

Contemporary masculinities and transformations of fatherhood

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Geopolis 2152

Organizers: Caroline Chautems, Irene Maffi, Ainhoa Saenz Morales

The emergence of the term “New Fathers” in the 70s, shaped on societal ideals of gender equality, and led to transformations of masculinities. “Hegemonic masculinities” (Connell 1995), now embrace the values of family investment, “care,” and gender equality. How do fathers, engaged in ideals of gender equality, and realities that are sometimes antagonistic to these ideals (“breadwinner” role, lack of family policies, etc.), shape fatherhood nowadays? Do these “caring masculinities” (Elliott 2016) reconfigure “hegemonic masculinities”? More broadly, what are the new parental identities at work?

Research to understand the emergence of this “care-oriented masculinity” (Klint 2003) has focused on fathers from the “white middle class,” among which some make the choice of taking paternity leave or being stay-at-home dads (Chatot 2021), in order to subvert dominant masculinities and aspire to an egalitarian family dynamic. However, fewer research has been conducted on the moment of entry into fatherhood, during the first days following the birth of the child. Moreover, there is also a lack of research, focusing on the plurality of masculinities, such on racialized fathers; fathers belonging to the “working-class”, migrant fathers, or LGBTQ+ fathers, among others. This workshop aims at thinking about masculinities in relation to fatherhood, in temporalities that have been less explored until now (preconception, pregnancy, birth and postpartum), and/or in an intersectional approach, integrating marginalized masculinities.

Schedule (10:00 – 15:30)

10:00 Arrival and coffee

Panel 1 – Caring fathers

Chair: Caroline Chautems

10:30 *A New Culture of Care - Characteristics of a changed mode of life within involved paternity*
Matthias Luterbach (University of Basel)

11:00 *“Caring masculinities” in Cesarean Birth*
Ainhoa Saenz Morales (University of Lausanne)

11:30 *Fathers and homeschooling during the Spring 2020 lockdown*
Jean-Marie Le Goff (University of Lausanne), Julie Landour (University Paris Dauphine)
and Pascal Barbier (University Paris Panthéon Sorbonne)

12:00 **Discussion Panel 1**

12:30 Lunch break

Panel 2 – Marginalized fatherhoods

Chair: Irene Maffi

13:45 *GBTIQ+ parents and single fathers in Switzerland: parenting outside hegemonic family norms*
Carole Ammann (ETH Zurich)

14:15 *Bonus Papas – Social fathers and their Caring masculinities in Patchwork and Queer families*
Muriel Degen (University of Basel)

14:45 **Discussion Panel 2**

15:15-15:30 **Conclusion**

A New Culture of Care - Characteristics of a changed mode of life within involved paternity

Matthias Luterbach (University of Basel)

In my presentation I develop a critical perspective on masculinity from a care perspective. I start with a nuanced presentation of the gendered family care arrangements of involved heterosexual cis fathers. I distinguish models of involved paternity between work-oriented egalitarianism, family-oriented egalitarianism, and a model of involved fatherhood that maintain unequal. Based on this description of different models, I will address the extent to which a change in the way of life as a whole is emerging in involved paternity, referring to Joan Tronto's expression of a "culture of care" in the context of her theorization of care.

While the fathers relate critically to traditional paternity, I will explore how this change of masculinity can be understood with Foucault's notion of "problematization". I'll try to adapt this notion for qualitative research. Namely, there is a comprehensive problematization of central aspects of bourgeois paternity as a way people try to find new modes of life and of thinking. In particular, aspects of male dominance are problematized as dysfunctional.

The input includes partial results from my doctoral project "Involved paternity: A new culture of Care?". The study is based on qualitative "experience-based interviews" (Jäger/König 2017) with heterosexual working fathers who provide childcare for at least one day of the week. The aim is to gain deeper insight into the gendered processes of constituting and reconstituting a 'masculine' relation to self in the face of changing ideals of paternity. My empirical approach is micro-sociological and based on insights from social and gender theory. Gender is understood as a historically socio-cultural 'mode of existence' with specific - here male - ways of thinking, acting, feeling and bodily practices (Maihofer 1995).

"Caring masculinities" in Cesarean Birth

Ainhoa Saenz Morales (University of Lausanne)

A cesarean birth, due to hospital protocols, and/or the mother's inability to do skin-to-skin contact with the newborn (waking up after anesthesia, lack of mobility, and sometimes acute postoperative pain), positions the partner as a caregiver towards the newborn, and sometimes towards his spouse. Indeed, a cesarean birth disrupts gender norms: the partner becomes for a period the primary caregiver.

Based on observations in two public Swiss hospitals and in-depth interviews with partners, mothers, parents, and health professionals, my ethnographic research on partners' experiences of cesarean birth aims to document care practices towards the newborn and the spouse (skin-to-skin contact with the newborn, help in latching the newborn at the breast, assistance with the mobility of their spouse such as accompanying her to the bathroom or helping her to take her first shower, etc.), carried out by fathers during and after a cesarean birth.

By adopting a gender relational and intersectional approach, I will show that this role of caregiver is transitory: as soon as the woman stands up, her partner is only considered by health providers as a secondary and complementary figure. I will also show how the care can only be performed by partners with socioeconomic resources (for example the "room-in" for fathers is a paid service in most Swiss maternities)

This communication invites us to think about the relationship between care and masculinities norms; how practices of care reconfigure or not, norms of dominant masculinities and paternities, but also what makes it possible to accomplish care and what hinders it.

Fathers and homeschooling during the Spring 2020 lockdown

Jean-Marie Le Goff (University of Lausanne), Julie Landour (University Paris Dauphine) and Pascal Barbier (University Paris Panthéon Sorbonne)

The spring 2020 lockdown meant that parents of school-going children had to take responsibility for organizing their children's home-schooling and learning processes. What specific roles did fathers play in this process? Our presentation is based on interviews conducted with forty couples in France and French-speaking Switzerland between autumn 2020 and spring 2021. These

interviews show that fathers were often much less involved than their partners in children's learning. Their children only ask them for help in topics in which they are considered experts, while their partner often finds them incompetent. In some cases, however, fathers are more involved in school supervision, playing various roles: closely monitoring children's homework, monitoring learning, and coaching children's autonomy.

GBTIQ+ parents and single fathers in Switzerland: parenting outside hegemonic family norms

Carole Ammann (ETH Zurich)

In this presentation, I talk about my (future) project in which I research men living in Switzerland whose parenting is contested because they fall outside of the heterosexual, cis-gender, two parent family norm. I do this by focusing on GBTIQ+ (gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer) parents and single fathers, two different, but partly overlapping groups. As they do not fit into the hegemonic family norm, they are regularly discriminated against, stigmatized, and confronted with various interlinked social, legal, political, and economic challenges that impact their parenting.

The objective is to investigate how these men understand, experience, negotiate, and enact parenting within social, legal, political, and economic structures geared towards heterosexual, cis-gender, two-parent families. I do so by adopting a twofold approach: first, I scrutinize what it means for them to both become, and be, a parent outside of hegemonic family norms. I am especially interested in how intersecting axes of difference, such as age, class, race, language, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity, influence GBTIQ+ persons' and single fathers' parenting ideals, experiences, and practices. Second, I focus on the encounters between such parents and (governmental) institutions. Thereby, I investigate the ways in which people working for such institutions perceive, evaluate, support, and/or challenge, GBTIQ+ persons' and single fathers' parenting.

Bonus Papas – Social fathers and their caring masculinities in patchwork and Queer families

Muriel Degen (University of Basel)

In Switzerland, around 130'000 children are currently growing up in multilocal family arrangements. These children from separated, patchwork and queer families commute between biological and social parents, siblings, half-siblings and other family members. In multilocal family arrangements participants develop their own practices of everyday life, of transitions, connections and demarcations, which are reflected spatially, but also regarding their family relationships. In my PhD project "A Zig-Zag Life. Growing up in multilocal post-separation, patchwork and queer families" I investigate how children and their separated or queer parents experience their multilocal everyday life. By taking a sociological in-depth look, interviews with children aged 3-12 years and their family members are combined with ethnographic oriented approaches such as go-alongs, photographs and drawings.

In these new forms of family life, constellations of shared, post-romantic parenthood with several involved parents are not uncommon. As my case studies have shown, multilocal arrangements can indeed give rise to new fatherhood. Some fathers seek an everyday and emotionally intense relationship with their children, which they perceive as an integral part of their identity. This intensification of affective attachment translates into Caring masculinity in various ways.

I would like to contribute to the workshop about Bonus dads in patchwork and queer families who care for children with whom they have no kinship ties. It is precisely here that new forms of fatherhood and the claim to provide care for children in everyday life become apparent. I would like to show how social fathers have to find a particular role to be defined somewhere between family and friendship bonds with the children – for which there is no script so far. Their position is precarious for legal reasons, because it is still far too little protected by family law in Switzerland. This shows that there are gaps between lived family realities and legal reality, which I would like to point out.