further gender equality. The way to reach that goal is through the EU policy- and legislation level. There is also a legitimization of these issues through rhetoric of human rights and rights of the child. For this thesis, PEF’s main objectives are interpreted as being:

- Further fathers’ interests
- Work towards gender equality
- Ensure children’s rights
- Through a European policy- and legislation level

Since the founding, and the signing of the main objectives, new organizations have joined PEF. Currently, there are 25 member organizations from 16 European countries. In what follows I will present an overlook of the organizations and which countries they are active in (Table 2:1). The organizations were gathered from PEF’s website and compared to the

signage off the founding papers (PEF, n.d. D), in order to gain an overview of which organizations were part of the founding and which are members that have joined since. I will list the organizations, their countries of origin and their role within PEF. Furthermore, I will provide a short description of the organization which was gathered on their respective website (full-list available here: <https://europeanfathers.wordpress.com/about-us/about/>). Where needed, Google Translate was used for the non-English websites. Since the purpose of the information is mainly descriptive and not analytical, Google Translate was deemed an acceptable tool.

Organization	Country of origin	Role in PEF	Short description (from their respective websites)
In Namen Elterliche Verantwortung – INEV (In the name of Parental Responsibility)	Austria	Member	Solidarity association for advice and research regarding families concerned with custody conflicts.
Kindergefuehle (Children’s emotions)	Austria	Member	Represents the interests of the child
Papa Gibt Gas – PGG (Dad Steps on the Gas)	Austria	Member	Fathers interest group
Väter ohne Rechte – VOR (Fathers without Rights)	Austria	Member	Organization of fathers and mothers lobbying for change in Austrian custody- and family laws
SOS Papa	Belgium	Founder	In defense of the right of the children to be loved and educated by both parents
Vaderinstituut – VI (Father Institute)	Belgium	Member	Aims to get fathers more involved in the care and upbringing of their children

Foreningen Far til støtte for børn og forældre” (Fathers’ association in support of children and parents)	Denmark	Member	NGO aiming to help children, fathers and families who are experiencing crisis which may affect a child’s health
Félag um foreldrajafrétti Ísland (Equal Parenting Association)	Iceland	Founder	NGO promoting equal parenting based on Convention on the Rights of the Child, offering legal advice
Mens Support Groups of Ireland (MSGI)	Ireland	Founder	N.A.
Pere – Enfant – Mere	France	Member	Association for the defense of the rights of children and parents
SOS Papa Nord-Picardie (Regional)	France	Member	Association for a children’s right to both parents
Väter Aufbruch für Kinder – VafK (Association for Fathers on the Brink for Children)	Germany	Founder	Non-profit association aiming for the preservation of a child’s relationship with both parents after divorce
Elvált Apák Érdekvédelmi Egyesülete – EAÉE (Association for Advocacy for Divorced Fathers)	Hungary	Founder	Association of NGOs for the purpose of providing support to fathers separated from their children.
FAD – Fathers Against Discrimination™ a.s.b.l. (“Both Parents for All Children”)	Luxembourg	Member	A dialogue platform established to promote equal opportunities for both parents.

Vader Kennis Centrum – VKC (Father Knowledge Centre Foundation)	Netherlands	Founder	Organization promoting co-parenting, equal parenting rights, involved fatherhood and father-inclusive policies.
Igualdade Parental e Direito dos Filhos – IPDF (Equal Parenting and Children’s Rights Association)	Portugal	Founder	Organization promoting children’s rights and parenting equality
Shared Parenting Scotland	Scotland	Member	Charity initiative furthering shared parenting
Društvo očetov Slovenije	Slovenia	Member	Association for fathers in dispute with mothers
DOOR – Društvo za otroke, očetovstvo in resnico	Slovenia	Member	NGO promoting shared parenting and offering legal advice in adversarial divorce proceedings
Union Estatal de Federaciones y Asociaciones por la Custodia Compartida – UEFACC (National Union of Federations and Associations for Shared Parenting)	Spain	Founder	Association for promotion of shared parenting
Federgen Spain	Spain	Member	N.A
Verantwortungsvoll erziehende Väter und Mütter – VeV (Responsibly caring Fathers and Mothers)	Switzerland	Founder	Association with the aim to keep parent-child relationship as unrestricted as possible after divorce

Donna2 (Second Wives and Families)	Switzerland	Member	N.A
Fatherhood Institute	United Kingdom	Founder	Think-tank working for a society that gives all children a strong relationship with their father and any father-figures
Men's Aid	United Kingdom	Founder	Provides advice and support to men who have been abused. Committed to help those who have suffered from a biased legal system

(Table 2:1)

Much like the main objectives, the list of members suggests a diverse set of organizations which are part of PEF. While, again, the focus is mainly on fathers, there are several organizations that focus on children's rights and shared parenting.

Chapter 3: Previous Literature

The sources for this literature were gathered in two ways. Firstly, an overview of the literature was established through general searching on the web and some recommendations. This first step helped establish a basic overview, as well as knowledge about key references within the field. Secondly, peer-reviewed articles were collected by using the databases: Scopus, the Sociology collection, and the Gender studies database. Using these, a list of articles was collected, which were then sorted and read based on the key words *fathers' rights* and *men's rights*. Most of the sources can be classified as being in the field of gender studies, which is a field that has gone through many changes in the last few decades. Therefore, an attempt was made to only collect sources from the last 10 years (exceptions where references are considered key for the field). The first aim of this literature review is to present the most referenced topics within the field of studying men's rights groups and fathers' rights groups. The second aim is to differentiate how literature on specifically fathers' rights groups distinguishes itself from the broader literature on men's rights groups. Finally, the aim is to reflect on the position of this thesis in the context of the previous literature.

3:1 Men's Rights Groups and Fathers' Rights Groups: Criticisms

Within the literature, *backlash* represents a theoretical standpoint where feminists base their discussion about the emergence and shape of men's rights groups. Mainly popularized by the journalist Susan Faludi in her work *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women* (1992), the concept of backlash establishes men's rights groups as a hostile response to changing gender relations brought about by feminism (Jordan, 2016). Much of the literature on the subject of men's rights groups and fathers' rights groups criticize them through this concept. Men's activism is viewed as a response by men to the loss of power in society. Some examples include Basu (2016) and Chowdhury (2014) using backlash to explain the rise of misogynistic men's rights groups in India that attempts to invalidate Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code, which was added in 1983 as a way to empower women and law enforcement in their response to abuse within marriages. Gotell & Dutton (2016) uses the term *anti anti-rape backlash* to describe the anti-feminist responses of men on university campuses in Canada. Within the literature, backlash serves as a conceptual tool which is used both to criticize men's rights groups and fathers' rights groups, as well as explaining their origins.

Dragiewicz (2011), in her work *Equality with a vengeance – Men’s Rights Groups, Battered Women, and Antifeminist Backlash* uses the concept of backlash to criticize men’s rights groups and fathers’ rights groups, and their interaction with the judicial system. The book is in the form of a case study of when eighteen men sued the Commissioners within the state of Minnesota in 2000, in a case named *Booth v. Hvass*. Their claim was that legislation aimed at protecting battered women were unconstitutional and gender discriminatory, and as such should be deemed void. Their argument was that a gender-blind understanding of domestic violence should be implemented instead. Dragiewicz views this attempt to exclude gender from domestic abuse as part of the backlash against feminist efforts to advance women’s rights.

Dragiewicz study of *Booth v. Hvass* is indicative of a common strategy of men’s rights groups and fathers’ rights groups. Since their conception, these groups have appropriated the feminist rhetoric of the 1960s and 1970s surrounding gender neutrality and equality (Busch, Morgan & Coombes, 2014). Bertoia & Drakich (1993) views this as a deliberate strategy to maintain, or regain, power by coopting the rhetoric of feminists against them: “The rhetoric of fathers’ rights gives the illusion of equality, but, in essence, the demands are to continue the practice of inequality in postdivorce parenting but now with legal sanction” (p. 612). Further exemplified by another quote: “Fathers rightists have coopted the language of equality but not the spirit of equality” (p. 612). Chen (2016) mentions a similar appeal to gender neutrality in Taiwan in the 1990s when they were reforming their parenting laws. Hacker (2016) identifies a similar tactic of Israeli men when they appealed to the United Nations through reports of gender discrimination towards divorced fathers. Jordan (2016) examines this topic even further by lifting it up to an academic discussion about conflicting ideas within the feminist school of thought, and she identifies some postfeminist thoughts within fathers’ rights groups in their assumption of non-existent gender inequalities.

An often-mentioned tactic is the attempts of men’s rights groups and fathers’ rights groups to raise sympathy by constructing men as the actual victims of current gender relations. An important author in this regard, is the previously feminist, turned men’s rights scholar, Warren Farrell (Messner, 2016). In the 90s, Farrell wrote the book, *The Myth of Male Power* (1993)

and became one of the most important individuals in the men's rights groups and remains so to this day. According to Messner (2016), Farrell employed a tactic of raising sympathy for men, instead of engaging in explicit anti-feminism. Since Farrell's book, the tactic of constructing men as the real victims of gender roles is often used. In an analysis of online web-forums, Rafail & Freitas (2019) find that 21% of posts were about the apparent inequality in societal discourse about rape, which disparages men. In another study, Starr (2017) come to similar results and conclude that men's rights groups online make use of *atrocious tales* in order to construct men as victims of injustice. Carian (2022), find that men's rights groups construct feminism as an oppressive force in society that privileges women, and men's rights groups attempts to counter-act this. According to Gotell & Dutton (2016), a prevailing claim is the claim that false allegations of abuse are a common occurrence in society and a way for women to rob innocent men of their freedom. However, the idea that this is a common occurrence has been disproven (Lisak, Gardinier, Nicksa, & Cote, 2010), yet it still remains within men's rights groups.

With regard to criticism aimed directly at fathers' rights groups and not the more general men's rights groups in which they are often included, Flood (2012) is a key author. Flood recognizes the potential harm fathers' rights groups impact on family law can have on women and children that are victims of domestic abuse, but he also critiques them by claiming that they can be harmful for fathers themselves. He bases his critique on the fact that fathers' rights groups lack assistance in key areas which would be beneficial for fathers: (1) to assist them in recovering from negative effects which may come with separation, (2) to support them in building or maintaining relationships with their children, and (3) to help them manage their relationship with their ex-partner. Flood claims that fathers' rights groups do not benefit fathers in this regard, and instead they focus on vilifying women (and ex-partners), which results in negative effects on the three key areas where fathers' rights groups would be beneficial. Flood argues that official services for separated fathers are needed, instead of fathers' rights groups, so that they can become a positive influence on their children's lives and foster a positive relationship with their ex-partners.

3:2 Fathers' Rights: Family- and custody law

The literature focuses more on law and policy when discussing fathers' rights groups than the more general men's rights groups. According to Flood (2010), the fathers' rights groups' fight against specific laws has made them in to one of the most vocal opponents of feminist achievements. Specifically, fathers' rights groups attempt to overturn family- and custody laws, which has resulted in them often combating laws that are put in place to protect victims of domestic abuse. Dragiewicz (2008), in another work then the previously mentioned case study, investigates the backlash from fathers' rights groups prompted by the ratification of the *American Violence Against Women Act* (VAWA). She concludes that the backlash against VAWA is a way for fathers' rights groups to attempt to reassert patriarchy and object to women's authority. Furthermore, she stresses that it is important to recognize that the rhetoric that fathers' rights groups use when combating legislature like VAWA, is having a negative impact on children and women who are victims of domestic abuse. Notably, this is the results of a seemingly simple claim of fathers who perceive that the system is unfair and has taken away their children from them (Collier & Sheldon, 2006). The dilemma between legislature that protects victims of domestic abuse and fathers' rights groups' view that these law takes away their right to see their children, is a central issue in the literature.

Collier (2006) exemplifies the struggles between fathers' rights groups and feminist achievements by reflecting on fathers' rights groups in the United Kingdom. Specifically, the group *Fathers' 4 Justice* (F4J). He concludes that the current law system in the United Kingdom may simply be ill equipped to deal with the very real human dilemma that groups such as F4J put forward. However, he goes on to argue that this system is a result of discourse within society which mirrors the patriarchic fathers' rights rhetoric. He even argues that the common view within academia that fathers' rights groups are simply an anti-feminist backlash within family law is another example of how fathers' rights rhetoric already exists in the current discourse. It is the type of binary and uni-directional view of power (*powerful/powerless and/or mother/father*), that fits perfectly with the rhetoric of fathers' rights groups. In other words, the issues that fathers' rights groups put forward are not ignorable and are expected within a landscape of changing gender roles, and currently, society is ill equipped to deal with it.

Often in the literature (and by fathers' rights groups themselves), Sweden is used as an example where fathers' rights have been broadly implemented within the government. Eriksson & Pringle (2006) attributes much of the fathers' rights within Sweden to the 1998 family law reforms. They also recognize that Sweden has a longstanding history of realizing the role of fathers. In the 1960s, fathers were established as a potential cause of unwanted behavior among youths (especially boys), but they were also seen as the potential solution. Sweden started employing different tactics to reshape men into good fathers, and thereby creating a *new fatherhood*, which would be beneficial for the well-being of the child. Today, the responsibilities of parenthood are fairly equally distributed in Sweden, much thanks to policy regarding parental leave and shared custody in the event of a divorce. Hobson & Morgan (2009) attributes the gender equality in Sweden to their welfare regime. Inspired by Esping-Andersens (1990) welfare-regime models, Hobson & Morgan concludes that the welfare in Sweden allows fatherhood to have fairly low financial obligations to the child and mother. This allows them to instead focus on the care aspects of fatherhood. The *cash vs care* dichotomy is central to Hobson & Morgan's fatherhood regimes. However, Eriksson & Pringle (2006) also points out that the Swedish family law has led to violent men gaining access to ex-wives and children. Which means that the issue of fathers' rights groups negative affect on the safety of victims of domestic violence persists, even in Sweden.

Concerning custody, the literature does not deny the fact that having present fathers come with benefits. A father, like any parental figure, can make valuable contributions to the well-being of the child (Flood, 2010). The question whether fathers is a necessity or not, is not the question that the literature deals with. Rather, the question is whether fathers' rights groups actually contribute to healthier fatherhood. As mentioned previously, Flood (ibid.) concludes that fathers' rights groups do not actually contribute to this regard, since they are constricted by their wider anti-feminist backlash origins. Their rhetoric is reliant on pointing out injustices in the system, instead of actually helping men become better fathers. Rhoades (2006) points out that in this regard, the issue of equal or shared parenting becomes merely a symbolic concern for fathers' rights groups. Bertioia & Drakich (1993) also points out how fathers' rights groups are more fueled by anger than actually caring for children. To summarize, while the literature views shared custody as a potential benefit for children, most agree that the benefits are not inherent in shared parenting itself. Instead, any benefits of

shared parenting rely on whether the parent is an actual beneficial presence or not. This, according to the literature, is a perspective which is lacking in fathers' rights activism.

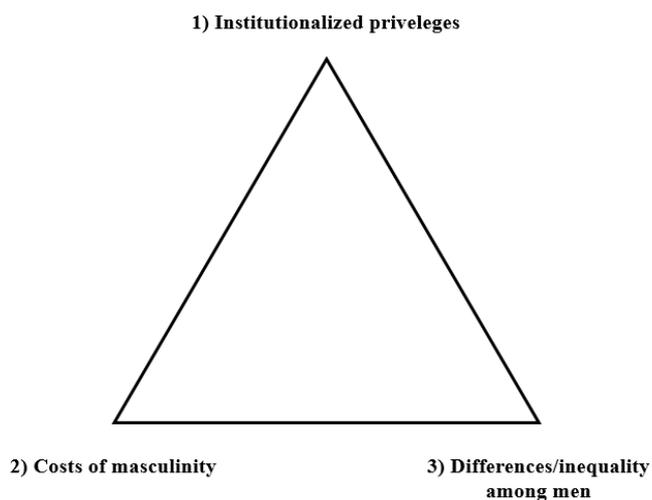
For this thesis, the criticisms of fathers' rights groups lifted in the literature is an important consideration. However, in this study, PEF is seen as a contemporary example with new dimensions and a changed rhetoric. Transnationality within fathers' activism is virtually untouched in the literature and the results of this thesis will contribute to the literature in this regard. Furthermore, fathers' rights groups are constantly changing, and PEF is regarded as a self-contained example of fathers' rights activism. Yet, understanding the literature and the criticisms that exist within it is vital to gain a full understanding.

Chapter 4: Theory

In order to fulfill the purpose and answer the research questions of this thesis, there is a need for a theoretical framework. The chosen framework for this thesis is Messner's *terrain of the politics of masculinities*, and Wojnicka's (2016 & 2022) *hard-line and soft-line* framework, which will be used to analyze the social media rhetoric of PEF.

4:1 Terrain of the Politics of Masculinities

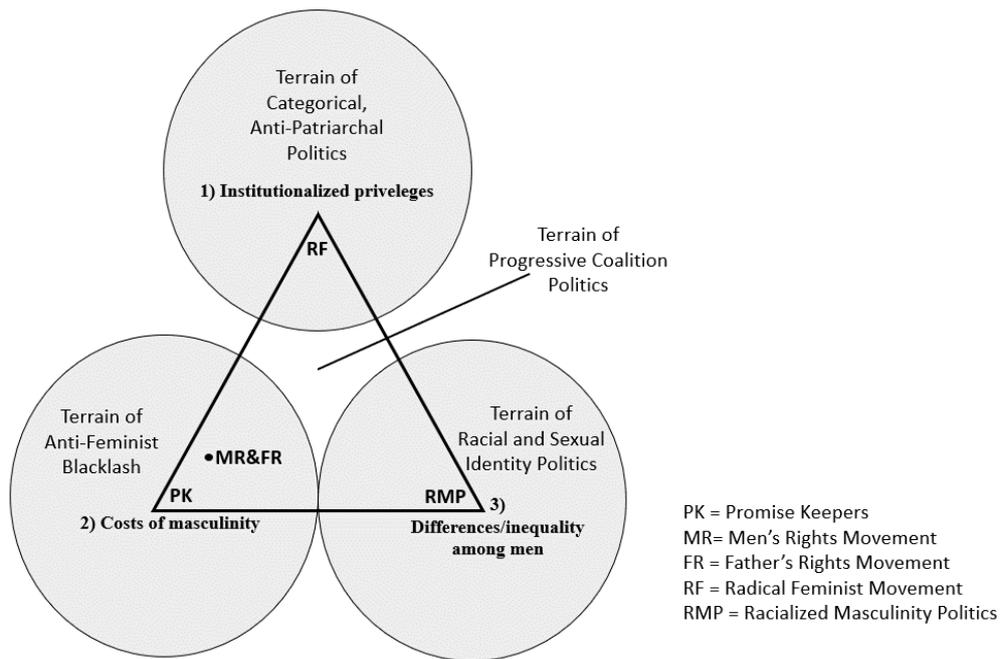
Messner (2000) grounds his theoretical framework of men's activism on previous theories from the field of critical men and masculinities studies (Kimmel, 2005; Connell, 2005). Specifically, Messner complements the existing theory with a theoretical framework of organized groups which has engaged in politics of masculinities since the 1970s. He names this framework the *terrain of the politics of masculinities*. The framework is illustrated by a triad based on three factors (figure 4:1). The three factors are (1) *institutionalized privileges*, (2) *costs of masculinity*, and (3) *differences/inequalities among men*. Men's activism has a long and complex history; therefore, a theoretical tool is needed to map them. The terrain of the politics of masculinities serves this purpose, and by analyzing the intensity of these factors in specific men's activism groups, it's possible to place them within the terrain. Thereby, gaining an overview of men's organized responses to the shifting system of gender relations.



(Figure 4:1)

Institutionalized privileges are a result of the power which men have had at the expense of women historically. While this has slowly started to change, overall, men still enjoy privileges which women do not (Messner, 2000). However, being a man does not come without its costs. The cost of masculinity tends to reveal itself through shallow relationships, poor health, or the pursuit of status and privilege. Of course, the costs come from a certain understanding of masculinity and a conformity to those ideals. Common definitions of masculinity have led men to downplay their pain and not open up about emotional struggles. Furthermore, assuming that all men enjoy the same privileges or experience the same costs, ignores the differences/inequalities among men. Based on sexuality, ethnicity, or economic discrepancy, the experience of being a man differs widely. This intersectional perspective opens up for the understanding that men's activism is not only formed in relation to feminism, but also to marginalized and subordinated types of masculinities (*ibid.*).

Messner (2000) furthers the utility of the framework by presenting implications of placements within the triad. Illustrated in Figure 4:2, the triad has now been separated into four different fields. Additionally, while Messner uses the framework to place a wide array of men's activism groups within the terrain of politics, for the purposes of this case study, I chose to only include the movements that are relevant as well as the movements which represents the three different points of the triad according to Messner. This choice was made in order to maintain focus, while also clarifying the theoretical tool with three critical examples.



(Figure 4:2)

Notably, the center of the triad has now become a terrain which would allow for a group to cooperate to reach progressive goals. Groups within the *terrain of progressive coalition politics* manages to maintain a rhetoric which strikes a balance between recognizing the institutionalized privileges of men, the costs of masculinity, and the inherent differences and inequalities among men. The balance allows these groups to form productive relationships to reach progressive social changes. However, it is also true that groups within this field would risk having a muddled, or even contradictory, ideology, which could hinder their possibilities to mobilize members and form a strategy (Messner, 2000). In contrast to this, the groups in the corners of the triad are able to maintain a focused message, while limiting their possibilities for coalition formation.

Groups within the *terrain of categorical anti-patriarchal politics* tends to focus on men and women as oppressor and oppressed. Radical feminist movements in Messner's framework acts within the framework of masculinity, yet they are allies to the broader feminist movements. Therefore, their strategies are often targeted on antipatriarchal actions. This includes education of men in topics such as antirape, antipornography and anti-wife-beating. They have also historically helped feminist movements in their efforts to enact laws which

protects women. Yet, their placement at the top of the triad means that they lack recognition of costs of masculinity and differences/inequality among men, which hinders their cooperation with other groups to enact further change (Messner, 2000).

The *terrain of anti-feminist backlash* is occupied by groups which exists as a counter movement to feminist advancements in society. The extreme case is represented by the Promise Keepers, which used Christian fundamentalism to campaign for a return to patriarchal norms where men are in the leadership role. It is also within this terrain that Messner places men's rights groups, and thereby also fathers' rights groups. The similar placement of Promise Keepers and men's rights groups should not be misunderstood as them mirroring each other's ideologies. While both groups have a strained relationship with feminism, men's rights groups do not usually agree with the antigay and traditional family values of the Promise Keepers. Indeed, the Promise Keeper's wish to return to an essentialist perception of women as nurturers and men as breadwinners exists in direct opposition of men's rights and fathers' rights (Messner, 2000).

In the bottom right of Figure 4:2 is the *terrain of racial and sexual identity politics*. The group which represents the bottom corner are groups which are concerned with racialized masculinity politics. These groups are highly diverse and lumping them all together as 'men of color', is a simplification. Yet, in the context of masculinity, they are joined together in the fact that manhood is viewed as something which racial oppression has excluded them from. Gender issues exist within the groups, but it often is de-prioritized in the face of other racist and classist oppression. This has led to these groups sometimes clashing with groups that focus on male privileges, since these privileges does not necessarily exist for them (Messner, 2000).

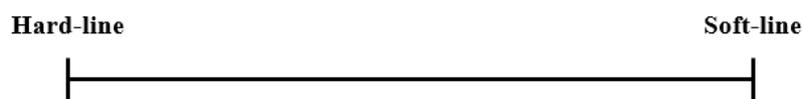
Messner's (2000) terrain of politics of masculinities is an important tool in the purpose of this thesis. In order to understand PEF as a case, a placement within the terrain will visualize their discursive position based on their social media rhetoric. Messner's framework also enables a discussion of men's activism which is broader than a backlash narrative, which much of the previous literature is somewhat constricted by. While Messner places men's rights and

fathers' rights within the terrain of anti-feminist backlash, the framework allows for the understanding that men's activism can exist beyond that. It also provides a potential guideline for how men's activism could reach progressive social change. Although it risks muddling their ideology and method, by striking a balance and existing within the terrain of progressive coalition politics, men's activism groups increase their chances of making progressive change.

However, in the case of PEF, Messner's (2000) framework lacks some crucial factors. While he mentions fathers' rights groups extensively, simply viewing them as existing within men's rights does not allow for the type of analysis which this thesis aims for. Furthermore, PEF distances themselves from fathers' rights groups, and instead constructs themselves as a group of fathers that not only deal with fathers' interests but also children's rights and shared parenting (personal communication, 2022-05-12). There is a need for a framework which allows for further analysis of PEF's social media rhetoric.

4:2 Hard-line and Soft-line Fathers' Rights Activism

According to Wojnicka (2016 & 2022), existing analysis of men's activism mainly focus on wider men's social movements, and only a small amount has been dedicated to fathers' rights groups specifically. Wojnicka complements this through a theoretical framework which emphasizes the differences that exists within the discourse of fathers' rights activism, which she names *hard-line and soft-line*. This framework exists as a scale on which fathers' rights groups can be placed (Figure 4:3). In this thesis, the framework serves the purpose of deepening the understanding of fathers' rights activism as a phenomenon by itself, and in doing so, move away from the interpretation of fathers' activism as solely an off shoot of men's rights groups.



(Figure 4:3)

Predominantly, the hard-line and soft-line fathers' rights groups are differentiated through four factors within their discourse: (1) *gender equality and gender rights*, (2) *masculinities types*, (3) *mobilizing emotions*, and (4) *cooperation and alliances* (Wojnicka, 2022). Gender equality and gender rights is an important aspect of both hard-line and soft-line fathers' rights activism. In hard-line groups, they do not reject the importance of gender equality and gender rights, however they argue that in modern society, men are disadvantaged, and therefore, policies should be designed to improve men's situation. Similarly, in soft-line actors, gender equality and gender rights represent a crucial aim of the activism. The discourse in these groups stress that the implementation of gender equality and gender rights is crucial for both men and women. Their arguments rely on their view that contemporary society discriminates against both men and women. In their view, women are discriminated against in the public sphere, while men are discriminated against in the private sphere and in matters relating to family and custody (*ibid.*).

The second factor which differentiates hard-line and soft-line fathers' rights activism is their discourse on masculinities types. Hard-line actors tend to frame masculinity and fatherhood in traditional terms. They focus on the man as the breadwinner and the patriarchal protector of the family. Changes in these traditional roles equates a loss of power and control for men, and therefore, hard-line actors' actions to counteract changes are viewed as an attempt to maintain patriarchal power structures (Wojnicka, 2022). Soft-line actors on the other hand, exhibits a more caring form of masculinity. The focus in these groups lies in reframing fatherhood as an emotional and nurturing role model for children (*ibid.*)

Third, Wojnicka (2022) differentiates hard-line and soft-line fathers' rights groups through their tactics of mobilizing emotions. Hard-line actors appeal predominantly to the emotions of anger and fear to mobilize men and fathers. At the core of eliciting these emotions is the decrease in male power and the potential loss of children and family. Soft-line actors, instead, focus on mobilizing men through love and solidarity. They do this through placing the well-being of the child in focus, as well as building relationships with other activists (*ibid.*).

Finally, hard-line and soft-line fathers' rights groups are differentiated in their approach to cooperation and alliances (Wojnicka, 2022). Hard-line activists perform collaboration mostly with other fathers' rights groups or men's rights groups. Other movements which focus on gender issues, such as LGBTQ movements, are viewed as counter movements. Soft-line actors, on the other hand, cooperates with groups not necessarily limited to men's or fathers' activism (*ibid.*).

Wojnicka's (2022) framework allows for an examination of fathers' rights activism more directly. Importantly, a fathers' rights group can exhibit qualities of both hard-line and soft-line activism, and therefore, placement along the scale is a possibility. In this thesis, the terrain of politics of masculinities of Messner (2000) acts as a tool for identifying PEF within a broad framework of men's activism with the help of their social media rhetoric. It allows for a contextualization of their rhetoric and also allows for a discussion about its inherent implications. Wojnicka's (2022) hard-line and soft-line framework acts as a way to examine PEF's social media rhetoric more directly. It's a tool to deepen the analysis and gain an insight into factors which Messner's framework might not consider.

Chapter 5: Methodology

The methods used to study men's rights activism and/or fathers' rights are mostly qualitative case studies and/or interviews (Basu, 2016; Carrian, 2022; Chowdhury, 2014; Jordan, 2016). However, many studies make use of the internet in their research (Eddington, 2020; Gotell & Dutton, 2016; Palmer & Subramaniam, 2017; Rafail & Freitas, 2019; Schmitz & Kazyak, 2016; Starr, 2017). The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, the internet is an easy source for strategies of men's activism and allows for an overview of the field (Schmitz & Kazyak, 2016). Secondly, and more importantly, the internet has become a major factor in the mobilization of men (Eddington, 2020). Currently, men's activism groups are mostly viewed as online movements that gather in websites such as Reddit. Campaigns such as *Gamergate*, which was an outcry online from men in response to the perceived pandering to any other demographic than white and heterosexual men in video games, is viewed as research-worthy phenomena when studying men's rights activism (O'Donnell, 2020). Dragiewicz (2008) chooses the internet as a source for her investigation of fathers' rights groups because she views it as the primary home for fathers' rights activism. The methods used in the literature suggests that the use of the internet has become an important factor in studying men's rights and fathers' rights. Even though PEF do not view themselves as a fathers' rights groups anymore (personal communication 2022-05-12), this thesis views them as being part of that framework, albeit a changed and new version of it. The internet, and social media in particular, is an important tool for PEF. Therefore, by analyzing PEF's social media presence, I will not only gain access to longitudinal empirical data of their social media rhetoric, but I will also be able to analyze one of their most important tools for mobilizing and recruiting members.

5:1 Research Design

The chosen research design for this thesis is to perform a case study. Bryman (2012) explains that a case study is the preferred design when there needs to be a deep and detailed analysis of an organization or community. Within the purpose of this thesis, there is a need to understand the unique features of PEF.

However, choosing a case study design also comes with some potential cons. The most referenced con is the fact that a case study is limited in its ability to achieve external validity

(Bryman, 2012). In other words, generalization is not usually a possibility within a case study. However, generalizability is not the purpose of this thesis, and therefore there is no need for that particular facet of validity. Instead, this thesis contributes to knowledge through an understanding of unique features of PEF and applying established theories to that understanding. This way, the thesis uses a case study design to contribute with particular knowledge to a previously unresearched case, while also contributing to the theoretical understandings of fathers' rights activism in a more general sense. Yin (2014) recontextualizes the common understanding of external validity by instead suggesting that external validity in a case study comes from expanding and generalizing theories, which he calls *analytical generalizations*, instead of the more commonly preferred *statistical generalization*. From this point of view, theory can be used to gain external validity from a single case.

When using theory to provide external validity, Yin (2014) provides five different rationales for picking a singular case. These are (1) a critical case, (2) an unusual case, (3) a common case, (4) a revelatory case, and (5) a longitudinal case. Understanding which rationale can be used to justify the chosen case is useful, however, as Bryman (2012) points out, a chosen case often represents more than one of the different rationales, and during the process of understanding a case, the reason for studying any particular case can change. When choosing PEF, I made no attempts to rationalize the choice through any of the suggestions Yin provides. Instead, I maintained an open-ended approach and tried to let the process guide the research to understand which type of case PEF represents. However, what motivated my choice of case in the beginning of my research was the unique nature of them being a transnational platform for a collection of several groups. Therefore, in an attempt to rationalize my choice of case through the terminology provided by Yin, I would classify PEF as being an unusual case made up of a multitude of common cases. Yet, the focus remains on PEF and not the member organizations within the platform.

5:2 Research Method

The purpose of this part of the methodology chapter is to describe my research method as well as the methodological process which led me to them. Thereby, I wish to lift certain limitations of my method and how I acted to minimize them during the process.

The chosen method to perform the case study is a content analysis of PEF's Twitter and Facebook. Traditionally, content analysis is mostly considered to be a quantitative method, however, there are qualitative versions (Bryman, 2012). The data collected in this thesis was retrieved from the social media of PEF. Both Twitter and Facebook were considered. This material, coupled with the aim to find out representation of main objectives and political discourse of masculinities and fatherhood of PEF, lends itself for a qualitative examination of the posts that they send out to their followers. In other words, the case study of PEF is performed by analyzing their social media posts, which will provide an in-depth understanding of the rhetoric they use to mobilize and recruit their members.

A content analysis of their social media is only one of the options that were available to me at the start of the process of writing this thesis. Yin (2014) stresses the need for case studies to use multiple sources in order to construct validity. Furthermore, Yin also points out that interviews are one of the most important sources for a case study. Therefore, extensive attempts were made to interview members of PEF. Around the middle of March 2022, I made attempts to come in to contact with PEF. After a while, I got in to contact with the president of PEF. After an initial meeting over voice-call on WhatsApp, he agreed to present my research proposal at a general assembly which PEF held 7th of April. In preparation for this, I prepared and supplied him with my research proposal, a consent form, the interview questions, as well as information about the research project of associate professor Katarzyna Wojnicka, which this thesis is a sub-project within. However, at our next meeting after 7th of April, he expressed that the members of PEF, and himself, felt concerned about previous publications of Katarzyna Wojnicka, in which they felt she was negative towards fathers' rights groups. As a result of this, they felt that they needed an opportunity to hear from me more directly, where they had the opportunity to ask questions and voice their concerns. I got a new opportunity to present my research proposal directly to them on their next general assembly, which was scheduled about a month later at 12th of May. While I accepted this offer, due to the time constraints of this thesis, the possibility for using interviews for my analysis, was now deemed unfeasible.

I do however make sporadic use of personal communication to strengthen certain claims in this thesis. These few references are examples of talking points that came up during our various meetings. However, personal communication is not used for analysis, but merely to inform on certain aspects of PEF as it exists today.

To counteract the lack of interviews, the examination of their social media was expanded. While I previously had only planned to analyze their posts on Twitter, Facebook was now added to the data. While this was a necessary compliment, it limited the type of empirical data I could analyze. Therefore, in order to diversify the methods for analysis, Facebook was used specifically for the collection of images. Facebook provides a different type of rhetoric than Twitter, most notably, the uploading of images is a more common occurrence on the platform. While platforms such as Instagram are more commonly considered for using images, PEF does not currently have an Instagram account. Van Diepen and Wolf (2021) argues that the use of social media such as Twitter is a way to perform self-identification for an imagined audience. In other words, the posts that were collected for this thesis are used in the analysis as a representation of PEF's identity as an organization. Furthermore, because PEF is an organization acting for social change, the posts also represent PEF's rhetoric for recruitment and mobilization.

5:3 Empirical Data

The purpose of this part of the chapter is to present the data collection process, and the problems which resulted in limitations of the data. As of writing this, PEF are only active on Twitter and Facebook, and visitors on their website are directed to them for contact (PEF, n.d. E). On Twitter, PEF has been members since January 2011, and on Facebook they joined April 2012.

The data collection started with transferring all Twitter and Facebook posts to Microsoft Word. This was done to create a more tangible and workable list. All the posts were used, and in total 520 Tweets and 821 Facebook posts were transferred into Microsoft Word before any selection of data was made. The data collection stopped 2022-04-30, and therefore, any posts after that date, are not included in this study. The posts were numbered, and divided into year

of post, and which platform they were collected from. Later, the posts were transferred into NVivo, which was the main analytical tool used for the qualitative content analysis.

Retweets or sharing of other organizations or individuals' posts needed to be considered for either inclusion or exclusion. In this thesis, these posts, while being written by another individual who are not necessarily a member of PEF, are viewed as part of PEF's rhetoric and discourse. There are a few reasons for this. Firstly, the act of posting is viewed as an expression of PEF's social media rhetoric, whether it was actually written by them or not. Secondly, Retweeting or sharing posts is an inherent part of the communication taking place on social media sites like Twitter and Facebook. Finally, because PEF is an organization which consists of many different member organizations, which in turn consists of many different individuals, going through all the Retweets and shares and deeming whether the organization or individual writing the post is part of PEF's network or not, was deemed unfeasible. It would also require some investigation into individuals which could be considered an invasion of privacy. For these reasons, Retweets and sharing of posts were included in the analysis.

The narrowing down of the data was based on a few factors. Firstly, PEF is an organization that acts across Europe, and therefore uses languages other than English. While Facebook offers translation of posts and Google Translate is readily available for use, when it comes to qualitative analysis of posts, these tools were not considered to be trustworthy enough. Furthermore, while I have some possible connections for help with translation, the number of varying languages made it impossible. Therefore, all posts using any language except English were considered a lapse in the data and excluded.

Secondly, some posts were left out due to ethical concerns. Specifically, images on Facebook depicting individuals were a common occurrence. These were mostly images taken at various events or individuals sharing their stories. Individual privacy is an important consideration when using images and posts on social media for social research. Furthermore, other than their official page, PEF also host two different Facebook groups. One group is for the members of PEF and is closed off to the public. The second group is open for everyone to join

and is a forum for individuals to discuss issues relating to fathers' rights. Posts in this group is not part of the empirical data of this thesis, since individual privacy is an important ethical concern, and asking for consent of all the members was not a possibility. Furthermore, the research questions of this thesis mainly require posts which represents the social media rhetoric of PEF, which is better represented by their official page and not the discussion groups.

Thirdly, the late-stage adaptation of using Facebook as a source of data caused some operational issues. Facebook as a platform does not allow for the same ease of manual data-gathering as Twitter does. The older posts on Facebook were highly restricted and were problematic to access. Furthermore, while an initial aim was made to analyze all posts PEF has ever made on social media, there was a realization that a manual collection of that much data would not be possible. Therefore, 2016 was the cut-off point for data collection for Facebook, and retroactively on Twitter as well to maintain consistency.

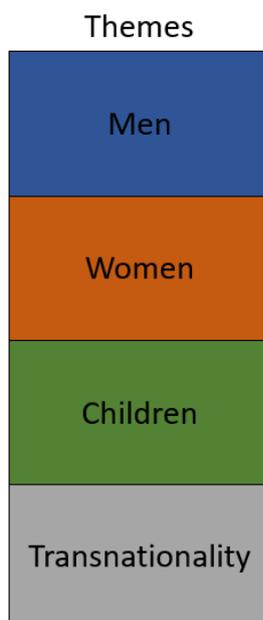
Finally, there needs to be some reflection of posts on Facebook and Twitter as data. Maintaining the full context of these posts is a challenge when using them. Posts often contain images, text, comments, a certain number of shares and likes, links to other websites and so on. Maintaining this context was not feasible for this thesis. Twitter posts were kept as only text, while Facebook posts were kept as only images. This resulted in some further lapse in data on Facebook since some images are not understandable without textual context. While a future study could be made about the textual content of the Facebook-posts, for this thesis, this was deemed a necessary limitation for data collection as well as analysis.

After restricting my data with the limitations mentioned above, the analysis was made with the use of 303 text-based Twitter posts, and 352 image-based Facebook posts. All gathered between the year 2016 and 2022.

5:4 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is one of the most common ways to analyze qualitative data (Bryman, 2012). Even though the research method for this thesis is content analysis, the qualitative approach employed allows for a thematic analysis to be performed on the collected data.

Of course, Twitter and Facebook represent different types of content which is to be thematically analyzed. The process employed for the coding of the texts on Twitter started with an inductive approach. However, throughout the process, the theoretical frameworks were considered, and therefore a completely inductive process was difficult to maintain. The process of analyzing the Tweets started with the coding of every single tweet as a whole. This means that each tweet represents one code each and efforts were made to only code any tweet to a single code. This allowed for some quick overview of the entirety of their twitter post history through considering the number of codes within any theme. Grounded in the theoretical frameworks, the codes were divided into themes based on which demographic was the subject of the tweet. Additionally, one theme was reserved for the transnational dimension of PEF (Figure 5:1).

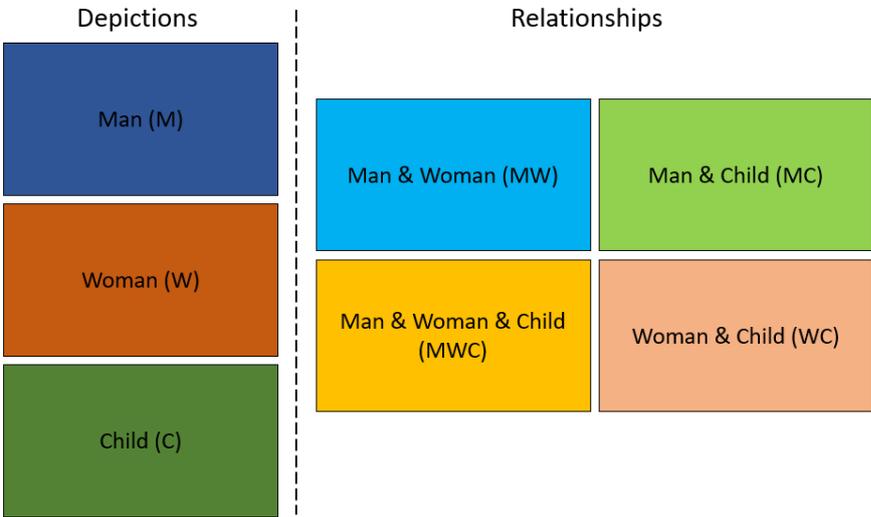


(Figure 5:1)

These themes represent a conclusion based on the codes which were made during early analysis. The codes and sub-themes will be presented in the results and analysis, to allow for a more thorough discussion with examples.

The images on Facebook were analyzed through themes based on what they depicted. When analyzing images, a thematic approach is the most common analytical method applied when having a data size between 100 and 10.000 images (Chen, Sherren, Smit, Young Lee, 2021). While there are other approaches to the analysis of images, the sheer amount of data which were to be manually analyzed required a method of analysis which could deal with many images in an appropriate manner.

The process of analyzing the images of Facebook were done somewhat differently than with the textual posts of Twitter. While the analysis of Twitter started with codes, the analysis of images on Facebook started with a general theming based on the demographic depicted within the images. The second step was to code the images with a consideration of the theme which they were part of. The codes will be exemplified and presented in the results and analysis. The themes were divided into two general sections (Figure 5:2). The first one; *depictions*, is reserved for any images only containing one individual. The second section; *relationships*, is reserved for any images containing more than one individual.



(Figure 5:2)

A limitation of using codes and themes as a means of analysis, is the risk of fragmenting or decontextualizing data (Bryman, 2012). The method which this study uses to negate this is to

make sure to show every code with an example from the empirical data in the results and analysis chapter. In other words, I claim that a way to counteract the possible risk of decontextualizing the data through coding and thematic analysis is to maintain as much transparency as possible when presenting the results. It is also necessary to be reflective and transparent during the discussion and when drawing conclusions.

5:5 Ethical considerations

When performing any kind of research, ethical principles should be a constant consideration. This is true for any field of research, and social sciences has its own relationship with ethics. Researching ethically may seem like a given, however, there are plenty of pitfalls and alternative interpretations. Even experienced social researchers can struggle with this. One such struggle is that there are plenty of sources on what ethically correct research actually is. For this case study, I mostly referenced the four areas of ethics within social research provided by Bryman (2012). These are:

(1) *harm to participants*

(2) *informed consent*

(3) *invasion of privacy*

(4) *deception*

(Bryman, 2012, p. 135).

Furthermore, in a discussion with my supervisor, we agreed that referencing the Swedish Science Council (Vetenskapsrådet) is an important guideline for maintaining proper ethical approach when performing research. The council provides a list of eight general rules for ethical research. These are:

1) You shall tell the truth about your research.

2) You shall consciously review and report the basic premises of your studies.

3) You shall openly account for your methods and results.

4) You shall openly account for your commercial interests and other associations.

- 5) You shall not make unauthorised use of the research results of others.
- 6) You shall keep your research organized, for example through documentation and filing.
- 7) You shall strive to conduct your research without doing harm to people, animals or the environment.
- 8) You shall be fair in your judgement of others' research.

(Vetenskapsrådet, 2017, p. 10)

These guidelines from Bryman and the Swedish Science Council are used for any ethical consideration during this case study. While I have presented some ethical considerations throughout this thesis already, I will now present some of the instances where ethical considerations were especially prevalent.

Firstly, there is the consideration of informed consent when collecting data from social media. I touched on this subject while presenting my data gathering process, and one way I handled informed consent was by avoiding the use of any posts in PEF's discussion groups on Facebook where predominantly private individuals' post. All posts used in the analysis of this thesis are either written by PEF or shared by them. The topic of confidentiality on social media is a fairly recent ethical consideration, and as mentioned by Van Diepen & Wolf (2021), many researchers do not even mention these considerations due to the consent forms being signed when individuals join the sites, which states that their posts may be used by third parties. Yet, in order to stay in line with the ethical guidelines stated above, I believe that anonymity of the individuals is important to minimize the risk of any harm befalling them.

The second instance where ethical considerations became especially noteworthy was the relationship with the research project conducted by Associate Professor Katarzyna Wojnicka. The strategy employed to counteract this potential ethical dilemma was complete transparency and honesty with PEF in regard to my affiliation with the project. They gained access to the consent form, which was drafted by Wojnicka for her study, as well as all the information openly available about her project. There were no attempts made to hide my involvement with the project of any sort. In fact, this transparency led to PEF expressing discomfort with taking

part in the interviews, due to previous publications of Wojnicka. While it greatly affected the results of this study, it is an outcome from acting in a way which I deemed necessary to avoid any willful deception.

Finally, the transparent and honest communication I established with PEF also meant that they had full access to the aims and methods of my research. In the research proposal I sent them I made sure to clearly include my purpose, methods, and research questions. This was also true for the project of Wojnicka. Furthermore, due to the guidelines stated above, I was also transparent with the fact that this thesis will be continued after submission to my examiner, and that I will continue to work on the thesis together with Wojnicka. I will also give them a chance to read the results of this thesis.

Chapter 6: Results & Analysis

To present the results and analysis, I will divide this part of the thesis into two parts both corresponding to one of the chosen social media platforms. For the purposes of this thesis, the combined results will represent PEF's social media rhetoric.

6:1 Twitter posts

The twitter posts of PEF were divided into four wide themes primarily based on the demographic who was the subject of the tweet (Figure 6:1). These are (1) *men* (n=76), (2) *women* (n=29), (3) *children* (n=104), and finally, the exception to the rule (4) *transnationality* (n=53). During the analysis there was also a final selection process. Some tweets were deemed not useable for the analysis. These posts were given the theme *undecided* (n=41), and included mostly posts which promoted different works, such as songs, movies, or blogposts from other individuals. Any promotions that were categorizable in other themes upon overview of the tweet were given an appropriate code in the final stages of the analysis. Examples of this include a post promoting the documentary *The Red Pill*. While at early stages, this was given the code *promotion of works*, which exists under the undecided theme, in later stages, this post was deemed as part of the code *men's health*, since *The Red Pill* is a well-known documentary about the difficulties of being a man. Examples of promotion of works which remained in undecided include promotion of songs, which were not categorizable anywhere else upon reviewing the title, or simple nameless links to blogposts. Within the undecided theme there were also posts which are simply uncategorizable because they are part of a type of particular communication of Twitter. For example, posts expressing gratitude to an individual or organization for sharing another post or sharing of humorous material which were not relevant to the purposes of this thesis. Due to the uncategorizable nature of this theme, it is not included in the results, and the posts included are instead deemed excluded. The numbers included in the figure 6:1, are meant to give a quick overview of PEF's Twitter. While the results within the numbers do represent a certain result, the coding of the tweets is of a qualitative thematic nature, and therefore, any quantitative results based on the numbers are problematic, since they are a quantitative result of a qualitative analysis.

Themes (N=262)	Sub-themes	Codes
Men (n=76)	Differences among men (12)	'Anti-racism' & 'LGBTQ'
	Costs of masculinity (60)	'Abuse', 'Atrocity tales', 'Celebrities', 'Men's Health', 'State of Fatherhood' & 'Sympathy tales'
		Tips for Fatherhood (4)
Women (n=29)	Vicious Women (16)	'Atrocity tales' & 'Feminism'
	Privileges (13)	'Gender Discrimination' & 'Gender Equality'
Children (n=104)	Custody (23)	'Shared Parenting'
	Fathers (24)	'Importance of Fatherhood' & 'Positive tales'
	Harm to children (57)	'Abduction', 'Abuse', 'Health', 'Parental Alienation' & 'State of Children'
Transnationality (n=53)	Legislation (18)	'State of Legislation' & 'Positive changes'
	Promotion (13)	'Events' & 'Organizations'
	General (22)	'Reporting on Europe', 'General corruption' & 'Positive occurrences'

(Figure 6:1)

6:1:1 Theme: Men

The theme of men is expressed through three sub-themes, two of which coincide with the framework of Messner (2000): (1) *differences among men* (n=12), (2) *costs of masculinity* (n=60), and finally (3) *tips for fatherhood* (n=4). Differences among men is expressed through tweets which are *anti-racist* or *pro-LGBTQ* rights. Anti-racism is expressed through tweets that exposes racism in society:

European Fathers PEF (2017-08-14):

The myth of the kindly General Robert E. Lee

<https://theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/06/the-myth-of-the-kindly-general-lee/529038> #slavery #familybreakdown #RobertELee #Racism #Whitesupremacism

Anti-racism is also expressed through tweets which shares videos or news that support anti-racist events. Notably for the timeframe of this thesis, the Black Lives Matter protests in America:

European Fathers PEF (2020-06-05):

Bellevue, WA Police Chief addresses protesters: "We are with you, we're not against you."

<https://youtu.be/WgZ1AKIu5Ac> via @YouTube

Support for LGBTQ is expressed through tweets which promotes positive developments in the realm of LGBTQ rights, or through videos which shows positive relationships between fathers and their LGBTQ children:

European Fathers PEF (2016-12-09):

This Father's Reaction To His Son Coming Out Is Perfect <https://thescene.com/watch/clickhole/this-father-s-reaction-to-his-son-coming-out-is-perfect> via @SCENE

It is noteworthy that PEF expresses a general support for anti-racism struggles, and LGBTQ rights. Not only are examples of this found in tweets such as the ones exemplified above, but it is also noted in the absence of any codes which may allude to the contrary. As a transnational organization focusing on men, fathers, and children, it is clear from these results that PEF are aware of, and support, other struggles such as sexuality and ethnicity. This supports the diverse nature of their main objectives and members.

The second sub-theme in the theme of men, *costs of masculinity*, also coincide with the framework of Messner and is by far the most tweeted sub-theme in this theme. It is also a sub-theme where there are many different types of codes. *Abuse* is the code for any tweets which referenced violence between partners. Notably, the placement of this code under the theme of men is relevant. In fact, with few exceptions, any tweets which references violence are done so through referencing cases where women were the aggressors, or to expose the hypocrisy in society about male victims of violence:

European Fathers PEF (2016-10-26):

Double standards are making male domestic violence victims vulnerable <http://dailym.ai/1Rd1S5Q> via @MailOnline

European Fathers PEF (2018-03-27):

With a family history dominated by an extremely aggressive & violent #grandmother, Fiona Richardson, the present Australian PC Minister for Prevention of Family Violence first needs to rethink her own family history, writes Bettina Arndt <http://bettinaarndt.com.au/news/minister-prevention-family-violence-needs-think-family-history/> #domesticviolence

Tweets which referenced women as potential victims of domestic violence or abuse does so through gender equality rhetoric:

European Fathers PEF (2021-01-08):

#UK #Lordsdebate on the new #DomesticAbuseBill - All #domesticabusevictims - whether male or female - need #equaltreatment – #BrianPaddick, Lib Dem peer and former Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police

Atrocity tales is a code which is reserved for Tweets which tells of especially atrocious occurrences or news stories. These were split up between both themes of men and women. Under the men theme, these atrocity tales tell of male victims of attacks or male victims of injustices:

European Fathers PEF (2018-09-11):

(Crying face) Italian father Giovanni Arcangeli attacked with acid in Odessa Ukrain for wanting to see his child <https://la-notizia.net/2018/09/10/giovanni-arcangeli-aggressione-acido/> #parentalalienation #Ukrain #femaledomesticviolence #GiovanniArcangeli

European Fathers PEF (2019-02-12):

Lebanese father who set himself on fire over unpaid school fees die

Clearly, these tweets are made to elicit certain emotions among anyone who reads them. They are tales that use heinous happenings as a way to raise anger or disgust among followers of PEF's twitter.

Similarly, PEF makes use of *sympathy tales* to appeal to emotion among their followers. These tweets are similar to atrocity tales in that they take the form of shared stories, but instead of making readers feel anger or disgust, these stories clearly appeal to sentimental emotions by sharing sympathetic stories of fathers:

European Fathers PEF (2016-10-13):

Father and son reunion after 18 years. <https://youtu.be/O4VDL0hjjmI> via @YouTube

While sympathy tales and atrocity tales are very short, as is typical of Twitter, they are clearly meant to reach anyone who reads them on an emotional level. Noteworthy about both the atrocity tales and the sympathy tales are that these are mostly focused on one occurrence or individual. In other words, they are handpicked tales, retold by PEF, to paint a certain image of the struggle's men and fathers experience.

PEF also tweets many stories using well-known figures which are caught up in struggles of divorce, custody struggles, or general stories about their relationship with their fathers. These were categorized under the code *celebrities*. The purpose of these Tweets by PEF is not as obvious as the appeals to emotion in other codes. The mentions of well-known celebrities are interpreted as either an appeal to legitimacy, or a way to include tweets which might be shared more extensively, and become 'viral':

European Fathers PEF (2016-03-25):

Guy Ritchie ask Fathers4Justice for advice on court fight with Madonna <http://dailym.ai/21yslKL> via @MailOnline

European Fathers PEF (2021-01-06):

#KamalaHarris's Father, a Footnote in Her Speeches, Is a Prominent Economist

Men's health is a code reserved for tweets which referenced health issues men experience. These tweets often mention suicides or general difficulties about being a man. They are also especially prevalent during November every year, which is the month in which International Men's Day fall:

European Fathers PEF (2021-11-20):

#Japan - #TheJapanTimes: #InternationalMensDay2021

International Men's Day: In Japan, it's tough being a man, too | The Japan Times

State of fatherhood is the name given to any tweets which reference the current status or struggles of fatherhood. These tweets most often reference institutional injustices and the perceived hypocrisies within society:

European Fathers PEF (2018-02-06):

Feb 6, 2018

Uk fathers are being airbrushed out of existence by family courts <https://inews.co.uk/?p=123539>

European Fathers PEF (2016-10-26):

Canadian father complains of 'sexist' child benefit system - Marilyn Stowe Blog

http://marilynstowe.co.uk/2016/10/25/canadian-father-complains-of-sexist-child-benefit-system/#.WA_p-s_4HFc.twitter

Finally, the last code under the theme of men is reserved for when PEF shares tips to men for how to be a better father. This code was not given its own sub-theme, since there were only four posts categorized as this code during the time period for data collection of this thesis. However, these tweets are noteworthy for the analysis and discussion, and so is the absence of more tweets of this nature:

European Fathers PEF (2018-04-15):

Doing it All: Parenting for Modern Dads <http://brook.gs/2bm9vGJ> via @BrookingsInst

In general, the codes within the theme of men are either an appeal to the emotions of their followers, or an attempt to expose hypocritical institutions in society. Exceptions to this are tweets about celebrities, which might be an appeal to legitimacy, or more noteworthy, tips for fatherhood. The reflection of their explicitly stated main objectives are there, however, in a miniscule manner. While their main objectives use gender equality rhetoric, their social media rhetoric reveals a heavy focus on the costs of being a man, instead of mentioning gender equality and potential privileges of men.

6:1:2 Theme: Women

Two sub-themes were constructed for the theme of women: (1) *vicious women* and (2) *privileges*. Vicious women, while a notably loaded term, is the chosen sub-theme for codes which tells of women as perpetrators through *atrocious tales*, or notably, any mentions of *feminism* on PEF's twitter.

As mentioned above, atrocity tales exist both under the theme of men as well as the theme of women. Here, the atrocity tales serves a similar purpose of eliciting anger and disgust in the reader, however, these tales are about women as perpetrators of these atrocities. For example, paternity fraud, sexual exploitation of youth, or examples of mothers being neglectful:

European Fathers PEF (2016-02-21):

Problems With Paternity: Fraud To Securing Parental Rights http://huffingtonpost.com/joseph-e-cordell/problems-with-paternity-fraud-to-securing-parental-rights_b_9244342.html via @HuffPostDivorce

European Fathers PEF (2016-09-09):

Ex-teacher impregnated by teen appears in court after breaking curfew <http://dailym.ai/2atOS9M> via @MailOnline

European Fathers PEF (2017-07-17):

Mother Arrested for Letting 10-Year-Old Shop Alone at Lego Store <http://reason.com/blog/2017/07/05/mother-arrested-for-letting-10-year-old>

Just as with the atrocity tales categorized under the theme of men, these tales are viewed as handpicked stories meant to paint a certain image to the reader.

Feminism is the code given to any tweets which mentions feminism, or any works made by feminists. Notably, this code is categorized under the quite loaded term *vicious women*. The purpose of this naming and categorization is to quickly show any reader of this thesis that the relationship between PEF's social media rhetoric and feminism is quite loaded. While there are only eight mentions of feminism during 2016 – 2022, they are all examples of how feminism is hypocritical or failing:

European Fathers PEF (2018-02-12):

Smart Woman RIPS Feminism to SHREDS During EPIC Speech <https://youtu.be/L9tI0JZ9E> via @YouTube

European Fathers PEF (2021-07-16):

Onesided feminist #EU #fakeresearch & #fakenews denying inequalities for men in family & social law + complete denial of denied postdivorce access&care arrangements in COVID pandemic as forms of inequality & domestic violence define #EU & #EIGE & #Eurofound as #genderracistbodies

The second sub-theme within the theme of women is *privileges*, which coincides with the framework of Messner (2000). Tweets which mention *gender discrimination* or *gender equality* were mainly done through an angle of female privilege:

European Fathers PEF (2020-10-23):

#75years #UnitedNations (#UN) today certainly #noreasonforcelebrations: UN proved to be a notoriously #genderdiscriminativeorganisation on behalf of #women & #mothers, where #genderbalance with #men & #fathers is ignored in all aspects of their reporting & policy actions. #EndUN

European Fathers PEF (2020-09-20):

#KatarinaBARLEY(#SPD,#GermanMinisterofJustice):This #GenderDiscriminative & #GenderRacist German Politician Rejects #EuropeanCouncilResolution2079 calling for parental equality for fathers & shared parenting because of motherprivilege on not having to work

While gender equality is part of the main objectives of PEF, it is noteworthy that equality is more often than not expressed as needing a rebalance of the privileges of women. Also notable in the theme of women is the lack of any recognition of male privileges or female victims of abuse.

6:1:3 Theme: Children

Children is an important theme of PEF's twitter, since it is the most tweeted about out of all the themes identified. It also represents a vital part of PEF's stated objectives, and many of their organizations express that children's rights and their health are their main goal. The sub-themes identified in this theme are: (1) *custody*, (2) *fathers*, and (3) *harm to children*.

Custody includes only one code, *shared parenting*. This represents the fact that this is PEF's preferred custody agreement, and it is at the core of their main objectives and the implementation of shared parenting on a wider scale is PEF's main strategy for working towards gender equality. The code consists of opinions and examples of why shared parenting is the preferable alternative, as well as some sharing of development in the world towards the aim of implementing shared parenting:

European Fathers PEF (2017-09-27):

Shared parenting and custody of minor children is continuing to increase in Spain. In 2016 it is awarded in 28.3% of divorces and separations

European Fathers PEF (2018-04-22):

Shared parenting beneficial for children despite conflict - Richard A. #Warshak (Professor) - Singapore, The Straits Times, April 2, 2018 <http://straitstimes.com/forum/letters-in-print/shared-parenting-beneficial-for-children-despite-conflict> #sharedparenting

European Fathers PEF (2021-05-03):

How is formally tasking mothers with all the responsibilities of childcare any sort of victory for women? I Thought I Won My Divorce. Then I Realized the Standard Custody Arrangement Is #CourtSanctionedSexism. (#EmmaJohnson, Elle USA, Mar 16, 2021) <https://elle.com/life-love/a35786937/standard-custody-agreement-sexism> #Sexism

Notably, *fathers* is a sub-theme under the theme of children. This categorization is meant to represent the angle which many of these posts take. The posts which represent this rhetorical angle the best are the posts which were given the code *importance of fatherhood*. These posts focus on children, but they construct the father as a necessity for their health and well-being:

European Fathers PEF (2016-11-26):

Well-Adjusted Dads Equal Better-Behaved Children
http://medscape.com/viewarticle/872290#vp_2?src=soc_tw_share via @medscape

European Fathers PEF (2018-09-12):

Babies learn most of their vocabulary from their fathers - New study suggests infants learn their vocabulary from their dads (Business Insider Italia, Mariella Bussolati, Sep. 1, 2018)

*<https://businessinsider.com/new-study-suggests-infants-learn-their-vocabulary-from-their-dads-2018-8>
#Languagedevelopment #Fatherhoodresearch*

European Fathers PEF (2021-01-15):

Norwegian research: Important for children's health to maintain contact with dad after divorce

Similarly, *positive tales* are used to establish the necessity of fathers. However, these posts are more lighthearted and focus on humorous occurrences or videos which presents the father as a positive and fun presence in the life of a child:

European Fathers PEF (2016-04-16):

Watch Dad pull out daughter's tooth using Millennium Falcon drone <http://ibt.uk/A6WXP> via @IBTimesUK

These tweets are notable due to the construction of the father as a necessity in relation to the child, which warrants the categorization under the child theme, even though they are closely related to the theme of men.

Another notable sub-theme is *harm to children*. Being an organization, which states that children's rights is one of their main objectives, this sub-theme consists of posts which proves this. Two of the codes; *abduction* and *abuse*, consists of posts which mention examples of how children are harmed in two specific ways. Notably, abduction is constructed as being perpetrated mostly by parents, and especially, by the mother:

European Fathers PEF (2017-10-17):

Press Release: Child Abductions by Parents in Europe

*<https://europeanfathers.wordpress.com/20171017-child-abductions-by-parents-in-europe>
#europeanfathers #childabduction #Hagueconvention #Brusselsiibis*

European Fathers PEF (2020-10-05):

Dutch News: International Child Abductions To and From the Netherlands for 3/4 Perpetrated by Mothers - Fewer children abducted by a parent, mothers usually the perpetrator

Similarly, abuse is mostly within the realm of domestic relationships. Women are once again constructed as perpetrators:

European Fathers PEF (2016-09-17):

Children do not have affairs with older women, they are abused by them | Ally Fogg
https://theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/06/children-older-women-abused-jade-hatt?CMP=share_btn_tw

State of children and *children's health* were codes given to any posts which consisted of a general update on children's status. They differ somewhat in their focus, but the purpose of them is interpreted as being similar. They paint an image of children as being a group of individuals in distress:

European Fathers PEF (2016-10-02):

From Self-Reliance to Over-Protection: Paula Fass on the History of American Parenting and Childhood <https://ww2.kqed.org/forum/2016/06/15/from-self-reliance-to-over-protection-paula-fass-on-the-history-of-american-parenting-and-childhood/>

European Fathers PEF (2018-06-21):

Children crossing Survey: 79% of Irish primary school principals report that children as young as four are presenting themselves with #emotionalproblems, #anxiety & #selfharm mainly as a result of #parentalseparation or #maritalbreakdown (Irish Times, June 20, 2018)
[#ECE](https://irishtimes.com/news/education/children-as-young-as-four-presenting-with-anxiety-and-self-harm-1.3536535)

However, the most common reason for children being harmed according to PEF's Twitter posts, is that of *parental alienation*. Parental alienation is a term used for when a child rejects one parent, due to manipulation of the favored parent (Bernet, Gregory, Rohner & Reay, 2020). While this phenomenon and the responses within social sciences to it could be the

subject of an entire thesis in itself, in this analysis it only serves to represent a major section of PEF's social media rhetoric regarding harm to children. While at first, I interpreted this as being part of the code children's health, during the gathering of data and subsequent analysis, the amount that this phrase occurred warranted it to be its own code. In the end, this ended up being the most referenced code through 2016-2022. The purpose of these posts is to educate followers on the topic, to stress the severity of it, and to identify misconceptions about it in varying institutions:

European Fathers PEF (2016-12-22):

'Parental alienation': What it means and why it matters <http://theconversation.com/parental-alienation-what-it-means-and-why-it-matters-60763> via @ConversationUS

European Fathers PEF (2020-08-04):

#ParentalAlienation is a form of #humanaggression by #parentalfigures engaging in long-term aggressive behaviors to harm the relationship between the child and another parental figure and/or to hurt the other parental figure directly because of their relationship with the child.

European Fathers PEF (2017-03-06):

*Should parental alienation be illegal? (BBC Two - Victoria Derbyshire, 21/11/2016)
<http://bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04h7mjt> #ParentalAlienation #UK #PAS*

European Fathers PEF (2018-03-06):

*Professional Misunderstanding of Parental Alienation | Psychology Today
<https://psychologytoday.com/blog/co-parenting-after-divorce/201608/professional-misunderstanding-parental-alienation>*

Parental alienation is extensively used by PEF to point out a common-place occurrence of abuse against children which is not taken seriously enough. 37 out of 104 posts under the theme of children was categorized as parental alienation, and therefore, it represents a big part of PEF's rhetoric in regard to children on their Twitter.

6:1:4 Theme: Transnationality

The theme of transnationality is reserved for Tweets that were coded as being related to the transnational nature of PEF. The three sub-themes represent the different angles that the tweets may have taken: (1) *legislation*, (2) *promotion*, and (3) *general*. Legislation contains posts which references hypocrisies in legislative status quo or noteworthy happenings. The first code, *state of legislation* is made up of tweets which comments on the status quo of legislative organs. There is room within this code for tweets which compares different laws in different countries, and point out positive examples, yet the main purpose of these tweets is to point out hypocrisies in the current system:

European Fathers PEF (2016-11-21):

Council of Europe's domestic violence convention makes men 'second class citizens'
<http://irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/domestic-violence-convention-would-make-men-second-class-citizens-1.2875099#.WDJHh3GWp4.twitter> @IrishTimes #Istanbulconvention

The second code within this sub-theme, *positive changes*, is for tweets which reports on positive legislative changes globally:

European Fathers PEF (2018-01-17):

(Red heart) #Jurisprudence #Spain: The Spanish #SupremeCourt reiterates that post-separation coparenting or shared residence and care is "the most appropriate and beneficial regime for minors." (Supreme Court, Sentence n° 665/2017 of TS, Civil, Dec 13, 2017)
<https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=nl&sl=es&tl=en&u=https%3A%2F%2Fsupremo.vlex.es%2Fvid%2F699649161>

European Fathers PEF (2020-09-20):

#CouncilOfEurope #Resolution2079 (#COE, #PACE, 2015) on Equality and shared parental responsibility for fathers: <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-EN.asp?fileid=22220> #Parentalequalityforfathers #SharedParenting #SharedParentinginEurope

Most of the tweets within this code reflect the main objectives as stated in PEF's founding statements. The tweets represent reporting on positive changes towards wider use of shared parenting and equality on a transnational level.

The sub-theme *promotion*, is for tweets which purpose is to promote either events or organizations within the realm of men's activism or children's rights:

European Fathers PEF (2021-11-18):

Tomorrow November 19 is International Men's Day!

Minister Jonas International Men's Day official statement - Antigua Observer Newspaper

European Fathers PEF (2020-09-09):

(Public address loudspeaker) Public Consultation by the European Commission on "Delivering for children: an EU strategy on the rights of the child" (Deadline: December 8, 2020) |

*<https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12454/public-consultation>
#EU #EuropeanCommission #EUstrategyontherightsofthechild #PublicEUConsultation*

While some promotion on PEF's Twitter were deemed not codable (as discussed in the introduction to this part of the thesis), these promotions represent important events and organizations for the cause of PEF. They also represent a certain amount of transnational cooperation through promotion.

The third sub-theme, *general*, is made up of codes which are of a more unofficial capacity. They are unofficial in the regard that they do not necessarily relate to the main causes of PEF. *General corruption* deals with corruption which not necessarily relates to men's activism, and instead serve as a reporting on injustices in the world:

European Fathers PEF (2016-12-06):

*#Poland, #France and #Switzerland are now protecting nasty #pedophile #RomanPolanski
<http://nyti.ms/2gKQsJh>*

Similarly, *positive occurrences* are for tweets which reports on joyful or positive developments which are not related to law or policy:

European Fathers PEF (2016-02-17):

#Brazil #BvLF Children's City Award: Best practices in urban design & public policies for children & families <http://premiocidadedacrianca.org.br>

Finally, *reporting on Europe* is for tweets which deal with news in Europe that are not related to men's activism, gender equality, or children's rights. These are most often related to current news stories in Europe, for example, in 2017 when Catalonia made moves towards separation from Spain:

European Fathers PEF (2017-10-23):

Catalonia plots next move as Spain attempts to seize power <https://cbsnews.com/news/catalan-independence-protests-next-move-as-spain-attempt-control/>

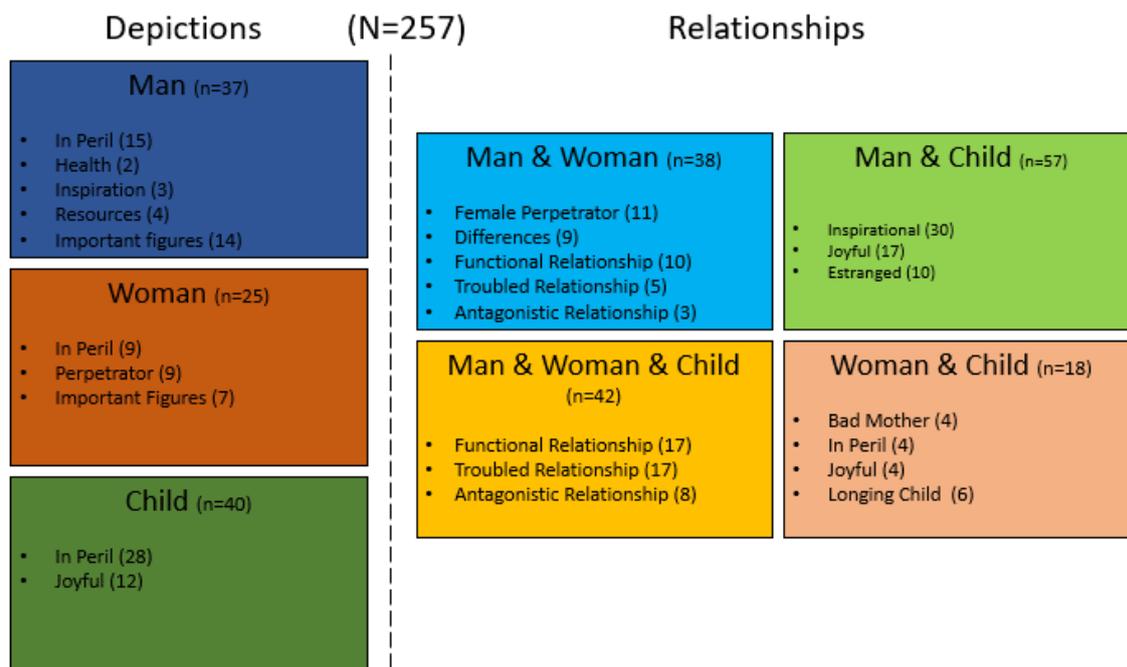
Tweets within this code can also serve to give tips which may be relevant to European citizens:

European Fathers PEF (2018-06-12):

*EU GIVES AWAY 15.000 FREE EUROPEAN MONTH-TRAIKTICKETS FOR 18 YEAR OLDS FROM EU MEMBER STATES ONLY (born between 2 July 1999 and 1 July 2000 included) – THIS AFTERNOON JUNE 12, 2018 AT 12:00 HOURS AM SHARP (CEST, Brussels Time)
<https://europa.eu/youth/discovereu> #DiscoverEU*

6:2 Facebook Images

The analysis of the images started with the demographic in the picture, and then themes were created around the purpose of the depictions of individuals, or the relationships displayed. Similarly, to the analysis of Twitter, a final selection of data was made during the analysis stage of the process. These images were coded as *undecided* and are made up of images which are not understandable without their context or were unrelated to the themes set up for the analysis. In total 95 images were deemed not codable for the purposes of this thesis. The themes were divided into two sections: *depictions* (of individuals), and *relationships* (figure 6:2).



(Figure 6:2)

Furthermore, a decision was made to not include the images in the presentation of results and analysis, but instead describe them through text. The reasons for this are primarily ethical. Many images depict private individuals and while many of the individuals depicted are professionally photographed for stock photos or something similar, judging which are ethical to use turned out to be too subjective. There was also a concern about copyright of images. On Facebook, there is a wide variety of types of images that are posted, and deciding which is fair to use or not, was deemed unfeasible. Additionally, my analysis relies on what these images represent, and therefore a description of that representation is deemed a valid way to present them.

6:2:1 Depictions: Men

The depictions of men were coded in five different ways: (1) *in peril*, (2) *health*, (3) *inspiration*, (4) *resources*, and (5) *important figures*. In general, these images construct a reality of men in trouble and as victims of the current legislative status quo. Images coded as in peril depicts men as being commonly in trouble in courts and denied their role as fathers. For example, an image of a male face being cut in half with the words: “I’m a parent too” (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2016-02-25).

The remaining codes in images depicting men are not as dramatic. Instead, they can provide tips in different ways as in the codes: *health*, *inspiration*, or *resources*. While these codes vary in their approach, they all serve the purpose of providing tips or aspirations for men, as in an image mapping out eleven encouraging phrases to say to one's children (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2016-08-23).

The final code *important figures* depict famous men or men of authority. The purpose of these images could be either an appeal to legitimacy or an attempt to take part in contemporary discussions in the social media space.

The online rhetoric regarding the depictions of men of PEF is mostly focused on men in peril. While there are some tips for fathers, the main purpose of sharing images seems to be to construct an idea that men are being wrongfully accused and are in general distress in society.

6:2:2 Depictions: Women

The depictions of women are similar to that of men, containing both depictions of women *in peril* and *important figures*, with one notable exception: images which are coded as women being depicted as *perpetrators*. This code includes a few different ways to depict women as perpetrators. They are all however, constructing women in a negative way. Often as false accusers, liars, or using sexuality as a weapon or generally violent. For example, a female teacher with knee-high stockings (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2016-04-05), suggesting sexual abuse in the classroom, or a mugshot of a mother with the words "If a mother makes false allegation during custody litigation! She should lose custody and be sentenced to mandatory jail time!" written across it (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2016-05-21).

6:2:3 Depictions: Children

The depictions of children were either of children *in peril*, or of children being *joyful*. Children in peril reflects the main objectives of PEF. The purpose of these images is to bring awareness to children being harmed and they often depict a child crying (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2017-09-17).

The depictions of joyful children also reflect the main objectives of PEF. With these depictions, the purpose is to show a joyful picture, hinting to what could happen if the objectives of PEF were fulfilled. Sometimes quite obviously, as in a picture of a happy toddler with a thought-bubble saying: “My parent agreed to 50/50 custody without going to court! I get to keep both sides of my family!” (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2016-02-17).

6:2:4 Relationships: Man & Woman

In images depicting relationships between men and women, the codes mostly focus on different types of relationships as in the codes: *functional relationships*, *troubled relationships*, and *antagonistic relationships*. However, there are also a number of images which focuses on *differences* between men and women. Finally, there are images which depicts a relationship between men and women where the woman is the one-sided *perpetrator* in some way. While these may have been able to be coded under antagonistic relationship, they have been separated to note the one-sided nature of PEF’s social media’s depiction of violence.

Functional-, troubled-, and antagonistic relationships is made up of images depicting a man and woman in varying types of relationships. The functional relationships are made up of images which depict smiling or happy men and women in a presumably loving relationship (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2017-12-15). Troubled relationships and antagonistic relationships both describes a toxic relationship, but to different degrees.

Troubled relationships are depicted through couples being melancholic or sad together. For example, lying in bed while contemplating difficult decisions (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2016-04-04). Antagonistic relationships are more aggressive and confrontational. For example, a silhouette of a man and a woman shouting directly into each other’s faces (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2017-05-26)

Differences is a code reserved for images which focus on differences between men and women. These are either meant to be humorous, as in an image laying out the rules how to

make a man happy with a checklist of five points, while juxtaposing with a similar list for how to make a woman happy but with 53 points (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2016-03-18). Or they are meant to be serious, while highlighting hypocritical social norms. As in an image depicting stick figures showing different double standards in society, for example how violence against women is not considered funny, while violence against men is considered humorous in society (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2019-06-09).

Images depicting female perpetrators are similar to the code under the theme of women. However, in these images the victims of the abuse, the men, are in the image as well. For example, in an image of a woman threateningly grasping her fist above a terrified man bracing for the punch (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2016-10-26), or a woman grabbing a man inappropriately at a water cooler (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2016-01-09), referencing sexual harassment at the workplace.

6:2:5 Relationships: Man & Child

The depictions of relationships between a man and his children are mostly made up of *inspirational* or *joyful* images. However, there is also images which depicts an *estrangement* in the relationship. Inspirational and joyful images are highly similar. Yet there is a separation between them depending on the mood depicted in the image. Inspirational images focus on good fatherhood and the importance of fathers through images with a melancholier tone, as in a dad and his children overlooking the ocean under a grey sky (Platform for European Fathers [Facebook post], 2016-01-04), or inspiring images of why fathers are important, as in an image of a father helping his son with homework, with the words: “this is what child support looks like”, written across it (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2016-03-26).

Joyful images also focus on the benefits of fatherhood. Here the images do not necessarily purposefully inspire though, other than depicting happy relationships between a smiling father and a smiling child (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2017-05-01).

Images depicting a troubled relationship between a child and their father was coded as *estranged*. These images describe a troubled relationship due to the estrangement which fathers are forced in to due to the status quo in family law. For example, an image depicting a CNN article with a father holding his son, and the words: “how can I be a father to my kid if I only get to see him four nights out of the whole month?” (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2018-11-13).

6:2:6 Relationships: Woman & Child

Images with both women and children depicts them *in peril*, being *joyful*, a *longing child*, or examples of *bad mothers*.

Images depicting women and children in peril are images which shows how they might be harmed or in general distress. For example, a picture depicting a woman and child in a hospital bed (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2018-08-05).

The joyful images of women and children are quite self-explanatory. They are images of women and children smiling and showing a healthy relationship between mother and child. For example, a mother and her daughter and son smiling by the ocean (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2019-03-12).

Longing children is the code reserved for images which shows a child with their mother, while showing emotions of longing towards something else. These images can show a child holding their mother’s hand, while having a close up on the face of the child staring into the camera (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2019-08-27). Or embracing their mother while melancholily staring into the camera (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2016-12-22).

Some images on PEF’s Facebook are also quite explicit in their depiction of bad mothers. For example, a silhouette of a mother and her child with the words: “I know you want to see your dad, but I said no, and I am the one with custody” (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook

post], 2018-09-28). Or an image of a female finger sternly pointing at a sad child (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2016-05-11), supposedly being scolded by her mother.

6:2:7 Relationships: Man & Woman & Child

The relationships between a man, woman and children are depicted as being either: *functional*, *troubled*, or *antagonistic*. Functional relationships are depicted through images of a happy family functioning well together. For example, in a family photo from a movie (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2022-08-18), or an image of an exciting game night (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2016-10-23).

Troubled and antagonistic relationships are similar, the difference being in the amount of confrontation being depicted. Furthermore, troubled relationships are often based on the father being separated or blurred out from the rest of the family (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2017-12-22). Antagonistic relationships are highly confrontational and depict arguments. Often, the child is being depicted as being caught in the middle of an antagonistic argument (Platform for European Fathers, [Facebook post], 2020-09-13).

Chapter 7: Discussion

The purpose of this discussion is to reflect and draw conclusions based on the results and analysis, using the theoretical frameworks chosen for this thesis. To do this, I will divide this chapter into two parts, each corresponding to a research question.

7:1 Representation of main objectives

How are the main objectives of PEF represented in the social media rhetoric? This part of the chapter will summarize the results above and consider them in relation to the main objectives of PEF. The main objectives as stated in PEF's founding statements are interpreted as being:

- Further fathers' interests
- Work towards gender equality
- Ensure children's rights
- Through a European policy- and legislation level

Firstly, the interests of fathers are extensively represented in the online rhetoric of PEF. While this does not usually take the shape of any concrete suggestions for action, the social media of PEF posts a lot of images and text which constructs men as victims of an unjust system. This coincides with what Flood (2010) claim is a common occurrence in fathers' rights activism. This is viewed as an effort of PEF to spread awareness, and thereby further the interests of fathers. However, inherent in these efforts are the lack of concrete solutions in favor of a construction of victimhood. While this may be an efficient tool for raising awareness of hardships experienced by fathers, it also comes at the expense of other expressed objectives of PEF.

Secondly, the work towards gender equality is not represented in their online rhetoric. Any posts which reference gender equality does so through constructing men as the victims, and women as privileged. Furthermore, women are often depicted as being perpetrators of injustices and abuse, while men are not depicted as such even once. This constitutes an anti-feminist discourse on abuse (Dragiewicz, 2011). This construction within their rhetoric

exacerbates polarization of men and women and does so through vilification of women. Furthermore, while shared parenting is the preferred custody arrangement of PEF, the images and posts constructs a picture of men as being a necessity for children, while women are bad mothers or keeps children from their father. Therefore, any gender equality rhetoric which may result from the aim of implementing shared parenting is undermined by the construction of men and women as polarized actors in a gendered struggle. As presented by Bertioia & Drakich (1993) in their study of fathers' rights movements rhetoric, PEF seems to correspond to their conclusions. They use gender equality language in their main objectives but fail at living up to the ideal in their social media rhetoric.

Thirdly, PEF's objective to ensure children's rights is broadly represented in their social media rhetoric. Many posts mention the harm children are experiencing. This is the objective which is the most well represented and makes up a significant part of the entirety of their social media rhetoric. However, also noteworthy is that there is a strong tie to the construction of necessity of fathers in relation to their children. This is especially visible in tweets which mention the importance of fatherhood.

Fourth, notably missing from the online rhetoric of PEF is the mentions of how to achieve their objectives through a European policy- and legislation level. There are no concrete mentions of suggested action or organizing of the members to act on the European level. Instead, the purpose of their posts with a transnational focus are mostly to point out hypocrisies within the system or to raise awareness of successful changes throughout Europe and the world.

Finally, it is important to note that the diversity of the member organization is lacking in the social media rhetoric of PEF. This could be a product of the way Twitter and Facebook operates, since it only takes one person to write a post. However, PEF represents a range of groups with varying strategies and ideologies, something which is not visible on their social media.

To summarize, the results of the thematic content analysis of PEF's Twitter and Facebook suggest partial representation of their main objectives. Mostly in the form of raising awareness of fathers' interest and children's rights. However, the main objectives are overshadowed by the number of posts which serves to construct men as victims of an unjust system. Furthermore, by doing this partly through the vilification of women, PEF's social media rhetoric risks polarizing men and women further, instead of helping to achieve their main objectives.

7:2 Political Discourse of Masculinities and Fatherhood of PEF

Based on their social media rhetoric, what is the political discourse of masculinities and fatherhood of PEF? To answer this question, I will reflect on the results and analysis with the help of the chosen theoretical frameworks. Firstly, I will use Wojnicka's (2016 & 2022) hard-line and soft-line framework to illustrate PEF's characteristics on a scale. Secondly, based on Messner's (2000) initial placement of fathers' rights groups within the terrain of politics of masculinities, I will reflect on how PEF's placement within the framework differentiates itself. Finally, I will combine the two frameworks to illustrate PEF's political discourse of masculinities and fatherhood, based on their social media rhetoric.

By employing the framework of Wojnicka (2022), the four factors presented in the theory chapter becomes important to gain an understanding of where on the hard-line and soft-line scale PEF falls. Firstly, their rhetoric regarding gender equality and gender rights falls towards the hard-line wing. Their rhetoric regarding gender equality and gender rights is predominantly represented in their focus on shared parenting, which makes up a big part of their social media, however, as mentioned above it is undermined by their polarization of men and women. Therefore, while not being deemed completely as hard-line, their gender equality rhetoric relies mostly on men being the real victims of the current status quo.

Considering the type of masculinities which PEF represents in their social media rhetoric, the result of this thesis suggests that PEF is a soft-line actor in this regard. For them to be considered hard-line, they would need to exhibit a strive towards returning to traditional patriarchal norms of masculinity, which they do not. They represent a new type of fatherhood

and masculinity, and at the core of their social media rhetoric lies the construction of the man as being a caring and nurturing figure in the life of a child.

When it comes to the types of mobilizing emotions which PEF uses in their social media rhetoric, they exhibit both hard-line and soft-line characteristics. In some regard, they rely on anger and fear to mobilize their followers. They do so by hand-picking stories and events and re-telling them as atrocity tales. The purpose of these tales is to construct villains and victims in an effort to mobilize followers (Starr, 2017). However, PEF’s social media rhetoric is also heavily reliant on the well-being of children, which falls in line with them being a soft-line actor. Therefore, regarding mobilizing emotions, PEF falls somewhere along the middle of the scale, leaning towards the soft-line wing.

Finally, in regard to their approach to cooperation and alliances, they exhibit soft-line characteristics. Several posts exhibit support for anti-racist efforts and pro-LGBTQ rights. Which is indicative of a willingness for cooperation with groups which do not focus on men’s or fathers’ activism.

Considering the discussion above, I deem PEF to be placed as illustrated in figure 7:1. While exhibiting some hard-line characteristics, PEF falls on the soft-line side of the middle of the scale.



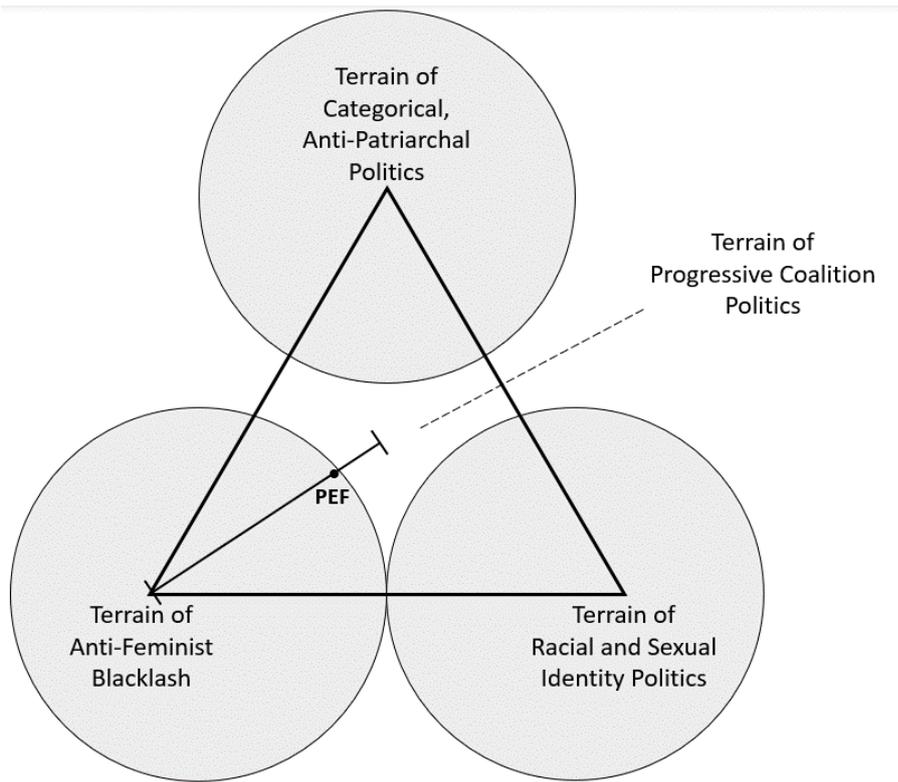
(Figure 7:1)

The placement within Messner’s (2000) terrain of politics of masculinity is based predominantly on PEF’s online rhetoric regarding women and men. Messner himself places

men's rights groups, and thereby fathers' rights groups, along the left line of the triad within the terrain of anti-feminist backlash. His placement is based on the heavy reliance on costs of masculinity within the rhetoric of men's rights, and the lack of recognition of differences among men. Based on the results of the analysis, PEF's social media rhetoric do recognize some differences/inequalities among men, which Messner's placement of fathers' rights groups does not represent. From this, I conclude that there has been somewhat of a shift within the rhetoric of fathers' rights activism.

There needs to be a disclaimer in regard to the purpose of this thesis. Transnationality seems to have a minimal effect on the social media rhetoric of PEF. While the purpose of this thesis is partially to contribute to the field by considering transnationality, it seems to have little to no effect. While transnationality surely affects how PEF organizes or structures itself, in terms of the rhetoric they put forward online, there is no noticeable effect. One can discuss and hypothesize that this is a missed opportunity for PEF to recognize differences and inequalities among men based on nationality, but there is no evidence of them doing so.

Combining Messner's (2000) terrain of politics of masculinities and Wojnicka's (2016 & 2022) hard-line and soft-line framework, will let me illustrate PEF's political discourse of masculinities and fatherhood, based on their social media rhetoric. The placement of the hard-line and soft-line scale is diagonal across the terrain of anti-feminist backlash, reaching into the middle of the triad. This placement is made to suggest the possibility to move outside the terrain of anti-feminist backlash, into the terrain of progressive coalition politics. Based on the results, analysis, and previous discussion of this thesis, I place PEF as illustrated in figure 7:2.



(Figure 7:2)

While the placement within the framework is theoretical and illustrative, it has the purpose of showing that my conclusion is that, as a contemporary fathers' movement, PEF shows a significant change from the fathers' rights groups which Messner (2000) considered when creating the framework. However, the placement also suggests that based on the results and analysis of their social media rhetoric, PEF cannot be deemed to fall within the terrain of progressive coalition politics.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The aim of this study was to contribute to the understanding of European fathers' rights mobilization through a case study of PEF. The placement of this study was done through establishing the historical context of men's and fathers' activism, as well as reviewing the existing literature. Through this, PEF was established as a unique and contemporary example of fathers' rights activism. As an organization, they declare a shift in fathers' activism by engaging in children's rights and gender equality and acting on a transnational policy level. To reach conclusions which will contribute with knowledge, a qualitative thematic analysis was carried out on PEF's social media posts, using the theoretical frameworks; terrain of politics of masculinity (Messner, 2000), and the hard-line and soft-line framework (Wojnicka, 2022). By doing this, this thesis examined a gap in the existing literature on men's and fathers' rights activism. Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the field of social work and human rights. It does so by exploring an actor which uses human rights rhetoric to affect macro-social gender structures which makes up the context for which social work practice exist. This was done by answering the two following research questions.

How are the main objectives of PEF represented in their social media rhetoric? The main objectives of PEF are interpreted as being to further fathers' interests, work towards gender equality, ensure children's rights, and to do so through a European policy- and legislation level. Through a qualitative thematic analysis of 519 social media posts from both Facebook and Twitter, it was concluded that PEF's social media rhetoric partially represents their main objectives. Predominantly, their objectives are represented in their focus on raising awareness of fathers' interest and children's rights. However, this fact is diminished by the number of posts which serves to vilify women. This results in a considerable part of PEF's social media rhetoric existing only to polarize men and women against each other, which goes against their main objectives.

Based on their social media rhetoric, what is the political discourse of masculinities and fatherhood of PEF? By combining the two theoretical frameworks of this thesis it is concluded that PEF differentiates itself from previous understandings of fathers' rights activism. While they are still categorized as being outside the terrain of progressive coalition politics, their social media rhetoric represents a major change. Predominantly, these changes

are due to their focus on the well-being of the child, their promotion of a caring type of masculinity, and their apparent willingness to cooperate with other social movements outside the realm of masculinity politics. They are currently being kept out of the terrain of progressive coalition politics due to the polarization of men and women which exists within their social media rhetoric. Therefore, the political discourse of masculinities and fatherhood of PEF's social media rhetoric is deemed to be on the edge of progressive coalition politics, yet still exhibiting anti-feminist backlash politics.

8:1 Limitations

Limitations within this thesis has already been touched upon throughout the methodology chapter. However, there are some inherent limitations within the purpose of the thesis in itself. Firstly, the transnational dimension which I aimed to examine in the purpose of this thesis turned out to not have any particular significance. The reasons for this can be hypothesized to be due to the chosen theoretical frameworks, or the empirical data used for this thesis.

Furthermore, the purpose of this thesis is limited in its representation. I have made extensive attempts to be transparent in the fact this thesis focuses on social media rhetoric and makes no claim to represent the entirety of PEF as an organization. This is an important disclaimer to make after having presented my results above. This is also true for the representation of the member organizations. The way social media works allows for one person to make all the posts, even though PEF is meant to represent many individuals. Therefore, it is important to note that the conclusions above represent a particular type of social media rhetoric, and not the entirety of PEF as an organization.

8:2 Future research

For future research, I would suggest actions to counteract some of the limitations above. Firstly, I would suggest employing different theoretical frameworks from different schools of thought. For example, viewing fathers' rights activism through theories focused more heavily on the social movement aspects, may reveal that the transnational dimension of PEF is significant and reach different conclusions than this thesis.

I would also suggest employing different methods. Specifically, I suggest using methods which can represent PEF as an organization to a greater extent than was possible in this thesis. For this, I believe interviews are the logical choice. Through interviews, future research can reflect on different dimensions of PEF, such as internal struggles or explicit strategies.

Finally, I would like to point out that analyzing social media rhetoric within fathers' activism and men's activism should continue. The internet is an important asset for recruitment and mobilization within this type of activism, and therefore future research should take this into account. I believe that a more extensive study of social media rhetoric of fathers' activism would reach informative conclusions for the future of social research.

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