

# Managers' views on employees' parental leave in Norway: problems and solutions within different institutional logics

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## Abstract

An examination of managers' perspectives on employees' parental leave rights is presented, drawing on qualitative interviews with 34 managers in the Norwegian police and in the legal profession. The aim of the article is to explore how managers approach employees' parental leave within different institutional logics and how their approach relates to gendered norms of good parenthood. According to these norms, parental leave is used fully, but mothers take the main share of the leave. The findings show that the managers do not necessarily perceive parental leave as a problem. However, the practical solutions the managers propose to possible challenges give important clues about what parental leave entails within the frame of different institutional logics. The managers' concerns reveal that parental leave rights may clash with central values, goals and strategies in an organisation. Within the logics of the police and private law firms, work is more individualised and thus perceived as more challenging than in the public sector law offices. When the solution suggested by the managers is for individual employees to adapt their leave, gendered norms come forward. However, the analysis also shows that gendered parenthood norms play out differently with the different institutional logics. With these insights, the analysis shows how policy regulations and local workplace contexts interact in shaping the consequences of family policies for gender equality in wages and career progression.

**Keywords:** Institutional logics, managers, parental leave, the legal profession, the police

## Introduction

Parental leave is an important tool for securing women's continuous employment (Korpi et al., 2013). In Scandinavia, parental leave rights are strong and widely utilised (Kitterød, 2016). Parental leave is lengthy and shareable, and both fathers and mothers have earmarked quotas. Policies supporting equal opportunities in employment, as well as equal contributions from mothers and fathers in the home, have been presented as ideals for achieving gender equality in both spheres (Hochschild, 1995; Gornick and Meyers, 2008). However, mothers take the majority of leave days (Kitterød, 2016). Furthermore, a gender gap still exists in relation to wages and career progression. Some researchers argue that family policies have a negative impact on women's careers. For example, parental leave removes mothers from employment for up to a year and may discourage employers from

hiring women for positions of authority (Mandel and Semyonov, 2006). Meanwhile, scholars such as Korpi et al. (2013) argue that the negative effects of earner-carer policies have been overstated (Ellingsæter, 2013; Korpi et al., 2013). Although the role of family policies is disputed (see Ellingsæter, 2013), a number of studies suggest that career interruptions related to childbirth are negatively correlated with wages and career progression (Halrynjo and Kitterød, 2016b; Datta Gupta et al., 2008; Hardoy et al., 2017; Budig and England, 2001). Such correlations have been interpreted as a sign that parental leave rights contribute to managers' devaluation of the employees they think will utilise them (Mandel and Semyonov, 2006). However, while these previous studies contain assumptions about managers, few have explicitly examined managers' attitudes. This article complements previous studies by examining the perspectives of managers empirically.

The manager's perspective is important because managers hold key positions in organisations. They assign tasks, decide promotions, and address an organisation's main objectives. At the same time, they play an important role in setting or implementing the criteria for good work and professional expectations, as well as expectations vis-à-vis employees' work/family reconciliation. This article situates parental leave in local workplace contexts by adopting an institutional logics approach in the analysis of the manager's perspective. Institutional logics are the belief systems at play in a social field. They function as a frame of reference for constructing issues, goals, values, problems, solutions and practices (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Meyer and Hammerschmid, 2006; Thornton et al., 2012).

The aim of this article is to analyse how managers approach employees' parental leave within different institutional logics and how their approach relates to gendered norms of good parenthood. The data comprises qualitative interviews with 34 managers within the legal profession and the police. Despite the two professions being different with respect to length of education, gender composition and career paths, there are important similarities. The two professions have historically been dominated by men and do not have strong traditions of work/family reconciliation. However, the gender composition in both professions is changing. Male and female law students are in parity in most countries (Schultz, 2003), and women now comprise 29% of police officers in Norway (Andersen et al., 2017). At the same time, both professions remain highly gender segregated within. Men

continue to dominate in senior positions and prestigious areas of specialisation (Kay and Gorman, 2008; Schultz, 2003; Fekjær and Halrynjo, 2012). One explanation for this is women's work/family reconciliation (Halrynjo and Lyng, 2009). The public sector is often portrayed both as more family friendly than the private sector and as offering fewer career opportunities and lower wages (Mandel and Semyonov, 2006). This article deals with three types of organisations, although two professions. While all police officers work in the public sector, lawyers can work in either the public or the private sector. Thus, a comparison of the private and public sectors is particularly relevant. Given the combination of an increased share of women and internal gender segregation, the two professions represent a critical case and are highly suitable for exploring levels of acceptance for childcare-related absence from work. Furthermore, because the professions employ a high percentage of men, they are useful for exploring managers' views on father's leave.

## **Gendered norms of parenthood and the implications for gender equality in wages and career progression**

In Norway, working parents earn the right to 49 weeks' parental leave with full pay. 10 weeks are earmarked for the father and 13 for the mother, of which three have to be taken before the birth of the child. The remainder can be shared between the parents (Kitterød, 2016). The introduction of 18 weeks' paid parental leave in 1977 gave both parents the right to paid leave, with six reserved for the mother. Fathers seldom exercised their right to leave until the introduction of a four-week father's quota in 1993. Following a series of increases, the father's quota was reduced from 14 to 10 weeks in 2014 after a change of government (Ellingsæter, 2016). The aim of an untransferable father's quota is to encourage more involved fathering (Brandth and Kvande, 2009; Kitterød, 2016).

Parents are not obliged to take parental leave, but most do. This suggests a good parenthood norm is being established where the family takes the full 49 weeks. However, parents' utilisation of parental leave also suggests a norm where the mother's leave is lengthy and father's leave is shorter. On average, fathers' use has matched the father's quota, while mothers have taken the remainder of the available leave (Halrynjo and Kitterød, 2016a). Several qualitative studies of parental leave have studied employees' experiences and the utilisation of parental leave (Almqvist and Dahlgren, 2013; Brandth and

Kvande, 2003; Bloksgaard, 2013; Halrynjo and Lyng, 2013; Brandth and Kvande, 2009; Halrynjo, 2010). One finding from these studies is that fathers adjust their parental leave to the demands of work life, whereas mothers do not. While it is very uncommon for mothers not to take parental leave (Cools and Strøm, 2016), not doing so is more common among fathers. Of those entitled to father's leave, 10% take no leave and 14% only use part of the quota (Kitterød et al., 2017). Thus, fathers' absence from the workplace because of children is relatively limited in comparison with mothers' absence, as she takes most of the shared parental leave quota (Kitterød and Rønsen, 2013).

A key question in the parental leave debate is whether the policies and their gendered use contribute to or counteract gender equality. On one hand, Norway is considered one of the most gender-equal countries in the world, having a high proportion of women in paid work and a parental leave scheme that encourages both parents to participate in childcare. On the other hand, women in Norway are grossly underrepresented in management positions (Hardoy et al., 2017) and earn on average 86.1% of men's income (SSB, 2017). This combination of strong family policies and gender inequality in work life has been described as a 'welfare state paradox': family policies that are mainly utilised by women facilitate women's access to work life, but simultaneously foster employers' reluctance to hire women and promote them to powerful positions. Women thus fall behind in wages and career progression; they have difficulties obtaining managerial positions, especially in the private sector; and are restricted to part-time work in the public sector (Mandel and Semyonov, 2006). Conversely, Korpi et al. (2013) argue that Scandinavian earner-carer policies have successfully enhanced the employment rates of women with no higher education, without undermining women's opportunities to gain access to top occupations and wages (Korpi et al., 2013: 5).

Gender differences in wages and career progression are often used as a measure of the negative consequences of parental leave. That the gender gap in wages and career progression is related to having children, is well documented (Budig and England, 2001; Hardoy et al., 2017; Cools and Strøm, 2016; Evertsson and Duvander, 2010). Several studies show that women are more likely than men to suffer a 'family penalty' from having children (Cools and Strøm, 2016; Hardoy and Schøne, 2008; Budig and England, 2001; Hardoy et al., 2017; Kunze, 2015). Another explanation is that men are likely to be rewarded by a 'husband

premium' (Petersen et al., 2014). A general argument is that family policies contribute to managers' statistical discrimination of women as a group (Mandel and Semyonov, 2006; Blau and Kahn, 2013). Mandel and Semyonov's argument assumes that the policies contribute to managers' devaluation of women employees. In a similar vein, Blau and Khan (2013) argue that the policies leave women as a group less likely to be considered for positions of power because managers cannot tell which women will avail themselves of such options. Assumptions about managers' attitudes are central in these arguments, although they have not been examined empirically. Indeed, some studies suggest that while employees may perceive managers as being negative towards parental leave, this is not necessarily true (Bekkengen, 2002; Halrynjo, 2010). Halrynjo (2010) attributes employees' adaptations to work life to individual competition between co-workers rather than to greedy managers. The few studies that have examined employers' views on father's leave have ambiguous findings. For example, Bekkengen (2002) finds that managers are positive towards father's leave, while Haas and Hwang (2009) found that co-workers and managers typically did not react positively to fathers taking leave (Haas and Hwang, 2009). This article will analyse empirically how managers interpret employees' taking parental leave and whether parental leave forms part of how managers assess employees' competence and attractiveness. The analysis looks at how managers' approach to parental leave relates to gendered norms of good parenthood, and how these gendered norms form part of a complex set of logics that influence how managers approach parental leave in the context of the workplace.

## **An institutional logics approach**

An institutional logics approach is used in the analysis of the managers' views. This perspective functions as a framework for analysing the interrelationships between individuals, organisations and institutions in social systems (Thornton et al., 2012). The approach is based on an understanding of society as an inter-institutional system, consisting of potentially contradictory institutional logics that both enable and constrain action (Friedland and Alford, 1991).

Institutional logics are the belief systems at play in a social field. They condition how sense making occurs by providing frames of reference for constructing issues, goals, values, problems, solutions and practices (Meyer and Hammerschmid, 2006; Thornton et al., 2012;

Friedland and Alford, 1991). Within this perspective, a market is more than an allocative mechanism, it is also an institutionally specific cultural system for generating and measuring value (Friedland and Alford, 1991: 234). For example: sense making may occur through the lens of self-interest, efficiency, profit and status in the market within the institutional logic of the market; through the lens of redistribution, community good and the status of interest groups within the institutional logic of the state; and through concerns about professional expertise, personal reputation and status in a profession within the institutional logic of professions (Thornton et al., 2012: 73). While Thornton et al. (2012) emphasise the role of the state as a redistributive mechanism, other scholars have emphasised its role as a regulative mechanism (for example Friedland and Alford, 1991). The conception of the state as a regulative mechanism is central in this article, as it deals with two professions that work with laws and regulations.

An institutional logics approach brings forth what the managers perceive as being at stake in the organisations when employees take parental leave, how the managers approach parental leave in relation to organisational goals, what managers expect from employees' efforts and how their efforts are measured or evaluated. A professional logic is particularly relevant in this article. However, scholars have emphasised that professional work cannot be understood separately from the organisation it takes place in. Studies of professional service firms show how organisations are important in reshaping professional work and values (Kirkpatrick and Noordegraaf, 2015). One can expect a professional logic to be expressed differently in the police and private and public law organisations. Firstly, because they are different professions. Secondly, because the professionals work in different types of organisations. The article distinguishes between the organisations by sector. The article perceives work within the police as intersecting between a professional logic and a logic of the state, work within the private law firms as intersecting between a professional logic and a logic of the market, and within the public sector law offices as intersecting between a professional logic and a logic of the state. How this intersection of logics unfolds in the organisations needs to be investigated empirically.

Meyer and Hammersmid's (2006) study of how managerial reform ideas are challenging old administrative orientations among Austrian public sector chief executives is an example of how institutional logics can be studied empirically. How the executives' framed the status of

the public sector, its problems and appropriate solutions was interpreted as indicators of the logic on which the executives drew. Similarly, analysing the problems and solutions managers associate with parental leave may be a fruitful way for this article to understand better how parental leave is met within different organisations. The logics are ideal types, and the aim is to analyse how the different logics come into play in the managers' sense making of parental leave and its consequences. It is to be expected that parental leave and its consequences are perceived differently within different institutional logics. However, what the different logics mean for how managers approach parental leave needs to be examined empirically. The norms for good parenthood are a part of the organisations' wider social context. It is important to examine how the managers relate to these norms, although they are not directly relevant for work in the organisation.

## Data and methods

The data for this paper comprises interviews with 34 managers in the police and the legal profession, all of whom had had experience with employees taking parental leave. The selected organisations are specialised, mainly employing employees from one profession. They differ in some important ways in relation to, for example, sector, duties and goals. The managers were either partners in private law firms or departmental heads in the police or public sector law offices, see table 1.

**Table 1: Characteristics of managers and organisations:**

Type of organisation	Female manager	Male manager	Total number of interviewees
Police (investigation and parole depts.)	3	8	11
Legal profession – private law firms	5	8	13
Legal profession – public sector (public law offices, civil servants, police prosecutors)	4	6	10
Total number of interviewees	12	22	34

Semi-structured, hour-long interviews were conducted in the interviewees' workplaces. The managers were asked about their experiences with parental leave, potential challenges and how such leave was handled from a practical perspective. The emphasis was on obtaining descriptions and examples. Managers can be reluctant to problematise parental leave in

interview situations. However, this was not the case here. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and then coded thematically in Nvivo. They were partly coded deductively, guided by the main themes from the interviews. These were:

- 1) An overview of the organisation's work (goals, duties, working hours, professional expectations);
- 2) Employees, family policies and work (parental leave in the organisation);
- 3) Career paths and promotions (career progression, goals and subsequent expectations for employees);
- 4) Parenthood and career progression (possible tensions).

They were coded inductively, with openness towards unanticipated themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006) such as the employee's role. How they talked about gender was also examined, with an emphasis on contradictions, double meanings, and their assumptions. An institutional logics approach was used to analyse in depth whether, how and why managers see parental leave as a problem and their proposed solutions.

## **Managers' approach to parental leave: potential problems and appropriate solutions**

The managers' approach to employees' parental leave is presented and analysed below. In line with the institutional logics perspective, the analysis is contextualised within what have been identified as three types of organisation, which appear in the following order: private law firms, public sector law organisations and the police.

*'... you will return having a worse market position...'*

In a private law firm, partnership is a sign of success and the competition is hard. Generating clients and earnings are the key to reaching senior positions. Here, lawyers are responsible for their own caseload. Because work is individualised in the private firms, so are the consequences of parental leave:

*'... this isn't a system like in the public sector where you can just return and, perhaps quite rightly, demand to move up in the hierarchy even though you've been away [...] That's not how it works in the legal world – we make a living from selling our services. And if you choose to be absent for a year, nobody will deny you that, but you will return to a worse market position ... [male manager]'*



The quote is significant from a gender perspective because he elaborates on lengthy leave, which is common among female lawyers. All the managers refer to the withering of a lawyer's network, which means the withering of career opportunities, as a possible consequence of parental leave. In contrast, they present challenges for the firm, such as increased workloads for other lawyers, as minor issues. This female manager elaborates on how six months father's leave could be problematic:

'... that's completely legitimate, I feel, that it has some consequences. Because there's some truth to it, I mean, you don't gain any experience from being at home watching the kids! It's not that you're being punished because you're home caring for children, it's just that someone else will pass you by.'

Denying employees parental leave is not an option, but employees may be advised to adjust their leave. At the same time, the managers say women usually take 9-12 months' leave, while men take 10 weeks, sometimes less. When six months' leave is considered a problem, mother's and father's leave can potentially have very different consequences. Importantly, most of the managers are primarily concerned about lawyers in senior positions, where lengthy absences can have dramatic consequences:

'... partners who've taken very long parental leave. Especially women, who've been absent for a year. So it's very difficult to return and re-establish the contacts that, after all, you need in order to generate an amount of work that justifies your high income. And we have seen partners have to quit in these circumstances [...] because they haven't managed to re-establish their business. [...] And that has been very negative for them and the firm, and it's just so sad.' [male manager]

The quote is significant. If lengthy absences can mean losing partnership, it can also mean not becoming a partner. The partner taking lengthy leave here was a woman. Despite possible negative career consequences, the managers expect mothers to take lengthy parental leave and accept it. By comparison, managers may suggest that fathers schedule their leave to coincide with holidays, or they say male lawyers often maintain some contact while on leave. The argument is that returning to work will be easier, as the lawyer will not be starting from scratch. Only one firm sought to influence female lawyers' leave. They encouraged men and women to share parental leave equally, thus sharing the potential negative career consequences. If managers view lengthy absences as negative for career progression, but primarily expect men to adapt, the underlying premise is that women do not want successful legal careers. The opposite is assumed in relation to men. This gendered expectation was sometimes implicit, by the managers taking mothers' absence for granted

while at the same time describing negative consequences. Other managers were more explicit, like this male manager expanding on the gendered expectation of availability:

'I think a partner who takes father's leave without being available will... be looked at a bit strangely. While a girl probably wouldn't. I wouldn't dare do it, and I would think "Oh, my God", if I had to step in for someone who was just sitting around reading Morgan Kane, you know, between nappy changes.'

This quote is also significant for employees' leave. These gendered expectations are not only about the leave's length, but also about the content: if 'partner' means male partner and 'girl' means female partner, he suggests that women are not expected to adjust their leave to the demands of work life, whereas men are; and also that men can do what is necessary but otherwise prioritise work. By comparison, women can fully devote their time to caring for children. When career progression is tied to maintaining a good market position, such gendered expectations are problematic since they may help sustain gendered career patterns.

*'... often the can-wait-tasks become the file pending'*

Taking less than the father's quota is unheard of in the public sector law offices. All the public sector law managers say the majority take their quota, but that longer father's leave is not uncommon. This female manager's approach illustrates how parental leave is not regarded as a problem:

'[the mothers]...have taken a bit longer than the fathers. And the lads have on the whole taken three months plus the summer holiday [...] And we have one that is going on father's leave now [laughter], where he said...: [...] "well, [the wife] will probably be on leave at least until August-September". "But aren't you going to share?" I said. "Yes, no... no, you don't say..." "Maybe you should discuss it", I said. [...] "Yes, no... perhaps I should go home and discuss it? Why should she have much longer leave? No, you're right!" It was a bit strange really though, that he hadn't thought about it!'

Although the managers do not necessarily encourage fathers to take longer leave, the quote is significant because it shows how the managers do not regard either career or the organisation's needs when considering parental leave. One reason for this may be the fact that the employees do not influence the caseload, as demonstrated by this male manager's problematisation of positions being left vacant when employees are on leave: 'We have to handle [the same number of] criminal cases a year regardless of how many people are at work.' When employees go on leave, the organisation may hire a substitute. However, most

managers will not start a hiring process for three months. Thus, father's leave is often not covered. Two managers emphasise that tight budgets do not allow for hiring substitutes for longer absences either. In these instances, parental leave increases the pressure on the remaining employees. How do the managers suggest this be solved? The next male manager had a situation where the caseload exceeded the department's capacity. The solution was for prosecutors to prioritise cases:

'... we just made a list [...] and made it clear that you're not expected to touch these cases. [...] [They] will just have to wait. It's very easy to defend it publicly; I mean, that a rape case needs to be handled before a drug case. Everyone understands that.'

In another organisation, the male manager says parental leave is seldom a problem even without a substitute: '... we have some now-tasks, some should-do-tasks, and some can-wait tasks. Therefore, the can-wait-tasks often become the files pending.' Civil servants can postpone certain work tasks, such as drawing up draft legislation. The two solutions suggest that the nature of the work is key as far as the potential consequences of parental leave are concerned. Meanwhile, managerial decisions on whether cases can wait or not depend on how the consequences of waiting are perceived. Public sector clients, whether they are central or local governments, members of the public or victims of crime, cannot go elsewhere to have their case handled. Private sector clients can. Thus, a manager's attitude to parental leave and task resolution may be a question of market versus non-market, rather than the nature of the work.

*'... there are certifications you need to maintain'*

Parental leave is common in the police. The police managers view parental leave as a problem for the organisation rather than the individual employee. While mothers' leave is longer and may result in lapsed certifications, fathers' leave is shorter and often means unfilled positions:

Interviewer – ... do you hire a substitute?

Manager – No. We work with a gap [...] we've never hired a temp to cover that type of leave. [...] we can't get people from a temping agency or anything. [...] Nobody wants a job like this for three months.

Interviewer – I understand. So what do you do?

Manager – Well, it gets terribly difficult. It has to be divided between the remaining staff. Processing

takes longer, the clear-up rate falls. [...] But that is never said out loud in the media, right? They only mention the positive aspects of parental leave and things like that, but, well, we're sitting here feeling the strain.' [female manager]

In one department, 9 out of 20 patrol officers were on father's leave the same year, without substitutes. Other managers had similar experiences. This has led to 'the leave challenge' now also applying to male employees, as one male manager explains. The father's quota was reduced from 14 to 10 weeks the year the interviews were conducted. This quote from a female manager shows the quota is crucial as far as the length of fathers' leave is concerned: '... those who've had [children] now after the summer, they only get ten weeks though. [...] so two are going to have ten weeks.' This finding supports the argument that the quota acts as a norm for the length of fathers' leave (Halrynjo and Kitterød, 2016a). Mother's leave is longer and usually means hiring a substitute so the service can continue. However, a police officer must complete 48 hours of training each year to maintain their security certification. Many managers therefore explicitly or implicitly expect female officers to attend training while on leave, so they do not return uncertified. This male manager says:

'... they have both the right and a duty to stay in contact in order to provide the best possible foundation when they return. Because being absent for a year and then returning? I wouldn't wish that on anyone. You will have become unsure and end up far back in the queue in relation to work tasks, because there are certifications you need to maintain. So, we work hard on that. And I actually have to work quite hard on it, because the 'nursing haze' lasts longer than that for some. So you sort of have to tell them: "Hello! This is important as well. It's five months before you're coming back to work, but those five months will pass quickly! So now, in the next week, you have to agree which days you'll be here", for example. Because then they come back and take their courses.'

The manager sees it as the employees' duty to take flexible leave. His reasoning is that if they cannot do the job expected of them, it is a problem for the team/organisation and the employee. About half of the managers stress that adjusting the leave is necessary to maintain certification after the leave. However, a few managers also say that training while on leave is not an issue, either because they can organise extra training for them when they return or because they can apply for certification without training. A female manager stresses that it might be a strain for women to attend training while on leave, and adds: '... we can grant a dispensation. And I think that's very good'. These different views show that managers sometimes understand regulations differently. The official guidelines state that

employees who held valid certifications prior to leave may retain provisional certification pending an opportunity to train and get recertified (Politidirektoratet, 2008).

Unlike the private law managers, who highlight challenges for individual lawyers, the police managers highlight challenges for the police service. While male lawyers in the private sector may be expected to adapt their leave, male police officers are not. In the police, managers view father's leave as unchangeable, whereas problems due to mother's leave can be resolved by mothers adapting their leave. The police managers do not initially refer to gender stereotypes when talking about parental leave, but are inclined to when talking about women not adapting their leave. While women not adapting is viewed negatively, taking responsibility as a father is viewed positively and as part of a police officer's social responsibility: 'That's one of the ... fortunately embedded things about papa also doing his bit. And police officers are socially responsible. And that includes at home and that bit [male manager].' As well as father's leave having positive connotations in the context of the police's remit, father's leave is short and does not interfere with the employee's certifications. Because mother's leave may do so, mothers are expected to adapt their leave, even when they initially do not wish to. The underlying premise here is that female and male police officers are expected to be able to do the same job. The main argument is that mothers should adapt to meet the needs of the organisation. Yet, a police officer's lack of certification is also perceived an individual problem in relation employees' work satisfaction and sense of security. This argument relates to a relevant challenge, a discussion of which is beyond the scope of this article: Norwegian patrol officers tend to change departments when they have children (Davidsen and Reiersen, 2010). Managers in both street patrol and investigation departments view this as a problem since they ascribe different qualities to men and women and therefore see gender balance as a positive thing for service provision.

### **Parental leave within different institutional logics**

Given that the institutional logics are ideal types, there will be empirical variations in how the managers understand parental leave. Parental leave is not necessarily perceived as a problem, but the problems the managers depict and the solutions they suggest are important cues concerning what parental leave entails in the different organisations.

Parental leave means different things within a logic where the goal is to improve efficiency,

profit, personal reputation or community goods. This means parental leave and its consequences cannot solely be explained by the practical demands of work life. For example, when managers see some tasks as able to wait or not, it may not be due to the nature of the tasks, but how this nature is understood. Table 2 sums up the empirical findings on how managers approach parental leave within different logics.

**Table 2: Different institutional logics, different approaches to parental leave:**

	Private law firm	Public law office	The police
Logic	Market/professional	State	State/professional
Goals and values in the organisations	Professional competence is individualised and the quality of the service is measured in terms of a legal competence that is closely related to client networks and earnings.	Professional competence is considered stable in relation to the organisational goal of contributing to the community good through laws and regulations.	Professional competence is individualised in terms of renewable certifications required to fully provide the organisational goal of contributing to community good by fighting crime and safeguarding the general public.
Consequences of parental leave	Parental leave may hamper client networks and earnings, thus personal professional expertise	Tasks can wait or substitutes can attend to the goals while employees are on leave.	Substitutes can attend to the goals while employees are on leave, but lengthy leave hampers individual certifications.
Role of employee	Individual career in focus	The organisation's service in focus	The organisation's service in focus
Problem	For individual career due to withering of network and earnings	Not a problem, they either hire a substitute or tasks can or have to wait.	For the organisation due to vacancies or lack of certification, but also on an individual level due to certification
Solution	The individual lawyer can be available in order to maintain network and earnings.	No resolution necessary.	The individual police officer can attend training in order to maintain certification needed to perform the service.

The table shows both what role an employee plays within the interrelated logics, and the perceived consequences of parental leave that follow. The main concern of the managers in the public sector law offices is the service provided by the office. This does not mean that a professional logic is irrelevant for the professional practice in these organisations. However, the managers do not problematise parental leave because work practices and goals are not individualised. They can arrange for a similarly qualified substitute so the service can continue, or prioritise between cases that can or cannot wait. Furthermore, an individual employee's expertise is not viewed as perishable and thus affected by a period of leave. In

comparison, the argumentation of the private sector law managers downplays possible challenges for the firm, while emphasising consequences for individual lawyers. Being absent is understood as an individual risk in a context where individual lawyers' competence is measured by the presence of perishable client networks and earnings. The differences with regards to sector show that a logic of profession should be contextualised within a given organisational context. Furthermore, there are some similarities between how the police managers and the managers in private law firms argue, although their logics differ.

Competence is seen as perishable and directly measurable on an individual level, whether in terms of certifications or in terms of client networks and earnings. This provides a basis for solutions where employees adapt their parental leave to the demands of work.

The findings show that in addition to central institutional logics within the organisation, gendered norms of good parenthood contribute to the managers' approach. These norms are triggered when the solution is individual adaptations. For the public sector law offices, individual adaptations are not an issue. The problems and solutions the managers in the private law firms and the police associate with parental leave not only vary with different institutional logics, but also vary by the leave taker's gender. When being on leave may result in the withering of one's network and earnings, possible solutions include being available while on leave, scheduling the leave for the holidays or taking shorter leave. At the same time, this solution is expected more from fathers than from mothers. Why are female lawyers not expected to adapt their leave? Earlier, I argued that these different expectations are based on an underlying premise in which female lawyers are not expected to want the same career progression as men. I will further argue that because parental leave is primarily seen as a challenge for the individual lawyer's career, the private sector law managers have no incentive to counteract traditional gendered expectations unless they are explicitly concerned about equal career opportunities for men and women. The law firm that explicitly encourages its female lawyers to take shorter leave and male lawyers to take longer leave, with the aim of them sharing the potential negative career consequences more equally, lends support to this argument. If parental leave were mainly considered a problem for the organisation and not the careers of individual lawyers, the managers would have an incentive to try to counteract traditional gendered parental leave practices regardless of their views on gender equality.

The findings suggest that managers' expectations concerning employees' parental leave not only reflect central logics within the work organisation, the good parenthood norms reflected in common Norwegian parental leave practices, where the leave is utilised fully and mostly by women, also influence the managers' views. Practice, as well as the managers' different expectations concerning male and female lawyers, suggests that the norms are stronger for women than men.

Previous studies showing that men often adapt their leave to the demands of work support this finding (Kitterød et al., 2017). Perhaps lawyers are not expected to adapt their use of parental leave to the market/professional logic in the private firms to a greater extent, for example by both genders limiting their leave to three months, because this would breach strong good parenthood norms. The findings also show that when female police officers' adaptation to the norm of taking full parental leave results in certifications lapsing due to a lack of training, this raises questions for a number of managers. This reflects the fact that they are arguing within a logic where the organisation's services require certified employees. The link between individualised qualifications and the services provides a strong incentive to encourage female officers to adapt. Importantly, women's adaptation is not viewed as a strong breach of good parenthood norms: lengthy leave is considered unproblematic and 48 hours is a relatively limited adaptation.

Thus, the relationship between parental leave and gender equality it is not just a question of how family policies interact with central institutional logics in each organisation; gendered expectations and good parenthood norms also have different consequences within different institutional logics.

## **Conclusion:**

This article has examined how managers approach parental leave within different institutional logics and in relation to gendered norms of good parenthood. The findings show that whether family policies contribute to managers' devaluation of women employees, as Mandel and Semyonov (2006) argue, is a complex question. Firstly, father's leave may be equally challenging for a work organisation as mother's leave. Secondly, the question is not whether managers are positive or negative towards parental leave, but how they understand employees' parental leave in relation to the organisation's work. With the



combination of an increased share of women and internal gender segregation, the selected professions were introduced as a critical case, highly suitable for investigating levels of acceptance for childcare-related absence from work. One general finding is that employees' parental leave rights enjoy a strong position even in career-oriented and traditionally male-dominated organisations, but that mother's leave is more naturalised than father's leave. This finding has to be understood in light of the wider institutional context of Norway, where parental leave rights are not only strong, but also widely utilised (Ellingsæter and Pedersen, 2016).

In line with gendered norms of parenthood, lengthy mother's leave is accepted, and the father's quota is perceived a norm for father's leave. However, it is noteworthy that in a male-dominated profession such as the police, taking father's leave is understood as part of a police officer's social responsibility.

Although parental leave rights have a strong position in the organisations, employees' absence may pose problems for the workplace. The managers' problematisations and the solutions they suggest give important cues concerning what parental leave entails within the frame of different institutional logics. The managers in public sector law offices do not conceive of parental leave as a problem. This follows from a logic where employees' competence is considered stable. Work tasks may be long lasting and considered postponable, or they may have to be postponed due to a shortage of staff. Whether tasks can be postponed is not only related to an objective measure of the 'nature of work', but how this nature and the consequences of postponing tasks are understood. In the private sector, clients may go elsewhere. In the public sector, they cannot. Within the police, a logic of the state involves a goal of contributing to community good. However, the professional logic differs from that of the public sector law organisations. Competence is individualised through renewable certifications. It is considered a problem if women return from lengthy leave without certifications and cannot contribute fully at work. Father's leave poses a different problem for the police managers. There are many fathers on leave, usually without substitutes. The solution is to run the service with fewer police officers. In the private law firms, the professional logic intersects with a logic of the market. Parental leave is not primarily viewed as a problem for the organisation, but for individual lawyer's career progression. This finding supports studies showing that parental leave can be problematic

from an employee perspective because being absent means becoming replaceable and thus breaches a career logic in which showing that you are irreplaceable is central (Halrynjo and Lyng, 2009).

In addition to logics relevant to work in the organisations, such as those of profession, state or market, the analysis shows that gendered norms of good parenthood are important for how managers perceive employees' parental leave. These norms become apparent when the perceived solutions are for individual employees to adapt. This is the case with father's leave in the private law firms and mother's leave in the police. Furthermore, gendered norms interact differently with the different logics. In the police, the state/professional logic do not allow for gender traditional choices that affect the police service negatively. They encourage women to adapt their leave so they can perform the same work as before. In the private firms, the market/professional logic means individual lawyers' careers may be negatively affected. This leaves the managers with no incentives to contradict gendered leave practices unless they consider gender equality a goal. The findings suggest the managers are used to the 'habitual gender order' in which things go as they go: mothers take lengthy parental leave, fathers take shorter. The managers seldom contradict this 'order'.

The gendered norms and differences between the organisations lends some support to Mandel and Semyonov's (2006) argument that family policies may be negative for the recruitment of women to senior positions, particularly in the private sector. However, the findings suggest that if parental leave has a negative effect on women's careers, it is not because the policies provide a basis for employers' statistical discrimination against women. Rather, managers' prevailing gendered expectations influence their expectations concerning how employees will utilise parental leave, as well as how they interpret this use.

This article shows the importance of contextualising professional logic within concrete workplaces. The contrast between how goals, strategies and required competence are understood in the different organisations suggests that the individualisation of work and how the nature of the work is understood are important when it comes to how parental leave is approached by managers. In occupations that require employees to be continuously available or frequently updated, either formally or informally, one might see similar challenges to those in the police and private law firms. In the case of occupations where

formal competence generally regulates access to the occupation, or where competence and work tasks are slower and less individualised, parental leave might be perceived as less of a problem. The use of ideal types in the analysis leaves room for empirical variations while providing stable analytical categories that allow for generalised understandings (Thornton et al. 2012). Thus, the findings are not limited to the police, private law firms or public sector law organisations. The study shows how meaning is generated within different logics, frames of reference for goals and strategies, and that policy regulation and organisational contexts interact in shaping the approach towards parental leave.

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