



Fathers

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10.5% of the total number of applications for parental allowance that were approved in 2007, which amounted to 571,000, were made by fathers, which represents a dramatic increase compared to the average number of fathers that claimed parental allowance in the previous years, which lay at around 3.5%.

According to a ver.di study which was presented just in time for Father's Day, fathers claiming parental allowance are neither employees or senior managers, but rather average men going on parental leave, often motivated by their wives who are striving to achieve a new lifestyle.

They are supported in this by initiatives run by the German Federal Government: the first contribution featured in this booklet explains what is behind the main focus of action "Rollenbilder erweitern – neue Perspektiven für Männer" ["Expanding role models – new perspectives for men"] of the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, and why, in connection with the compatibility of family life and work, there is talk of a "40/80 disaster".

Fathers in everyday family life: Andreas Lange and Claudia Zerle from the German Youth Institute, Munich, present the findings of a study on the role of men and their attitudes and behaviour towards family and gainful employment.

Still unthinkable 30 years ago: 90% of all fathers in Germany are present at the birth of their children. Fathers in the delivery room: has this model proven its worth simply because it has become the norm in recent years or are there also negative experiences which call for a critical examination of this new cultural practice? Petra Otto follows up this question.

Jutta Franz from pro familia analyses the role of the male partner in pregnancy conflict counselling and the significance of the gender of the counsellor.

Every child needs a father, says Rainer Neutzling, before going on to outline the various types of father with which single mothers could be faced. He describes how important it is when partners separate for them to "remain parents" for the wellbeing of their children, despite their "raging emotions".

More and more immigrants wish to be active fathers, according to Michael Tunç, in his contribution about fathers from second generation Turkish immigrant backgrounds. Besides ethnocultural factors, socio-structural circumstances, to which a greater amount of research should be dedicated, are also responsible for our adherence to traditional male values.

Ilona Renner presents the results of an evaluation of the booklet "I want to be part of it! Becoming a father" written by the BZgA.

We hope you enjoy reading this booklet

The editorial team

Equal opportunities policy needs men and men need equal opportunities policy

Equal opportunities for women and men are now met with approval from all social classes and form a basis upon which a fair split between work and family life can be achieved that is freely chosen by couples. However, in actual fact, 80% of women, but only 40% of men are willing to make such changes to their behaviour. The Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth has launched a number of projects in order to bring about long-term changes in this area.

Male power rituals?

“They are still around. I often notice it when men act as if they are top dog: the booming low voice, expansive gestures, chest out, head held high, stomach pushed out ... I have simply seen it far too often, above all at the hospital among male senior and head doctors. You could barely break through it there.

The questions that we are asking ourselves today in Germany were asked as early as 20 years ago in the USA and Scandinavia. The role of the man was viewed differently there much earlier, that is to say, the man was not just seen as the boss outside the house who did not care about anything that happened at home, but rather he began to be viewed as someone who played an active role in the family. This also put pressure on the relationships market there and women said that they could not find a partner anymore.”

URSULA VON DER LEYEN (Stern, 8 February 2007)

For a long time, the terms equal opportunities policy, equal rights, gender or gender mainstreaming were always used in connection with women. People spoke of equal opportunities policy and this was associated, more or less consciously, with the concept of the advancement of women. Gender mainstreaming, which was designed as a strategy for addressing the interests and concerns of both sexes, was, in practice, often understood as giving special consideration to and asserting the concerns of women. In a very large number of cases, those with responsibility for applying gender mainstreaming were equal opportunities officials, or in non-governmental organisations, women's representatives.

The definition of the main focus of action “Rollenbilder erweitern – neue Perspektiven für Männer” [“Expanding role models – new perspectives for men”] saw the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) explicitly define equal opportunities policy as policy that also takes account of the interests of men for the first time. However, this change did not come about by chance. As early as the 1990s, women's policy broadened to become equal opportunities policy, both on a national and international level. In 1995, 189 countries signed the “Beijing Declaration” at the World Conference on Women held in China. The Beijing platform for action is a programme promoting equal opportunities for women and men. Two

years later, the promotion of equal rights for women and men was established in the EC Treaty. Ten years ago, the department for women at the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth was converted into the department for equal opportunities. This signalled the start of a move away from policy focused purely on the advancement of women towards an equal opportunities policy aimed at both sexes.

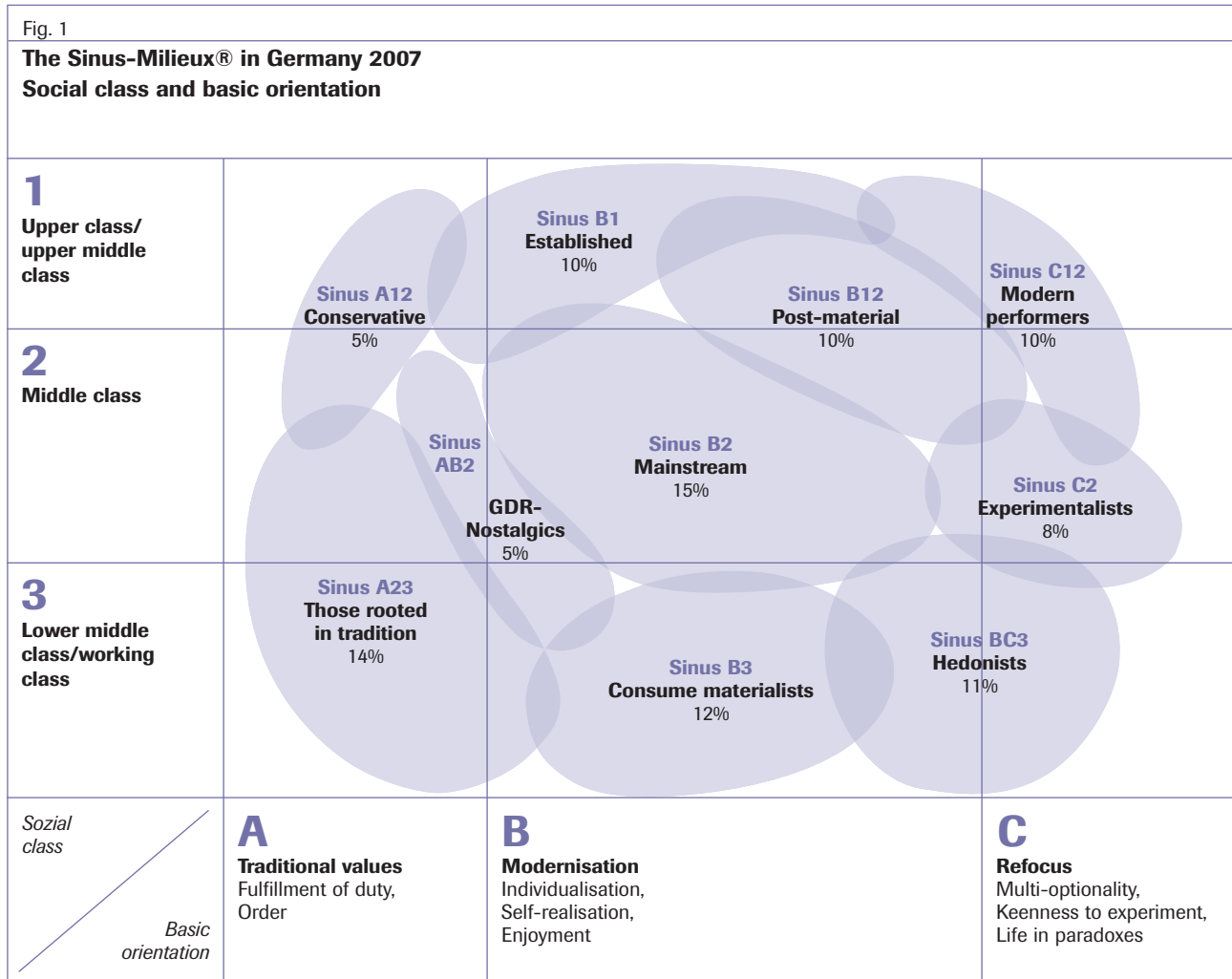
The aim of equal opportunities policy is to create a gender-fair society where women and men can realise their life plans, particularly as mothers and fathers, beyond the constraints that are exercised due to the outdated perception of gender roles. If women and men could exploit their respective individual potentials without the restrictions imposed by role expectations, this would enrich the lives not only of every woman and every man, but it would also enrich society as a whole. Issues of personal identity and role perception were of central importance during the Women's Movement. Men must now find their own way as far as these issues are concerned and develop new sensibilities.

The challenge for today's equal opportunities policy is to support and accompany men and women in this development. Acceptance of the notion that women and men are equally responsible for providing an income, for the daily routine of the children and for caring for family members who require care must be promoted.

Why is this new focus necessary?

Women's policy and the Women's Movement have achieved a great deal in recent decades, even if the world is still anything but perfect for women. However, new opportunities have arisen for women in our society: different lifestyles are not only possible, but are also largely socially accepted, even if barriers continue to exist in many areas, which result in not everything being implemented as is desirable by a long way.

The majority of young women (80%) wish to combine work, having a partner and children in their lives, which realistically can only be achieved with a partner who holds and lives by similar views. At the same time, they reject the hostility towards men perpetuated by traditional feminism and want to work with men rather than against them.



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In contrast, as far as men are concerned, and even among young men, the traditional perception of gender roles continues to be very strong.

Their lifestyles revolve, for the most part, around the traditional sole breadwinner model and they expect their partners to take the load off them. Only about 40% of young men share the attitude of the majority of their female counterparts that it is possible to successfully combine family and work for both partners.

KLAUS HURRELMANN, co-author of the 2006 Shell Youth Study, speaks of the “40/80 disaster” in relation to this issue. Even if these attitudes vary in their distribution within the individual social classes, it must still be noted that the fact that the sexes have different goals in life makes it more difficult for both men and women to find a partner and can represent a risk factor for men and women who are already in a relationship. In short: every change in the lifestyles of women automatically affects men as well. This relationship between the two has not been given sufficient consideration up until now.

However, men are also changing at the same time. The number of fathers wishing to play a more active father role is on the increase. This begins with accompanying their partners to pregnancy counselling and by no means ends with their presence at the birth. However, they come up against a great deal of opposition, from colleagues and managers at work, from their friends, from their family, and in some cases, even from their own partners.

Results of the Sinus milieu study “Ways of achieving equality of opportunity now and in the future”

This study, which was published in March of this year in the series produced by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, provides a wealth of findings regarding desired and actual gender roles. The term “milieu” is based on the assumption that people’s lifestyles are characterised by both external circumstances as well as by their inner values. Research into milieu therefore attempts to make all those subjective and objective characteristics of empirical analysis that make up the sociocultural identity of the individual (values, social position, goals in life, attitudes towards work, leisure activities, various aspects of lifestyle, everyday aesthetic tendencies, consumer habits, etc.) accessible. Figure I shows the ten different milieux that currently exist.

The Sinus milieu study on equal rights provides quantifiable information regarding the perception of gender roles that proves the qualities that are assigned to women and men within the respective milieu.

In all milieux, equal opportunities for women and men are a fundamentally accepted social norm. The concept of equal opportunities has therefore become something socially desirable. However, this supposed understanding is only superficial. The more the issue of equal opportunities is dealt with in concrete terms, the more evident the profound rifts that pervade our society, as far as this issue is concerned, become.

In the gender groups of the two milieux outlined below, the attitudes towards equal opportunities are diametrically opposed, that is to say that the extremes of different lifestyles can be found here:

- Traditional men (Sinus A 23): over 60 years of age, one- or two-person household, completed the German school leaving qualification known as the “Hauptschulabschluss” as well as vocational training, low to average income, compared to
- Well-educated women (Sinus B 12): generally aged between 30 and 50, often from households with young children, four-person households, very high level of education, high income.

These women are seeking the balance between different demands: between “self-realisation” and “being there for others”, between family, work and their own leisure time and between opposed qualities such as toughness and empathy, masculinity and femininity. For such women, equality of opportunity is a valuable commodity.

Traditional men live their lives according to traditional perceptions of gender roles. There is a clear division of roles within their households: the man and father is the breadwinner, the head of the family and makes all of the decisions, while the woman and mother takes care of the house and children. Concepts of equal opportunity have a tough time in this milieu.

The picture varies as far as young men are concerned: young men who have completed the German Abitur qualification (German equivalent of A-levels) share the rational view of women as far as equal rights are concerned, but are often left feeling incredibly insecure by women of the same age, whose self-confidence appears to be attractive and suspicious to them at the same time. This forces them to question their own role.

Young men with a low level of education do not see anything positive as far as equal opportunities are concerned. They expect a clear, traditional distribution of roles according to the pattern with which they themselves feel most comfortable: the man is the breadwinner and the woman is responsible for taking care of the home and the children and can also do some part-time work if she is able to keep on top of the work at home.

The equal opportunities culture in everyday life generally leaves men feeling insecure, that is to say that self-confident, emancipated women in the family and at work make them feel insecure. The majority of men from virtually all milieux, with the exception of the post-material milieu (Sinus B 12), the modern performers milieu (Sinus C 12) and the established milieu (Sinus B 1) associate equal opportunities policy with “women’s policy” and “families policy”. Many men regard “women’s policy” as one-sided partisanship for women against men. Equal opportunities

policy triggers anxiety about loss in men belonging to the mainstream, those from traditional backgrounds and those that belong to the modern-day underclass. They do not associate equal opportunities policy with the possibility of them being able to gain something. It is for this reason that they previously regarded equal opportunities as something of importance, but now see it as having achieved its aims and even as having partially exceeded its aims.

However, the study also shows that there have been changes. Besides the traditional perception of roles, there are now also other perceptions of roles, both as far as men and

women are concerned. Lifestyles are no longer perceived as being unalterable. They are dependent on gender and milieu and can change during the course of a person’s life.

The “new-age man”

In those milieux where traditional values prevail, gender roles are also assigned in the customary manner. The acceptance of equal opportunities is paid lip service by this section of society. It is voiced, which is perceived as meaning that it is socially desired. In these milieux, a clear gender and age divide can be seen: (older) men are generally more traditional in their views than (younger) women.

In the case of the established milieu (Sinus B 1), despite its strong acceptance of equal opportunities, the position of the man as the full-time breadwinner goes entirely without saying. Despite their claims of being highly in favour of equal opportunities, couples from the post-material milieu (Sinus B 12) often fall back into traditional roles following the birth of their children.

Middle-class men (Sinus B 12) feel insecure and feel the need to go on the defensive: expectations on the labour market force them into the traditional role, but society (and in some cases, the men themselves) desire an alternative lifestyle for them (for themselves). However, these men often lack the relevant role models to achieve this.

A traditional, hierarchical division of roles reigns in the consumer materialist (Sinus B 3) and especially the hedonist (Sinus BC 3) milieux. The gap between the sexes in terms of lifestyle and role expectations is greatest among the hedonists. A modern form of machismo manifests itself here among men as a way of protecting themselves against the demands and self-confidence of women.

Individualisation has made the most progress in the reorientation milieux. The handling of gender roles is relatively independent of external expectations and traditions until children enter the equation.

This ultimately means that when people talk of the “new-age man”, they are talking about a minority, although it is absolutely clear to the majority of men that the hierarchical gender relations and the traditional division of roles no longer “work” and do not represent a model for the future. The majority of women have other ideas and the position of women is backed up by social discourse. In many cases, the concept of “the new-age man” has not yet reached many male-dominated sectors of society, for example, certain associations, informal men’s clubs and professional contexts. Verbally, many men, particularly those from the modernisation and reorientation milieux, hold modern views regarding the role of men and women and even incorporate these into certain areas of their daily lives, such as the household, for example. However, when it comes to their livelihood or children being born, old-fashioned role models persist to an extraordinary degree and continue to exert their powerful influence and men and women fall back into them. Women generally suffer considerably more as a result than men.

Compatibility of family and work

In a society where parenthood is no longer a given, but rather a choice among many others, there is also no longer a uniform, clearly defined and binding model for mothers and

fathers. The image of the norm of what makes a “good mother” is present in the heads and hearts of virtually all women. They are grappling with the role models of a “good mother” from two eras that determine their approach to motherhood: that of their grandmothers from the 1950s/1960s and that of their own parents from the 1970s. However, these role models were not transported into the present as a compact whole, but rather significant, multifaceted elements of them were. Today, they act as strong references for women and men, from which they attempt to distance themselves, but which also represent a moral authority and a strong model.

The Sinus milieu study demonstrates this clearly: 93% of the population are of the opinion that mothers should stay at home during the first few months of their child’s life, only 20% demand the same of men. In addition, 91% believe that a woman should reduce the number of hours she works while her children are still young, whereas only 34% also expect this of fathers. This “only” can be diagnosed as a crass inequality. However, from a historical perspective, these figures can also be read as being a noteworthy sign: at any rate, one third of the population expects something of men that was still taboo or regarded as a weakness three decades ago.

The roles of women and men in our society have changed dramatically. Despite this, the traditional role models in relation to women are often activated as a kind of reflex in people’s subconscious minds, particularly where children are concerned. However, parents also know that a good mother must be different today than 30 or 50 years ago: education, role models and social environment (labour market, education, etc.) have fundamentally changed. The desire of women to go out to work is now rarely discredited as being the product of an egocentric need for self-realisation (with the exception of a few conservatives).

As far as men and fathers are concerned, the traditional breadwinner model is losing its legitimacy. The demands made of men (even by men!) concern the relativisation of their strong focus on work and call for them to take an increasing amount of practical responsibility for the family.

- 20% of the population believe that fathers should stay at home during the first few months of their child’s life,
- 34% of the population believe that fathers should reduce the number of hours they work while their children are still young,
- 39% of the population believe that if children develop anti-social behavioural, this is due to their fathers not spending enough time at home,
- 50% of the population believe that childcare options should be adapted to the needs of fathers in employment, and
- 9% of the population believe that men should take the load off their working wives.

It is worth noting that these demands are made, virtually without distinction, by both women and men. A significantly higher number of the younger generation are calling for a change in the role of men and significant differences exist between the milieux.

Nevertheless, in practice, it has been demonstrated that when a couple have children, a retraditionalisation of gender roles often takes place and the traditional role models of the father as the sole earner and the “good mother” resurface (Fig. 2). Men then work more than women on average, whilst it is generally the woman who stays at home or works part-

time, and this is despite the fact that not only 77% of men, but also 64% of women, regard a reduction in working hours as a loss: loss of social standing as well as loss of skills, influence, opportunities for development and opportunities for promotion at work.

However, conversely, this tendency of the majority of men against part-time work has proven to be a great obstacle to the woman returning to work after starting a family.

Initial experiences of parental allowance

The figures for the first year of parental allowance demonstrate the following tendencies:

571,000 applications were approved. At 10.5%, the proportion of fathers whose application for parental allowance was approved in 2007 was three times as high as the proportion of fathers opting to take the former parental leave (3.5%). Over the course of 2007, the number of fathers taking advantage of parental allowance rose from 6.9% during the first quarter to 12.4% during the last quarter. During the year as a whole, the place with the largest proportion of fathers taking advantage of parental allowance was Berlin with 13.3%, followed by Bavaria with 12.4%.

However, clear gender stereotypes continue to be reflected in the duration for which parental allowance is claimed: that is to say, 60% of fathers claimed parental allowance for two months and 18% for 12 months, whereas 87% of women claimed parental allowance for 12 months and less than 1% for two months.

Just under 22% of fathers received the minimum amount of 300 euros, whereas this figure was 30% for mothers. 12.5% of fathers received the maximum amount of 1800 euros (even more in special cases), whereas this figure was 5.6% for women. 60% of women received a maximum amount of 500 euros per month, whereas only 30% of men received this amount.

On the one hand, the number of men taking parental leave is constantly on the increase. On the other hand, it is predominantly women who claim parental allowance; they also take a significantly longer period of parental leave, and receive, on average, significantly less parental allowance. In practice, these figures serve to confirm the findings of the Sinus milieu study. There is a clear change in and opening up of role models, without the old-fashioned division of roles within the family having lost its dominance.

Education and the labour market

MARTIN BAETHGE is already talking of the “misery of young men” (BAETHGE 2007). However, there are just as few of these young men around as there are young, inexperienced and submissive girls. However, it is true that, as is the case with social background and academic success, there is a clear link between gender and the school leaving qualification achieved (Fig. 3).

The proportion of boys achieving a “Hauptschulabschluss” (general education school leaving certificate obtained upon completion of grade 9 at the Hauptschule or any other lower secondary level school) or leaving school without any qualifications at all has increased. In contrast, the number of young men holding a higher education entrance qualification has seen a consistent reduction. Since about 1995, young

Fig. 2

Employment of women and men depending on children

In full-time employment (more than 34 hours per week)

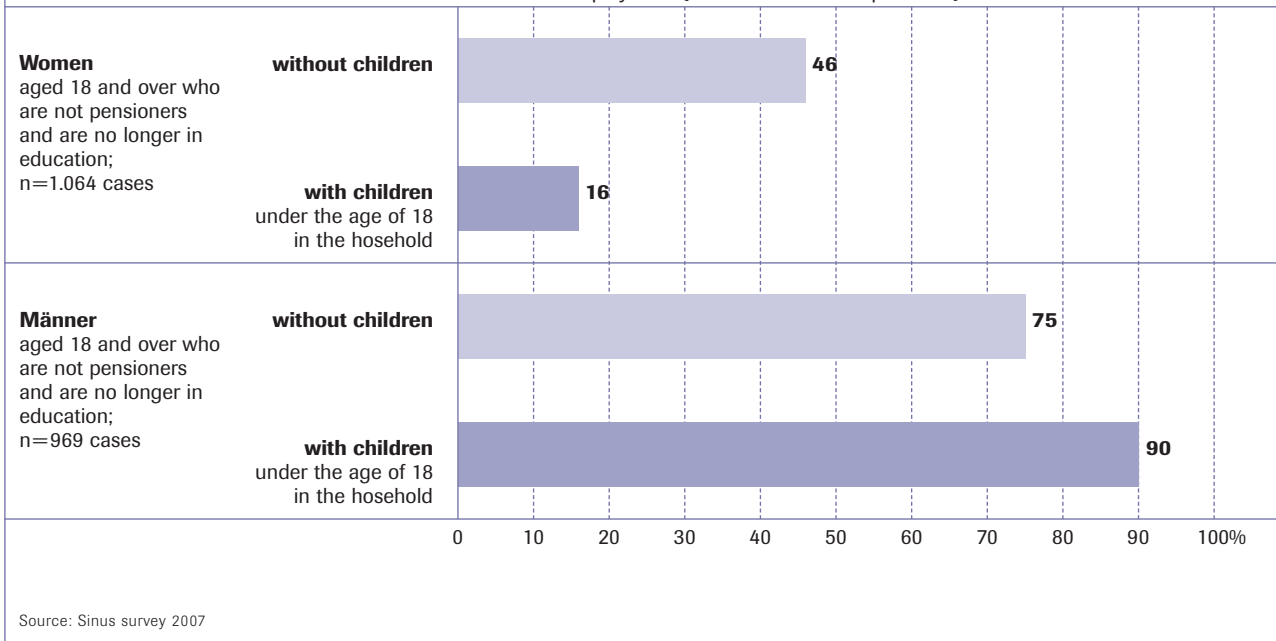
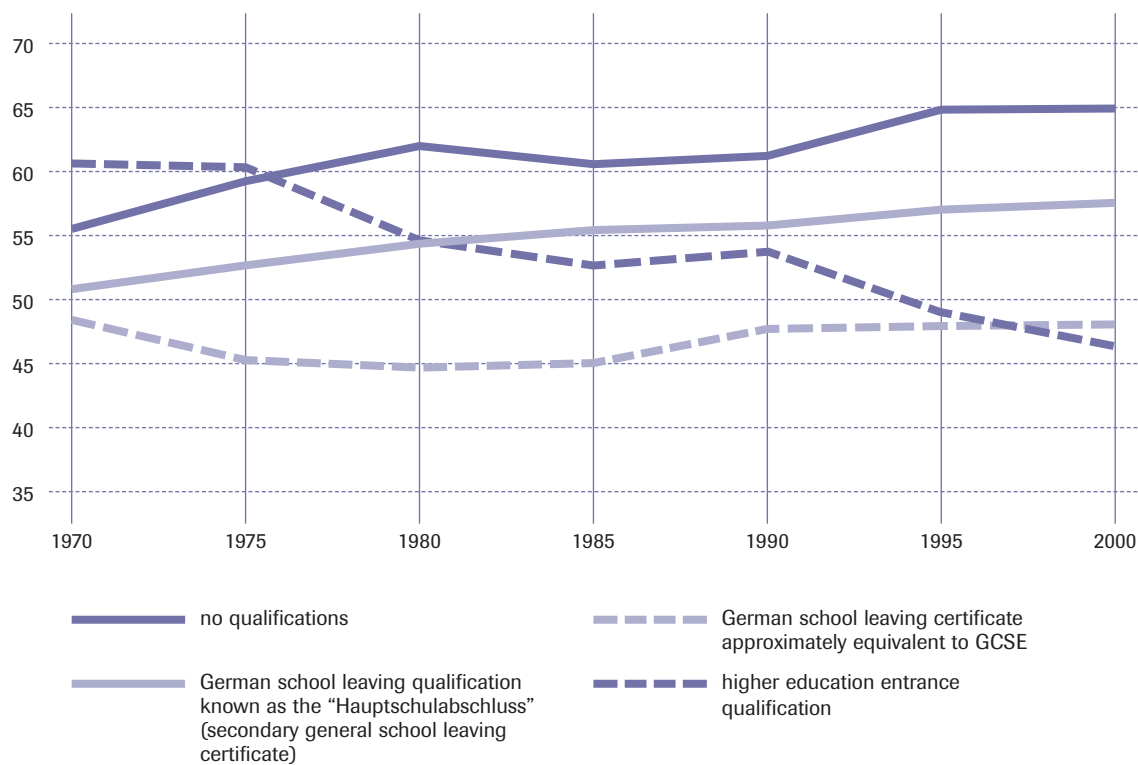


Fig. 3

School leaving qualifications obtained by male school leavers 1970–2000 (in %)



women have made up the majority of school leavers holding a higher education entrance qualification and in some federal states this proportion has already reached 60%.

At the same time, the labour market is undergoing fundamental change. The average educational requirements are increasing. The service sector is growing, whilst almost 2 million jobs were lost between 1994 and 2004 in manufacturing-based professions. It is predominantly men who do not hold a higher education entrance qualification that are affected by this downturn in industry. The same tendencies can, of course, also be found in the educational sector, where traditional male professions are also losing their importance.

All of these developments put together result in the fact that in the so-called "transition system" – this includes all initiatives that do not lead to a vocational qualification – boys account for approximately 60% of participants. In addition, unemployment among 15 to 24-year-old men is meanwhile (2004) almost four per cent higher than unemployment among women of the same age.

These changes in the education and labour markets, of course, have an impact upon how realistic certain male and father roles continue to be. Educational efforts and the opening up of new professional and role perspectives for men and fathers are necessary.

Modern-day equal opportunities policy

Modern-day equal opportunities policy must, if it is to be successful, take account of men on three levels:

- Men as partners and facilitators of women: without a change in the roles of men, it will not be possible to achieve equal rights
- Men and women as far as equal opportunities policy is concerned: increases in efficiency for all
- Men as a target group in reducing the number of gender-specific disadvantages.

In these areas, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is planning, developing and promoting a series of studies and projects, some of which are mentioned here:

The **introduction of the federal parental allowance** on 1 January 2007 represented a great step forward as far as providing fathers with the opportunity to dedicate themselves to raising their children to the same extent as mothers is concerned.

The aim of the project **"What comes after the breadwinner model?"** is to accompany the transformation of the role models from the breadwinner model right through to the economic independency of men and women at the European level (Denmark, Germany, France, Great Britain and Italy) in a scientific manner and to discuss the issue and its implications for society. It is conceived as a series of conferences following on from one another that will be organised and carried out by the BMFSFJ in collaboration with the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Social Law in Munich. The project, which also plans to issue expert reports, will run for four years (from 2006 to 2009) and will be advised on technical matters by an advisory board.

The subject of the first conference, which was held from 4 to 6 October 2007 in Como, Italy, was "Personal Responsibility, Private and Public Solidarity – a Comparison of Role Models in Family and Social Law in Europe". Further con-

ferences are scheduled to take place in autumn 2008 and autumn 2009. The international perspective should begin to bear fruit for Germany as the project continues to progress and should bring the often ideological debate conducted in Germany onto a more objective level.

The booklet **"New Pathways – Portraits of Men in Turmoil"** presents men and fathers who show, by way of example, that besides the traditional role models, other new role models can not only be presented but can also be experienced at first hand (<http://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/generator/Kategorien/Publikationen/Publikationen,did=100970.html>).

The Germany-wide pilot project that has been running since 2005 **"New Pathways for Boys"** (www.neue-wege-fuer-jungs.de;s.a. FORUM 1-2008) was developed and expanded as the counterpart of the annual "Girl's Day – Mädchen Zukunftstag" and has since been rolled out across the whole of Germany. It has inspired educational activities for boys both within and outside school that are aimed at broadening the choice of professions open to boys, making male role models more flexible and strengthening the social skills of boys. The Germany-wide networking project supports initiatives and projects that deal with the issue of making career and future plans in a gender-sensitive manner and intends to raise awareness of the need for support for boys during the transition between school and work.

The pilot project is now collaborating with the community service programme [Zivildienst] and the multi-generation homes scheme. There are plans to promote the project further over the next three years. This will involve, in particular:

- The expansion of the Germany-wide network of initiatives aimed at supporting boys in a gender-sensitive manner during the transition between school and work,
- Specialist events and the expansion of the web portal,
- The expansion and building up of support initiatives aimed at interested teaching and specialist staff as facilitators in school-based and non-school-based work on behalf of and with young males aged between ten and 16, and
- Directly addressing the target group of boys aged between ten and 16 and a wide (youth) media audience by developing and implementing high-publicity campaigns.

The project **"Social Boys"** is a cross-generation voluntary service programme for 13 to 16-year olds and their guardians: at three locations, boys reach an agreement with a social organisation to commit to regularly working and helping out at this organisation for a whole year. Their service consists of caring for, accompanying and supporting the elderly, children or the disabled, for example. The school pupils could also be asked to take on activities including playing together, reading aloud, doing leisure activities together, providing help on the computer or doing small tasks. The school pupils, of which there are more than 90, will be accompanied by mentors, who will each take care of several boys and act as their fixed contact person. The project runs from 2005 to 2008.

Male role models continue to be rather rare in social occupations. Particularly in nurseries, boys can play an important (role model) function. The experience that the pupils gain can also be very useful in terms of providing careers guidance and can awaken an interest in social and educational professions, for example. Besides establishing and developing social commitment within the population, the

aim is particularly to get young men interested in professions that do not correspond to the conventional gender stereotypes of men (and fathers!). Nurseries therefore also see voluntary service as a suitable “investment in the future” for the possible recruitment of male staff (www.sozialejung.de).

The academic study “**Community Service as a Socialisation Mechanism for Young Men**” examines the effects of community service. This deals not least with the question of whether this compulsory service, which is predominantly undertaken in areas of work that are not typically entered into by men, has an influence on the young men’s understanding of roles and also on their career ideas. The results of the examination, which is being carried out over a three year period, will be presented at the end of 2010.

Against the background of changes on the labour market and discussions about the role of men in education, the Ministry is planning the research project “**Men Training to be Pre-School Teachers and in Nurseries**”. This deals with the requirements and conditions that must be met in order for young men to decide to train in this area and in order for them to remain in nurseries in the long-term.

All of these projects and initiatives also represent the building blocks of a gender-fair and family-friendly society in the future, in which “new-age men” and committed fathers will have a significant role to play.

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Every child needs a father (even if he is absent)

In his article, Rainer Neutzling describes what boys and girls need in order to develop their gender identity of men, what this means for single mothers¹ and what fathers and mothers living apart can do for themselves and their children, provided that they are able to put the allocation of blame behind them.

DIETER SCHNACK once responded to the question: “What is masculinity?” with “I know what masculinity smells like. Masculinity smells of tobacco, leather, sandwiches², paint and sweat. In short, masculinity smells of the bag that my father used to carry when he came home from work in the evening. I am absolutely certain that masculinity smells like this and I am pleased about this certainty.” (1997)

For many years, we have occupied ourselves with the question: what is it that boys need in particular in order to have a happy upbringing. Our findings include the fact that it is extremely important for boys to be able to be like their fathers, without coming into conflict. The mother is also irreplaceable as an object with which to identify. The older I become, the clearer it is to me how much I resemble my father and mother. In addition, it is also intrinsically important, of course, for girls to be allowed to be like their fathers.

In the mother-father-child life triangle, the father is not a mere addition to the maternal blessing of bringing up a child, which could be dispensed with, if necessary. The father is far more indispensable than that. Of course, it is possible without a father as well. It is also possible without a mother, and even without either parent, but the trilogy is better, the triangle consisting of mother-father-child. If the father or mother is absent, many things are made more difficult, more risky and more fragile.

Raging emotionality

Prior to writing this essay, I read a number of specialist essays on the children of divorced parents, single mothers, fathers living away from their children and on the financial and psychological consequences of a separation for all of those involved. What is more, the more I tried to come up with answers to the questions of what boys and girls need in order to develop their gender identity of men and what this means for single mothers, the more I felt overwhelmed by the oppressive feeling of entering into an ugly divorce dispute.

For those affected, there is generally little clarity and a great deal of confusion, little security and a great deal of anxiety, more anger than sadness and more hate than

remaining affection involved in these situations. At best, these feelings are only temporary. What is more, someone is always to blame. Blame, feelings of blame, allocation of blame and rejection of blame play an important role, but all pose obstacles to a good experience between parents and child.

Who are we talking about here? Is it the single mother who had a one-night stand with the father of her child and never intended to share her life and parenthood with him? Or is it the single mother who has shared her home and the raising of her children with their father for many years? Is she really a single mother? If so, is she one because she wants as little as possible for her child from this father or is it because the father is not available? How do these mothers view the father of their child? Are they full of anger, full of disappointment, do they feel hurt, humiliated or abandoned? Or are they reconciled, cheerful, healed, self-confident and respectful? What kind of fathers living away from their children are we talking about? Has their anger towards the woman subsided or is it still blazing? Are we talking about fathers who were able to separate from the mother of their child on good terms? Or do they feel violated, bereft and used? Do they wish to reach an amicable agreement with the woman and be hands-on fathers?

The more I thought about whom we should try to please, the more I was in danger of getting lost as far as the raging emotionality that is associated with a separation is concerned. It is not dissimilar in this respect to the way in which a child is affected by the separation of his/her parents.

According to the Swiss Paediatrician REMO H. LARGO (2004), anyone wishing to find out whether the children of divorced parents would be capable of having a relationship later on as adults must ask: what are their experiences of relationships? And not: in what kind of family are they growing up? Children imitate the way in which their parents behave towards one another. Is this relationship full of rejection or do they respect one another?

¹ The text is the slightly amended version of a lecture which the author gave to the Augustana Forum in Augsburg at the end of 2007.

² There was some confusion surrounding this term. A German native speaker was consulted and decided that this was the most likely meaning in this context.

Why do my children need me?

In order to clear my head a little more, I asked myself two simple questions: why do my children need me? And: what would I miss if we no longer lived together and I lost contact with them because I had fallen out with their mother to such an extent that we were only overcome with remorse and hostile towards one another?

First of all, my children would miss the man that I would cease to be: a generally happy and content everyday guy. However hectic it always was in the mornings at breakfast before school and work, however often we clashed ("Now, for the last time, tidy your things away!" "For crying out loud, put your shoes back on!" "Your constant shouting is getting on my nerves!"), by the evenings, at the latest, we had seen each other again and had had the opportunity to make up. Every day was an opportunity to make a fresh start. Those times are gone now. I am no longer there. I have left. There is no longer a generally happy and content man there. We can no longer hug or kiss one another every day. The children and I miss one another very badly.

The children are losing what I am losing: the fact that every day they can tell by my eyes that I am a happy, concerned, annoyed, proud and above all loving father, that I like being their father. Any doubt about my love, my loyalty, my reliability and my confidence, my ability to protect them, to comfort them, to help them through difficult situations in life, to advise them and to give them encouragement ... the slightest doubt about this can make them ill, both mentally and physically.

They are losing a mother who is treasured and cherished by their father and who wants me to treasure her. The children, who have both a part of me and their mother in them, no longer see how much their father treasures THE woman, a part of whom is in them, or how much their mother treasures THE man who is a part of them. Being able to experience this is an essential prerequisite for self-acceptance and self-love in children.

My children no longer see (or they have seen us fail to do this) how a husband and wife behave respectfully towards one another, how the sexes argue with one another and then make up. When they come to stay with me, they will miss their mother because she can't be there through the good times (even if only in their hearts). When they are with their mother, I am excluded from the equation.

They barely have me anymore: the man who has a very particular smell, who feels very special, who listens in a very special way and who has his very own way, typical of their father, of sitting at the table, laughing and eating, of perching there grumpily or telling a joke.

They are losing the warmth that I gave them every day. I am missing from their lives as the one who hugs them, the one who holds them close to his heart, the one who raises them, the one who sets them boundaries, the one who plays with them and as someone whom they could crawl into bed with at night.

I am no longer the unquestionable, archaic guarantee that nothing will happen to them; that come what may, they will not go hungry. Now, perhaps they can only hold my hand and be protected from all dangers one night a week and every fortnight during a weekend fraught with yearning. At one time, when they were in my arms, everything was good. Now, that is no longer the case.

My children can no longer see how much I like music,

why I go out to work and earn money. They no longer learn from me why commitment and achievement are worthwhile. I can no longer explain the world to them, as I cannot even make them understand why we do not live together anymore.

The inner feelings of the father

Of course not every father who does not live with his children could give such a detailed account on the spot of everything that he has lost through being separated from his children, where and how exactly he misses them and in what way they miss him. In addition, there are, of course, fathers who have made a run for it, but that does not change anything about the fact that a child who has been separated from his/her father is missing out on all of these things and much more.

Even children whose fathers are violent and have left the family, or were forced to leave the family, miss their father. They miss having a good father. Not "good" in the sense of the father figure found in picture books, who is big, friendly and gentle and makes virtually no parenting mistakes, but rather the father whom the child may and is allowed to view as the good side of himself/herself.

As part of a study (2005), I once interviewed a 17-year old boy called Martin. Martin had been badly beaten by his father throughout his life and his mother had not protected him. His father left the family time and time again, either because he had met another woman or because he was put in prison for a short time. Martin's mother welcomed him back with open arms each time. "Why does she do that?" I asked the boy. He shrugged his shoulders and said: "she is afraid and she loves him."

At the age of 14, Martin began to take on the role of his father, whenever his father disappeared again. He began to hit his siblings and his mother and yelled at everyone the entire day until they told him: "Hey, you are just like your father!"

Although Martin receives neither encouragement nor recognition for his behaviour, he cannot change. The desire to identify with his father exercises an immense pull, not because Martin wants to be a wife-beater, but because he wishes to identify with the side of his father that he admires.

In response to the question of how it felt to hear that he was like his father, he replied: "I had perhaps tried too hard to become like him" and things just escalated. I did not want to become quite as heavy-handed as he was, but they always just said: you are like your father, when I did something bad, for example, when I got into a fight again. They never said it when I did something good."

The things he liked about his father were that he "had a wife and children and he owned his own house. He had a steady job; in fact he did rather well for himself, apart from the fact that he could not manage his anger. He was very good at his job. This was something for which everyone was always thankful. He was also very laid back the whole time, he was definitely rather cool and I was always a little impressed by this. He somehow had a knack for chatting to people and somehow creating a relaxed atmosphere. That was what I really admired about him, and in fact, I just wanted

to be like that the whole time. I wanted to be just like him, but without the beating. The only thing is that what happened was the exact opposite. I only inherited the beating side of him."

He describes himself as the exact opposite: “I was always inhibited and stiff and somehow always argued with some people, even when it was only over something frivolous. I always allowed myself to get wound up and constantly tried to turn things around so that I was in the right. Nobody whatsoever could cross me and ... I have no idea.”

Martin’s story tells of the sad failure of a young man trying to separate out the positive and negative sides of his father’s character and trying to emulate only the traits that he admires. He needed to undergo psychotherapy which attempted to heal as many of the wounds from his childhood as possible. These wounds had largely been caused by the fact that none of the three relationships of the father-mother-child triad had been functional. His fate is a striking example of what happens to many young men with violent fathers, and demonstrates how great the desire is to be like one’s father, irrespective of whether the father is a “good person” or a “bad person”.

The same is also true of the more or less normal everyday relationship between children and their fathers. A child will also want to, and indeed must, identify with a father who is deemed to be “bad”, “unreliable” or “irresponsible” by the mother. If the positive attributions of the father given by the mother and the child’s actual experiences with him do not outweigh the negative, the child will develop identity problems about this issue. The child will ask itself: who am I, who am I allowed to be if a central part of me is not good or is not allowed to be good? If the father was constantly negative about the mother, then both son and daughter would experience the same problem.

The unknown father

It is known that many children who have never known their biological parents go in search of them at some point, even if they have had a good experience in their foster or adoptive families. This is not a demonstration of ingratitude towards the foster/adoptive parents, but rather the result of a deep desire to ascertain their biological origins.

It is also for this reason, for example, that family therapists advise men who become fathers against their own intentions and will, to be aware that from the moment of conception onwards, they have an independent relationship with the child, as does the child with them. Perhaps the man just had a one-night stand with the child’s mother and she unintentionally became pregnant as a result, and to his horror, decided to keep the baby. He feels powerless and as though he is at the mercy of her decision and is angry and despairing. Many fathers are overly hasty to turn their backs on the child and its mother at this point.

Conversely, it is better for both the father himself and for the child if he accepts the fact that the child has been conceived and that there is therefore a psychologically inseparable relationship between himself and the child. Viewing the child as an independent person can help the man to accept his becoming a father as a simple fact. If he does this, his own personal future with his child is left entirely in his hands: what kind of father would he like to be? Does he simply want to pay child maintenance and not have any contact with the woman and child? Or can he imagine being a part of the child’s life?

If it is not clear whether or not the man and woman will spend their future together or whether the man will have

contact with the child, it is important to make some far-reaching decisions, as the Cologne-based family therapist HILDEGARD JÜRGENS emphasises: the man should give the woman a current photograph of himself, which she can later show the child so that he/she can see what his/her father looks like or used to look like. He should also provide the mother with a list of illnesses and allergies that run in his family and other important information that should be noted in relation to the child’s health. He should also pay child maintenance. Even if the father and child are never going to see one another, it can still nevertheless be of inestimable value to the child to know or to learn at some point that he/she is at least valued by his/her biological father every month. This represents a humble, and perhaps nevertheless meaningful, connection between the child and his/her father.

The father’s point of view

In the positive case, the father-mother-child triad is characterised by three independent relationships that, in as equal-sided a triangle as possible, form the fundamental unit for raising a child. The sociologist BRUNO HILDENBRAND (2004) emphasises the fact that in this relationship triangle, all three parties have an undivided right to one another. The relationships are nevertheless characterised by constantly changing and completely conflicting positions of closeness and distance. He illustrates this point with the following example:

One rainy Sunday, an eight-year-old son returns home, damp and covered in dirt, from a bike ride in the woods with his father. It may well be that the mother scolds the father for not being very sensible and the boy then proudly joins forces with the father against the mother, but that will not stop him from having a hot bath after being told off by his mother and then cuddling the mother and excluding the father from this intimate relationship.

It is this constant change in the triad that is bound up with productive conflict which helps to shape the child’s personality. “The emotional basis, permanence and dependability form the basis for a child to be able to tolerate these conflicts at all, which are necessary for him/her to carve out an identity,” says Hildenbrand. If one element of this triad is missing, this will require children to do something to compensate for this, for example, to spend their lives searching, generally for their father or for replacement father figures.

In my experience, children who were forced to live without a loving relationship with their father often doubt themselves and their own abilities more in later life than other people. They often run a higher risk of lacking in courage at times and lacking in drive, or they are extremely performance-oriented, but without ever being pleased with what they have achieved. They are lacking the essential experience of reading in their father’s eyes: you are good, you are beautiful and I love you, even when you do things that annoy me.

This is the most important message for children to hear from their parents. A husband and wife have paired up with one another of their own free will. Their love is fundamentally conditional in nature and must often be re-negotiated to a certain extent. If there ever comes a time where they do not sufficiently agree with one another, their love disappears and they separate. In contrast, the love between parents and children is permanent in principle. Under normal circumstances, children also feel this unconditional love for their

mother and father: you are good, you are beautiful and I love you, even when you do things that annoy me. If this is not possible for whatever reason, this poses a great danger to the child's self esteem.

The "traditional" father

However, are the fathers in the triangle not predominantly those who have relieved themselves of any responsibility for their children, who are constantly just at work and spend too little time with their children, who in the event of a separation, leave their children with the mother entirely as a matter of course because they have to work and immediately cease to pay child maintenance the moment that things don't go their way, if they pay at all!? If they are so dreadfully important for the development of their children, why are they not more worried about them?

Anyone attempting to provide an answer to such reproaches instantly finds themselves entering the unpleasant divorce dispute mentioned at the outset. It is for this reason that it is necessary at this point to say something about the traditional mother and father roles within our culture. This will perhaps help to clarify any misunderstanding without having to constantly put forward someone to blame.

It begins with gender-specific education. Unlike girls, boys must generally let go at an early stage of the lovely omnipotent fantasy of a child being able to be created all by itself. By around the time they approach nursery school leaving age, they must therefore suppress, to some extent, their potential to create, that is to say their ability to play a part in the creation of children. It is often only much later that they become aware of their fertility once again, generally only when a woman tells them that she is pregnant. A further consequence of having suppressed this potential is the carelessness of boys and men when it comes to contraception; something for which they are often criticised. If only someone had told them when they were boys that their fertility is something of which they can be proud.

Whilst female fertility is regarded as a creative force and can therefore be seen as a source of pride for the female sex (a girl's first period is sometimes even seen as a cause for celebration), conversely, nobody would think of arranging a small family celebration on the occasion of the son's first ejaculation.

And what about traditional mother and father roles? They have undoubtedly undergone social change: the efficient and virtuous housewife and sacrificial mother is now no longer the only model for women, just as the man is no longer bound to the role of the sole breadwinner. However, the power of the traditional role models must not be underestimated. Naturally, today's women may and should also be employed, committed and successful, and of course, modern society wishes fathers to be loving and committed and to still have enough time to help with the housework and children as well as going out to work. However, all of these things are deemed to be added extras. The traditional mother and father roles continue to be at the centre of our understanding of what makes a good mother and father.

A short story should illustrate how deeply rooted the traditional role models are:

In a Hollywood film, when an ocean liner sinks, it is guaranteed that there will not be enough lifeboats. The mothers grab their children, while the fathers battle it out to

find a place for them. There is always one man who has been portrayed as an unlikeable character right from the start: he is often a short and fat, obtrusive loudmouth. His lack of masculinity is always revealed at the decisive moment; we do not expect it to be any other way. He is always the only man who does not stick to the instruction of "women and children first!" He simply pushes his way into the lifeboat and takes the last available space. He is scared and does not want to die, but we think: what a coward! However, the wife of the lead hero manages to muster up a final bit of strength to get into the lifeboat along with their child, but she does not want to leave without her husband. He must now persuade her: "You have to think of our little one, darling! Believe me, it's for the best!" (And in such a situation, nobody strikes up a conversation with him about the fact that, as its father, he could also take very good care of the child. A bizarre idea: the father gets in the boat with the child and leaves the mother behind ...). Of course, the mother puts up a fight, even though she knows that there is no alternative. When insistently trying to persuade her husband doesn't work, it is over to him to tell his wife to bring herself and the child to safety. Finally, all of the women and children are in the lifeboat. Just a few final, desperate kisses, then it doesn't take very long for the sea to swallow up the ship leaving no survivors.

Those who go down with the ship are all men, with the exception of the old lady included in the budget who insists that she will not now leave her husband after 50 years of marriage. Then the low-paid, but nevertheless honourable and dutiful stokers and mechanics drown first, followed by the husbands and officers that remained behind, and finally the captain, just as it should be. A lovely film, sad, but lovely, since with only one exception, all of the men fought faultlessly. We can be particularly proud of the father playing the role of our lead hero. We have to attest that his socialisation must be considered a success. The young boy that he once was has become a good father. Unfortunately, he is now dead.

Anyone who is now smiling to themselves has just realised how deep within the heart the desire for this kind of heroic fatherliness lies dormant. However, naturally, not every man should immediately hand over his life; after all, his contribution as the breadwinner is still required. However, it is clear that it is the role of the mother, not the father, to stay with the child. He must first see that he is back on land, so to speak, before seeing his child (and wife) again.

I know of a few isolated cases where the parents have separated and the young child has stayed with the father and not with the mother. The mother told the father: "Take the child. You can look after him/her better than I can. I will obviously have the child to stay with me regularly and will even pay child maintenance, but otherwise ..."

Does that stir something in you? Is it perhaps the feeling of disgust? What kind of mother is that!? How can a woman just leave her child like that? Since it is not considered to be nearly as bad for fathers to leave the family home, have the children stay with them regularly and otherwise pay child maintenance, it cannot really be something so awfully wrong. Nevertheless, it is not culturally acceptable for women to do this. To go against this demands an incredible amount of staying power.

On the other hand, fathers: it remains unchanged that one of the most important messages to be given to boys while they are being raised is that they should be in a position later

on in life to feed a family alone, at least temporarily. Women and children must be able to rely on this even today. The fact that in general many women also view pure “househusbands” as not being altogether masculine is just one example of the fact that even men are not just handed the reversal of roles on a plate.

If women “keep” the children in the case of a separation and men leave the family, but continue to provide financial support, this is only partly their own decision. It is rather more a case of them obeying the strict rules of our social culture. Despite all of the social change that has taken place, the raising of children of course largely continues to be the woman's domain, while the man's job is first and foremost to prove himself in the world of work. This polarity is based on an unchanged, broad social consensus.

The paying father

Dare to dip your toe in the muddy waters of the debate about single mothers and fathers obliged to pay child maintenance and you will find yourself treading in the icy waters of the traditional battle of the sexes: on the one hand, the sacrificial mothers who have been left in the lurch and are overworked, on the other hand, the unreliable fathers who often do not pay any child maintenance. Stuck in between the two fronts are the poor children.

It is a fact that children usually stay with their mother when their parents separate: the figures fluctuate between 80 and 90%. It is likewise a fact that divorce brings with it a great risk of poverty for all concerned. Well over half of all single parents have to survive on a monthly net income of less than 1300 euros (STATISTISCHES BUNDESAMT 2006). And even fathers have to come to terms with significant financial losses following a divorce. Ultimately, they not only have to pay child maintenance, but must also finance a second home.

The majority of fathers pay child maintenance, approximately 75%, and this percentage approaches the 100% mark if both parents have right of custody, if they had already been parents together for a number of years prior to their separation and the distribution of tasks within the family was not rigidly traditional (PROKSCH 2002).

Fathers who do not pay child maintenance are either unemployed, have too little money despite being employed or have an extremely difficult relationship with their former partner. They do not want to pay because contact with their children is made difficult or refused completely, or because their ex-wife has a new partner and they do not want to be just a “paying father”. The desire to gain revenge for their wife having left them also plays a role.

The psychosocial situation of single mothers is often characterised by financial need, exhaustion and mental overexertion. They are often forced to remain in employment in addition to taking responsibility for the daily care of the children. Their children are left to their own devices more often and from a younger age than other children. The mothers often complain of a fear of failure,

having a bad conscience and feeling angry. They have an above-average risk of suffering from depression and are often only able to raise their children with a great deal of emotional strain.

The children of single parents run a significantly increased risk of suffering from psychosomatic disturbances and of having difficulties in forming relationships. There is

a risk that the children will suffer from depression or intense anxiety, particularly if contact with their father is problematic. There is an above-average likelihood of boys demonstrating aggressive and impulsive behaviour among children whose parents are separated/divorced (FRANZ 2002).

Since somebody must be to blame for causing so much unhappiness, the battle of the sexes that is linked with divorce is almost exclusively about allocating blame. However, what appears to be a bitter battle between men and women here is actually a problem that is related to the gender-specific roles that are taken on in the case of a separation: whoever remains with the child can only work to a limited extent and is dependent upon money being transferred by their former partner. A partner who is in full-time employment can only live with the child under very difficult circumstances, following a separation, but must largely continue to finance his/her nuclear family, of which he/she used to be a part, but to which he/she now only has access as a guest, at the most.

In the case of a separation, provided that no violence was involved, there are only losers. Fathers living away from their families are by no means winners. The fact that they often have great difficulties in satisfying their desire to be a father and the demands of their children for fatherly love is generally not a question of poor character, but rather one of the gender-specific roles assigned to them following a separation.

In what is often a very emotional debate, it is important to recognise that it is not just single mothers who find it difficult to make ends meet and cope with raising their children, but it is also difficult for fathers living away from their families. Above all, each individual case has earned unbiased attention. In the end, fathers are often held solely responsible for the problems faced by mothers and children because they are thought not only to be abdicating their responsibility for raising their children, but also in particular their ancestral role as the breadwinner, and are thereby condemning their wives and children to a life of illness-inducing poverty and overexertion. Of course, this certainly does happen all too often, but it is not the general rule.

It must be recognised that it is incredibly difficult for fathers to maintain the inner bond with their child when faced with conditions that are neither fair to the child nor the father. Even a woman would find it extremely difficult if her child lived with its father and she only saw the child for one weekend every fortnight and one afternoon during the week. Every child knows that such visits that are fraught with desires and yearnings are often very awkward.

It must also be understood that the constitutional unconditional nature of love between children and parents is often linked to a whole host of negative conditions following a separation: how can love flow, how can the man take responsibility for raising the child, how can the necessary universal trust be built up or continue to exist if the father and child do not/no longer live together? It is perhaps possible, but it is incredibly difficult.

The infamous “paying father” is by no means a mere hollow macho formula. One must see that, for many men, the predicament of having to finance your own family whilst living at a distance is the greatest challenge they are forced to take on as a result of their dreams of having a family. Their role, which was also once accepted by their ex-partner, meant that they had been the so-called breadwinner up until this point and they had also been lovingly acknowledged as such

by the woman. Now they are forced to continue to fulfil this role, but are no longer loved by the mother of their children, neither for this nor for any other reason. This is also difficult to cope with mentally (cf. AMENDT 2004).

Women would not fair any better when placed in the same situation as their ex-husbands. Although it is comparably rare for women to be liable for paying child maintenance, it is a fact that even “mothers often do not satisfy their obligation to pay child maintenance”, as is illustrated in the concluding report relating to the accompanying research into the most recent childhood reform presented in 2002 (PROKSCH 2002).

Blame and responsibility

Children learn empathy, i.e. the ability to abandon your own view both mentally and emotionally, in order to imagine what somebody else is feeling or to take on board another person’s view of things, above all, within a functional “mother-father-child” triad. Another important precondition in order for a child to develop the ability to empathise and sympathise is to realise that the suffering that they themselves are experiencing is not denied by others. Empathy and sympathy are, however, usually the first things to be abandoned in the event of separation.

The strong desire of many parents going through a separation to accept no blame, if possible, for the failure of the family is responsible for this. This self-deception works most easily if one or other of the partners has failed as a mother or father. If she or he is inadequate, unreliable, incapable and unfair, this allays one’s own feelings of guilt. After all, one thing is clear to all (subconsciously): if parents separate or do not live together, they are always to blame as far as their children are concerned. From the children’s point of view, their relationship with their parents is permanent. They therefore cannot understand why their parents do not love one another (anymore). Up until children reach school age, the word “divorce”, means almost nothing to them. They do not understand how adult life works; the fact that during your lifetime, you get together with people and then separate from them again. They see it happening and are forced to accept it, but they do not understand it.

Some mothers see reproaching fathers for their failure as a way of trying to reduce their own blame for the demise or non-establishment of the family idyll. Excluding the father from the process of raising the children can likewise feed the illusion of not being as much to blame. Sometimes it is impossible for children to do anything but adopt the mother’s negative judgement of the father and to withdraw from him. If children then wish (in their state of mental turmoil) not to see their father anymore, the mother is resolved of all blame so to speak: he is not interested, he is useless, and he is not good for the children ...

In addition, it is often fathers who, when faced with the challenge of being a good father under unfavourable circumstances, give up and break off contact with the child. As far as the child is concerned, in doing this, they make themselves culpable to such an extent that they are rarely able to make amends. By saying: “the woman didn’t allow me to be a father”, fathers attempt to reduce the extent of their own guilt.

Remaining parents

Children have a good chance of being able to cope with the separation of their parents or with their parents not being together when both parents:

- Are prepared to work through their own hurts and wounds as well as those that have been inflicted upon them in connection with the separation,
- Are able to appreciate in front of the children the qualities of their ex-partner that are worthy of love and indeed that caused them to fall in love with them in the first place,
- Are able to admit their “guilt” for having broken up the family unit to themselves, to one another and to the children and
- Are able to inform the children together that they are about to separate.
- Understand that the parent living away from the family must not be idealised or vilified by the children and should be allowed to have an undisputed place in the children’s hearts, even if he or
- she acts in a careless or inadequate manner as far as the other parent is concerned (cf. WÖRAN 2006).

What does this mean for single mothers? The things the father can give the children cannot be replaced, and at best, can only be compensated for. It is also possible to raise children without a father, but children suffer this loss. Some suffer more than others, depending on the other relationships that they are able to experience.

The most important thing that a single mother can do with regard to the potential lack of a father for her child is to do enough for herself as a woman. It does the child good if the mother is happy with herself, the world and her love life and relationships. It does everyone good if she can still tolerate the father of her child a little and if she lets the child know that there was once good enough reason for her to desire and treasure the child’s father. How beneficial it is if she can show that she is still a woman who desires and values men. Preventing the child from seeing its father or making it more difficult out of self-righteousness or helplessness is a grave mistake. The mother is helping the child if she also allows him/her to have contact with other men: to see his/her uncle, grandfather and her friends. She must and should not take up the mantle of the penitent, but it is important that she stands by her responsibility for the state of the family. It is difficult to blame herself, but refusal to accept any blame makes everything worse. In contrast, what lightens the load of the mother is when her child has a good relationship with his/her father.

The same is true for the father. He should also reappraise the part he played in the failure of the family as well as standing by his responsibility to provide for and raise his child. He should not seek to blame the woman. This process often takes years and this is a time during which space is needed to grieve for the losses suffered. It is always the child who suffers when the father denigrates the mother. Refusal to pay child maintenance to the mother and child, despite having enough money to do so, may be emotionally understandable in isolated cases. However, the child sees this as an admission of defeat by the father.

The most important thing that a father living away from his family can do is to take good care of himself, that is to say, to build networks within his friendship circle and circle of acquaintances, for example. In addition, he should be well

and truly aware of the extremely important role that he has to play in the child's mental welfare and ask himself: what does this child mean to me?

Neither my wife nor I would just leave our children with the other partner. What would we do then if we were ever to separate? How could we break up and nevertheless both continue to live together with the children? As I would need just as much time as my ex-wife to take care of the children, the model would subsequently fall flat on its face: she would "keep" the children while I went to work full-time. I hope that it will never come to this, but it would certainly be exciting to find out how we would resolve this paradox. She and I would probably potter around at different ends of our broken family, but we would have to solve the same puzzle.

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Fathers in everyday family life.

The gulf between attitudes and behaviour

The following contribution depicts how and why society's perceptions of masculinity and fatherhood have changed. Research findings regarding the current role played by fathers in everyday family life, their attitudes and behaviour towards family and gainful employment form the focus of this contribution.

Rifts and asynchronies in the social definition of the role of men and fathers

The publication of the EU Equal Opportunities Report 2008 (EUROPEAN COUNCIL 2008) has forcefully put the subject of fathers on to the public agenda once again. The large number of letters from readers and contributions to internet forums that are dedicated to discrimination against women as far as the possibility of reconciling having a family with having a career is concerned and identify the lack of male commitment to home life as part of the problem, make one thing clear: the question of fathers should not be considered in isolation, but rather should only be regarded as one integral element of a cultural analysis of the way in which family and career are arranged as a whole. Based on our initial assumption, it is the changes that have taken place in the world of work, culture and politics that are seemingly so far removed from our home lives and families that hinder men and fathers in their understanding of their roles (BÖHNISCH 2003).

To be precise, the role of men and fathers is changing in the following ways: the technological and economic reorganisation of working relationships unsettles young men who are considering their future opportunities on the labour market, added to this is their clearly increasing anxiety about personal finances (GRABKA/FRICK 2008, p.106). This shakes the self-evident foundations of the role of the father as the breadwinner of the family. Simultaneously, there are vehement calls for men to become new-age fathers who assume the role of the loving educator. However, at the same time, the breadwinner role is so firmly rooted both mentally and in the routines of the majority of men that they are unable to grasp their obvious role within the family. Beyond the fine words, there continues to be a lack of recognised role models just as there is a lack of support from society for involved and committed fathering (TÖLKE 2007). Men who attempt to adopt alternative approaches to masculinity, that is to say those that seek to strike a balance between their career and family life, all too often experience a far-reaching sense of uncertainty or an obvious display of contempt towards their behaviour among colleagues at work and friends and family at home. This is reinforced by the fact that when men behave in certain ways that are based on equality and partnership,

whilst these are predominantly viewed by their partners as "nice", they are rarely deemed to be demonstrations of "masculinity". Ambivalences are therefore preconditioned (DÖGE/VOLZ 2002): men are expected to be caring, emotional and sensitive whilst having the male charisma of George Clooney (SÜFKE 2008).

In addition, popular discourse about masculinity and fatherhood is correspondingly heterogeneous and contradicts itself. At present, extremely different images of and attitudes towards men coexist. In her study on the use of "soaps" (Marienhof, Lindenstraße) on the television, SCHMITZ (2007) uses the comments made by men to determine that although those questioned feel obliged themselves to conform to new perceptions of masculinity and to reject traditional gender role stereotypes and can therefore also imagine themselves, in principle, as committed fathers, it becomes clear upon closer inspection that much of what they say is nevertheless based implicitly on extremely traditional views. By way of example, they talk of "men basically not being interested in tittle tattle", but rather being interested in "football", and not watching women's programmes like *Mona Lisa*, for example, to which an interviewee responded "men don't watch things like that".

According to this, new and traditional perceptions of masculinity and combinations of the two not only exist side by side in society, but there are also contradictions in the views held by the men questioned which must be seen as a general phenomenon. An almost classic example of this contradiction, if not an example of "gender confusion", is the English football star David Beckham (BÖHNISCH 2003). On the one hand, he is the very embodiment of the new-age, androgynous man who comes across as being sensitive, fashion-conscious and body-conscious, and above all, his family appears to be his number-one priority. On the other hand, he represents the very kind of assertive male type that the neo-liberal economy requires. On the whole, we can draw the conclusion that many young men feel unsettled by the disparate demands that are made of them as regards the way in which they live and plan their lives.

To summarise, the abovementioned lines of development of masculinity and fatherliness form a multi-faceted area that is full of tensions within which young men's ideas on life and fatherhood are shaped:

- As far as cultural interpretive patterns and discourses are concerned, the model of the employed man as the sole breadwinner has lost its dominant position.
- However, being a father and becoming a father no longer form an unquestioned component of the script of modern life. There are various “scripts” which young men interpret individually or “re-write” altogether, in their attempts to deal with the labour market, culture and values. The classic synopsis of the four-stage model of education, career, fatherhood and retirement has not been the only path chosen by all men for some time now.
- Processes of enforced modernisation are reflected in the destandardisation of transitions in CVs, as well as in the destandardisation of lifestyles and the change in the time at which the various stages of life occur (SCHERGER 2007; WÄLTHER/STAUBER 2007).
- A major categorisation variable that co-determines the characteristics of concepts of masculinity and fatherhood can be seen in the socio-structural establishment of milieu (MEUSER 1998).

A plurality of approaches to masculinity and corresponding styles of fatherhood must therefore be assumed which may in turn be different in individual areas, namely housework on the one hand, and raising and taking care of the children on the other hand. How do men define themselves in this area of tension? What does fatherly behaviour look like in everyday life?

From breadwinner to educator or the discrepancy between attitudes and behaviour

The discourses outlined above are not without their effects: the social perceptions of male and female roles have shifted in general towards an equal split between family and gainful employment: 75.1% of German men and women aged between 18 and 65

are now of the opinion that both the man and woman should contribute to the household income (DORBRITZ et al. 2005, p. 49) and 67% of men aged between 18 and 60 believe that men should become more involved with child-care (ROST/MÜHLING 2006, p. 59)¹. This change in the image of the father from being the breadwinner to becoming the person who raises the children brings the opportunity for men to become more involved in the development of their children and to build a close relationship with them early on.

Much has changed as far as attitudes are concerned ...

Since the end of the 1980s, there has been a continuous decline in both the number of women and men who agree with the male breadwinner model (cf. HOFÄCKER 2004 and 2007). Among fathers themselves, there was a 25 per cent reduction in the acceptance of the traditional breadwinner model between 1988 and 2002: whilst 45% of fathers were still convinced by this model in 1988, in 2002, only 20% continued to agree with such a division of roles (HOFÄCKER 2007, p.13)². It is necessary to mention that this development can be seen throughout Europe, albeit to varying extents (Ibid.). At the same time, half (51%) of German fathers believe that men should be more involved in the housework (Ibid.) and the number of men who believe that a child who has not yet reached school age suffers as a result of his/her mother

going out to work decreased by 16 per cent to 55% between 1988 and 2002 (ROST/MÜHLING 2006, p. 59). ZULEHNER identified 20% of German men as “modern men” in 1998, that is to say those men that are distinguished by their particularly liberal approach to gender roles (ZULEHNER 2004, p. 10) and this percentage is bound to have increased further up until the present day. “New-age fathers” who “are more present, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in the lives of their children than traditional men”, can also be found once again among modern men. “They are also characterised by a significantly increased willingness to share the housework with their partner” (Ibid., p. 7). The figures show that involvement in the family has become more important to men. They wish to take on a greater number of tasks as fathers and wish to take care of their children more. This demonstrates the extent to which attitudes have changed.

... and how is the actual commitment of fathers looking at present?

On average, fathers³ currently spend 59 minutes a day taking care of their children aged 6⁴ and under (EUROSTAT 2004, p. 66), with civil servants spending the most time and self-employed fathers spending the least time. This time is spent particularly at the expense of men’s free-time, as the hours they spend at work continue not to be reduced (DÖGE/VOLZ 2004, p. 16). The findings show that the majority of West German men work even longer hours following the birth of their first child: 44.2% of fathers admit to having worked longer hours following the birth of their child than previously or to having been promoted at work/having found a better job (BZgA 2004, p. 23). The principal reason for this is thought to be that men must dedicate a great deal of time and effort to their careers particularly when starting a family, in order to maintain the family’s financial livelihood. POLLMANN-SCHULT and DIEWALD (2007) use longitudinal data to prove this effect of an increase in income once men start a family. This is particularly true in the case of highly qualified men. Although women now demonstrate a significantly higher tendency to be in gainful employment, the proportion of women in gainful employment⁵ in Germany stood at 58.4%⁶ in 2004, during the first few years following the birth of their children, women continue to work significantly fewer hours. The proportion of women with children under three years old in gainful employment lies at 31.2%, of which in turn only 12.5% work full-time and 18.7% work part-time (MIKROZENSUS 2004, p. 35). In addition, the findings reveal that even women with older children often work part-time, in order to strike a balance between family and career: of the 74.3% of mothers with children aged between 15 and 18 in gainful employment, over half (37.7%) work part-time (MIKROZENSUS 2004, p. 35). In this respect, the problem of reconciling having a family with work continues to be a problem faced by women.

1 The figures cited from the ifb family report, Bavaria 2006, edited by ROST/MÜHLING apply to West German men aged between 18 and 60 (p. 60).

2 HOFÄCKER used men aged between 18 and 55 living with a long-term partner and at least one minor as a basis for calculation (2007, p. 13).

3 In households consisting of couples

4 Including children aged 6

5 That is to say, the proportion of women in gainful employment out of all the women aged between 15 and 64 who are able to work

6 That is to say, four per cent higher than in 1991 (Gender data report 2005)

Accordingly, there is a pronounced inequality between the commitment of fathers to taking care of their children and the time and effort put into childcare by mothers: mothers spend 2.18 hours a day caring for children aged six and under, which is the equivalent of approx. 70% and therefore the vast majority of childcare (EUROSTAT 2004, p. 66). Calculated on a weekly basis, this difference becomes particularly significant: mothers spend 37.8 hours a week taking care of children that fall into this age group, whereas men only spend 22.5 hours (ROST/MÜHLING 2006, p. 133). The childcare study carried out by the German Youth Institute shows that 32% of fathers with children under three years of age are not involved at all with the care of their children during the week (ALT/TEUBNER 2006, p. 166), whereas fathers are spending more and more time with their children at weekends (GRUNOW 2007). This focus on the child at the weekend and the kinds of activities undertaken with the child which largely involve sport, conviviality and non-everyday activities is thought to be one of the most significant changes in the role of the father today.

Nevertheless, the material and day to day housework continues to be unequally divided and fathers play the role of “supporting actors” at best here, alongside their partner’s corresponding emotional expressions of annoyance that accompany this (KAUFMANN 2008). In Germany, women carry out just under two thirds (64%) of the housework within the household and therefore significantly more than men who only carry out a little more than one third (37%) of the housework as a whole (EUROSTAT 2004, p. 44)⁷. A comparison of the data collected by the Time Use Survey 1991/92 and 2001/02 [Zeitbudgeterhebung] shows that although the gap between the ratio of men and women involved in housework has closed somewhat, this is not however due to more men being involved in housework, but rather to a reduction in the amount of housework being undertaken by women, particularly women in employment (FEDERAL STATISTICAL OFFICE 2003, p. 14). However, there are anyhow indicators to suggest that fathers with children under three years of age are spending more time with the family, and as already mentioned above, this time appears to be spent at the expense of their free-time (DÖGE/VOLZ 2004, p. 16).

Due to the fact that their time is restricted by work, fathers undertake fewer childcare-related tasks, although they feel that they are virtually just as responsible as mothers for almost all areas (ROST/MÜHLING 2006, p. 60 et seq.). Although they attribute tasks such as changing nappies, dressing the children and taking the children to see the doctor to women and see themselves as being responsible for activities such as exercise and play, on the whole they do strive to divide tasks equally (Ibid.). In turn, a great deal of value is placed on the competence attributed to them by the mothers and partners. To a certain extent, mothers are important “gatekeepers” for achieving the increased involvement of fathers desired by society (VOLZ 2007).

Is it that they do not want to put their egalitarian views into practice or is it that we do not allow them?

Is it just the defence strategies used by mothers and male complacency that prevent concepts and attitudes that tend to be progressive and egalitarian from being put into practice? The answer is no, as there are also structures at work that

reproduce the actual gender-segregated division of labour. Firstly, the structures and remuneration patterns present on the labour market in the form of the average salaries of men in gainful employment still being significantly higher than those of women (HINZ/GARTNER 2005), tend to force men out of the family following the birth of their first child. Secondly and having a far more subtle impact are the working cultures that place too much emphasis on spending as much time as possible on the plant or in the office and which do not allow family men to reduce their working hours for family reasons without losing out on career opportunities. In terms of balance, this causes a rift between sophisticated, innovative concepts of family and fatherhood on the one hand and the primacy of being fully included in the employment system on the other hand. Family policy-related initiatives such as parental leave and paternity leave, which are meanwhile gaining acceptance, certainly constitute an important initial contribution, which, metaphorically speaking, provides a pillar for bridging this gap. However, a rethink at the managerial levels of the private sector and in the public sector appears to be of far greater importance as far as we are concerned (HÖYING/LANGE 2004). It is simply not enough to praise fatherhood in symbolic and rhetorical terms, but rather following the period of paternity leave, fathers must be offered working hours that allow them to become more involved with the family and be regarded as fully-valued members of the workforce, even if they work slightly fewer hours on site.

Becoming a father – a new research topic

Parenthood and reconcilability were deemed to be “women’s issues” for a long time. Changes in the way in which gender is perceived and the gender situation, the decline in the birth rate and changing demands as far as the raising of children is concerned are increasingly putting men and fathers under the spotlight as far as research is concerned. Men and fathers are tending to lose their role as the breadwinner and this is resulting in the partial detraditionalisation of the way in which family-based tasks are divided, where fathers are also beginning to see themselves more as the educator and social interaction partner of their children. There is more and more talk of “new-age fathers” nowadays, but there continues to be a lack of institutional arrangements and attractive, socially accepted role models that enable “active fathering” to be put into practice and favour “active fathering”.

A new project that is currently being carried out by the German Youth Institute with support from the Bertelsmann Foundation is therefore investigating the “pathways into fatherhood” for young men. The study focuses on male youths and young men who are likely to become fathers at various stages of adolescence. The study also takes account of the initial experiences of young fathers. The aim of the study is to reconstruct the concepts of fatherhood, that is to say, to question what kind of fathers young men imagine they will be and how they perceive the ability to reconcile career and family with one another and how these ideas are put into practice by real fathers. The results of the study are expected in autumn 2008.

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⁷ Men and women aged between 20 and 74 were interviewed regarding housework

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⁸ It was not possible to trace the meaning of “Zeitdiagnose”. The term has therefore been translated as “topical diagnosis”, but it is not entirely clear whether this is in fact what the German term refers to.

Perceiving positive changes. Second-generation Turkish immigrant fathers

In addition to ethnocultural factors, socio-structural circumstances are responsible for the fact that many second-generation Turkish immigrants adhere to traditional masculine roles. The author puts forward the case for more in-depth research of these factors, differentiated according to social milieu, but also asks that we take real notice of the change in gender roles and concepts of fatherhood that can already be seen to be taking place.

Since the introduction of the new regulation pertaining to parental allowance and the option of paternity leave, policy regarding fathers has been a hotly discussed topic in Germany. The intention is that fathers should become more involved in bringing up their children, supported by a modern family policy that is focused on equal opportunities. The increase in the proportion of fathers who take parental leave, up to 12.4% in the fourth quarter of 2007, indicates slow yet constant progress. However, fathers from immigrant backgrounds hardly feature in these types of fundamental debate concerning playing an active role as a father and solutions to problems that fathers encounter reconciling their professional and family lives.

In a current overview of German-language research into the topic of fathers, GUDRUN CYPRIAN lobbies for fathers from immigrant backgrounds and those living in bicultural families to be included in the research. In these types of families, “(...) the process of change in fathers’ roles can be observed particularly clearly. For the family abroad, the history of immigration creates conditions that force them to make numerous dynamic adaptations, especially in the relationships between work and family, between the generations and between the sexes. Here it is possible to observe, as if under a microscope, how fatherhood as a process is continually being constructed anew in relationships.” (CYPRIAN 2007, p. 43)

However, CYPRIAN does not connect these considerations with a critical discussion of research carried out to date and of the gaps in research pertaining to fathers from an immigrant background. Yet mainstream German-language research into the topic of fatherhood to date can only be characterised as ethnocentric. Previously, no systematic attention has been paid to immigrants in research and policy regarding fathers, not even in publications from the German Ministry of Family Affairs, such as “Facetten der Vaterschaft. Perspektiven einer innovativen Väterpolitik” [Aspects of fatherhood. Perspectives of an innovative policy regarding fathers] (2006).¹ In this and other publications documenting

research into fatherhood, what is shown is generally only the diverse range of lifestyles among German fathers without an immigrant background, known as “majority Germans”; fathers from an immigrant background are not represented.

On the other hand, research into immigration includes studies that make points regarding men or fathers. However, these studies rarely make systematic reference to theories and concepts in research looking at gender, men or fathers, as issues of integration and acculturation predominate. Moreover, until now research into immigration has generally lacked control groups made up of “majority German” fathers. In conclusion, there has been little success to date in investigating aspects of the change in the role of the father and comparing immigrants and those belonging to the German majority.

The study conducted by MANUELA WESTPHAL (2006) represents one exception. This study compares first-generation immigrant fathers from families who are repatriates of German origin and from families of Turkish economic migrants with fathers in West German families. Among other things, WESTPHAL discovered that these men from the first generation of immigrants do not only understand themselves to be fathers in the sense of the provider and breadwinners’ role, but also try to make time for their children. The fathers invest their scarce time in their family because they have an interest in seeing their children climb the social ladder. “Among the men who had immigrated, in comparison with the West German men, the male gender-role stereotype was found to be a clear construct that was hardly questioned, and which was characterised in everyday life by strong processes of change and new constructions.” (WESTPHAL 2006, p. 227). Whilst, for the “majority Germans” included in the study, some cracks can be seen between their focus on being “new-age fathers” and actual practice, WESTPHAL regards the increased child-rearing activities of the immigrants more as pragmatic everyday solutions than as the result of changing convictions, for example as far as the ideal division of labour between the partners is concerned. In addition, if we consider the results of the study conducted by MARGRET SPOHN (2002) looking at first-generation Turkish immigrants, we can conclude that a change in concepts of fatherhood has already taken place among the men in the first generation of immigrants.

¹ Only occasionally (see BMFSF) does the research consider bicultural couples. For a more in-depth critical analysis, see TUNÇ 2007.

However, as it is primarily second-generation immigrants who are at the stage of active fatherhood in their lives, findings concerning this group are of outstanding importance for research into, work with and policy concerning fathers.

Multi-dimensional perspectives on gender, ethnicity and class

To date, there are still no studies looking at second-generation Turkish immigrant fathers. However, extensive findings on adolescent male immigrants are available from research into young people. From a biographical point of view, these findings can be of use for the topic of men and fathers, as adolescence is the period that determines future social standing. As the latest statistics show, the educational opportunities in Germany have changed, which means that boys from immigrant families are at a particular disadvantage as far as the education system is concerned (GEISLER 2005). Studies looking at school-leavers with diplomas from secondary general schools [Hauptschulen] document the difficulties that male second-generation immigrants from Turkish families have in integrating themselves into the employment market and show that these young people are more frequently affected by unemployment than the German control group and are more often employed in the lower sectors of the employment market, where they earn less. According to GESTRING, JANSSEN and POLAT (2006, p. 205), we can assume that this social situation has a major impact on the gender arrangements of the second-generation Turkish immigrants: "In addition to Turkish culture, where the gender role division is set out with less ambiguity than in German culture, the class that the immigrants belong to also plays a role in explaining their orientations. Amongst the less educated classes, the traditional division of roles is less often called into question." AHMET TOPRAK (2005, p. 169 f.) also puts forward a similar argument when he claims that, besides ethnocultural factors, the socio-structural disintegration affecting many second-generation Turkish immigrants is responsible for their adherence to traditional masculine roles. Although we can see here that greater attention to issues of social inequality can prevent research in the context of male roles and immigration from explaining socio-structural phenomena using ethnocultural concepts, the accompanying unavoidable question is what the gender arrangements of second-generation Turkish immigrants from more educated backgrounds look like. This is because, without comparing and contrasting people in different social situations, for example manual workers and university graduates, it is scarcely possible to differentiate accurately between the diverse reciprocal effects of ethnic and socio-structural influences. Something known as "intersectional research" may be used to find answers to the question of how images of masculinity are constructed through the reciprocal effects of ethnocultural and socio-structural factors, for (young) men with a second-generation immigrant background. Intersectionality means analysing the reciprocal effects of overlapping categories of social differentiation, such as gender, ethnicity, class, age and others (see TÜNÇ 2006)

No longer "like father, like son"

As part of this type of analysis, the intergenerational transmission of (family) resources is an important issue. How do the family relationship patterns of male immigrants develop during and after adolescence, particularly in interplay with their educational paths and with transformation processes relating to immigration, and how does that influence their images of masculinity and of fathers? VERA KING (2005) provides interesting findings on this issue, having investigated how the family dynamic of father-son relationships and educational mobility impact on one another. KING identified various constellations of educational processes and forms of adolescent detachment in families, with specific effects on the sons' self image as men and fathers. For example, with the constellation "defiant outsider", major adolescent disassociation and autonomy within the peer group that is linked with great restrictions on the self is combined with unfavourable educational progress. Young men in this constellation form exaggerated constructs of masculinity and reject their families' expectations of upward social mobility. "However, the young men's revolt and act of turning away from their parents – the exaggeration and acting out of clichés of masculinity within the masculine peer group – may be the expression of a doomed attempt to rehabilitate the devalued masculinity of their fathers" (KING 2005, p. 64). In comparison, young men in the "family man" constellation succeed in bypassing adolescent separation and individuation for a time, in conjunction with initial acceptance of their parents' remit of upwards social mobility. However, these young men later give up the path of education on which they have embarked, so that they do not lose their closeness to their fathers. In this constellation, the consequence for the son's image of masculinity is caring fatherliness. Such constellations are connected by a particular dynamic within relations between the different generations of the family: the social decline of the father, caused by immigration, and the father's experiences of being treated with disrespect motivate the son to save his father and rehabilitate him. In turn, the father delegates his unfulfilled needs to his son, who he expects will move up through the social classes by means of education. On the other hand, the son resists his father's interference in his own life, in pursuit of individuation, as it were. This basic pattern of father-son relationship structures the process of detachment among the young men – King paraphrases this as "dissociative reference". "The respective concepts of masculinity are as much the expression of emotional closeness as the struggle for differentiation, and at the same time responses to the social discrimination and recognition that the sons have created in various ways – as outsiders or as people who are successful or partially established in the relevant environment." (KING 2005, p. 73).

Another factor influencing such dynamics of parent-child relationships and the development of individual concepts of the father for some second-generation immigrants is the experiences of separation gained in childhood by so-called "suitcase children". As a result of immigration and/or the great burden of work taken on by their parents, some children of first-generation immigrants lived apart from their parents or from their father, in their country of origin, often for a number of years. These members of the second generation have varying success in forming good, stable and satisfying relationships with partners and their family, with this depending, among other factors, on how they have dealt

with these experiences. In this regard, it is already apparent from the research project² which I concluded recently that fathers from second-generation Turkish immigrant backgrounds feel the need to be committed fathers and to nurture a close and emotional relationship with their child/children.

Scarcely recognised diversity in ways of being a parent and a father

Recently, the Sinus study “Migranten-Milieux” [Immigrant Communities], published in October 2007, gave momentum to the research field of gender, family and immigration. The insight provided by this approach was to uncouple membership of an immigrant community from the ethnocultural background of the immigrants. Social circumstances also have an influence on the way of life and day-to-day culture of the community, for example there is an intellectual community or a community of manual workers, where immigrants from various ethnocultural backgrounds come together. In comparison, the attitudes of “majority German” communities and immigrant communities towards gender democracy are similar, in line with the relevant social circumstances – those who are better educated are thus more likely to concur with the value of equal opportunities than those who are less well educated. Overall, the majority of the second generation of immigrants are in favour of equal opportunities (see BMFSFJ 2007). In this respect, it is confirmed that young adults who are second-generation immigrants in Germany scarcely differ from “majority German” young people with the same educational background when it comes to their attitudes on equal rights for the sexes (see PUPETER 2000).

TANJA MERKLE and CARSTEN WIPPERMANN include immigrant milieux in their study “Eltern unter Druck” [Parents under Pressure] (2008) and point out that immigrants can be found in all “majority German” parental milieux, above all “in the milieux that are young in socio-cultural terms (and in age)” (p. 56). I would like to emphasise this diversity of parental milieux occupied by immigrants, which also includes diverse ways in which it is possible to be a father, as to date this fact has received little attention in public and specialist discourses and should be accorded more importance in determining the course of action for politicians and practitioners of educational science. However, MERKLE and WIPPERMANN do not systematically compare immigrants and “majority Germans” in similar parental milieux with one another. The methodology for the study of parents is unbalanced, concentrating as it does on the stage of active parenthood with children between the ages of birth and sixteen, and being forced to exclude the traditional milieux of those from immigrant backgrounds with higher age structures, and the corresponding milieux among “majority Germans”. Instead of concentrating on the problems of the first generation of immigrants, for example on “estrangement and loss of their own children” (p. 75 et seq.), we should look specifically at the second generation. After all, such comparative research concepts are, in principle, well suited to shedding light on the everyday life, the problems and needs of various parental milieux made up of second-generation immigrants.

A large proportion of Turkish immigrants are also Muslims, meaning that parental milieux and fathers should also be examined against the background of the diversity of religious orientations, whereby belief must be acknowledged to be of greater importance as a resource (c.f. THIESSEN 2007).

Observing active fathers among immigrants

After this brief overview of research I wish to look in more detail at the practical implementation of work with fathers and policy regarding fathers. The project “Engagierte Väter – Optimierung von Konzepten zur Väterbildung mit Migranten” [Committed fathers – Optimisation of concepts for education of fathers with immigrants] (2004), which was coordinated by the Paritätisches Bildungswerk Nordrhein-Westfalen, can be regarded as an exemplary intercultural project concerned with fathers. Within this, seven national projects with initiatives for fathers from immigrant backgrounds were developed across Europe between 2002 and 2004. The German project in the greater Cologne area is targeted at Turkish immigrant fathers and has the aim of awakening their interest in how their children are brought up and providing them with space and time to look at their style of parenting and flag up alternatives. In practice, the concepts of education for fathers and families, which are tailored to the middle classes of “majority Germans” were modified and adapted to suit the realities of life for the men from immigrant backgrounds. Intensive use was made of existing networks and contacts with mosques and immigrant organisations, meaning that it was possible to seek out and address the target group effectively and motivate its members to take part, which was also achieved through the use of native speaker specialists from the same background.

The project “Baba – Papa. Väter im Gespräch” [Baba – Papa. Discussion with fathers] has been running in Berlin-Kreuzberg since 2003. It supports fathers from Turkish and Arabic immigrant backgrounds in being active fathers, as, in their socially disadvantaged situation, many fathers now scarcely succeed in doing justice to a role as breadwinner and protector of the family. Starting with the experience that the fathers are either hardly involved in bringing up their children at all, or have problems with this day-to-day process, the project helps them to be committed fathers beyond the role of provider and breadwinner, and to resolve the problems they encounter in bringing up their children. In concrete terms, this means that the fathers are offered individual consultation sessions and access to events that provide them with knowledge on questions of child rearing, as well as giving them the opportunity to participate in discussions and to exchange opinions. A huge range of group initiatives, some of which are organised as father-child activities, enables the fathers to gather new experiences and set learning processes in motion, with this also bringing home the joy of being a father. This work with fathers is based on the principles that initiatives should be low-threshold and offered in multiple languages, and that it should be possible to take advantage of them without having to clear bureaucratic hurdles (c.f. SCHÄFER/MORADLI/YAŞAROĞLU 2006). Building on these positive approaches, the aim is now to try and involve men from immigrant backgrounds in all the activities constituting work with fathers and policy regarding fathers, as part of an integrated approach to the issue of immigration. In order to

2 For more information on my doctoral thesis, see <http://www.michael-tunc.de>. For the first empirical results see TUNÇ 2008.

improve provision for this target group and to enable them to participate, work with fathers must be opened up still further interculturally and must drive forward the development of intercultural competences (see FISCHER et al. 2005). Concepts allowing immigrant parents to gain qualifications and for parents' associations made up of immigrants, sometimes as part of intercultural work with parents in schools (see GOMOLLA/FÜRSTENAU 2008), offer additional opportunities to activate and support fathers from immigrant backgrounds.

In conclusion, professionalisation of work with immigrant fathers is interconnected with several processes of opening up initiatives:

- Further opening up of work with families and family advisory services to fathers,
- Low-threshold work with families and fathers for groups with low levels of education and
- Intercultural opening up of all providers and close cooperation with immigrant organisations and religious organisations.

Similarly to research concerned with gender and men, practical approaches to work with fathers are always situated within the context of political questions concerning equal rights for men and women. However, initiatives to make gender arrangements in immigrant society more democratic must not be targeted almost exclusively at female immigrants, as has previously been the case. Instead, they must recognise and target male immigrants more frequently, as stakeholders in the issue of equal rights. After all, an increasing number of immigrants want to be active fathers. In addition, solutions to problems that fathers encounter in reconciling their jobs and their families make a vital contribution to realising true equality between the sexes. In my opinion, the following discovery from more recent gender politics, within the meaning of gender mainstreaming, also applies in the context of immigration: in spite of the existing barriers and conflicts, an increasing number of male and female immigrants (including Muslims) are forming emancipation alliances between men and women, in order to overcome traditional gender relations together. Extensive political and specialist activities aimed at promoting such developments must naturally continue to concern themselves intensively with those "majority German" and immigrant men who uphold hierarchical gender relations. However, as there are also positive changes that must be noted and recognised among immigrants, it should be possible to face them with a greater focus on resources than previously. With regard to (new) men and fathers, with and without immigrant backgrounds, who are prepared to change, we should reinforce our adoption of a kind of partial attitude and provide them with more supporting initiatives.

Michael Tunç



Michael Tunç holds a degree in social education and is currently working on his thesis, which has the rough title "Vaterschaft und Vater-Kind-Verhältnis in türkischen Immigrantenfamilien. Eine qualitative Studie mit Migrationsfolgegeneration" [Fatherhood and the father-child relationship in Turkish immigrant families. A qualitative study with subsequent generations of immigrants] and is funded by the Hans-Böckler foundation. He is active in work with men and fathers, particularly in the Cologne forum for men and fathers and in Väter-Experten-Netz Deutschland e.V., where he is involved in developing intercultural initiatives aimed at men and fathers.

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The role of the male (partner) in pregnancy conflict counselling

“As I see it, whether the client experiences a consultation as helpful has a great deal to do with quality, but little to do with gender.” Using many examples, the author describes how she involves men in pregnancy conflict counselling in a pro-active manner, in order to do justice to the pregnant woman’s circumstances.

In pregnancy conflict counselling sessions, men are no longer “ticked off” as companions, but instead seen as people who are also involved and affected. However, there is a certain tendency to push the male partner into the background during the consultation, sometimes to regard him as the factor disrupting the course of the discussion and the woman’s decision-making process, to tell him to be quiet or even to leave the room.

In fact, the final decision on whether to terminate an unwanted pregnancy or carry it to term lies solely with the pregnant woman – she is the person who is most intensely affected by both options, physically, mentally, socially and materially. However, the woman does not live on an island but in a social context that has significance for her decision.

In my experience as a counsellor, I have found it necessary and useful to incorporate this life context of the client into the consultation session, whether by having relevant important people present in person or by including them in the thought processes using circular questions.

Frequently (but certainly not always), the pregnant woman’s partner is one of these important people, and if he appears at the door with her then he is welcome to participate in the consultation with me. Here I would like to provide a few selected suggestions on how we counsellors can make this counselling constellation easier for ourselves, our pregnant clients and the men. My aim is to develop an understanding of the specific situation of the “pregnant man” so that he can take on the same role in the consultation as he has in the client’s life.

In cases involving couples with relationships in which there is a lot of conflict or where one partner is dominant, it may be natural for the counsellor to exclude her client’s partner from the discussion, at least for a time, to protect her, as it were, and to allow her to come to her senses. However, in doing so, we should be clear that the exceptional situation created by this step remains a short episode in the life of this woman and that she will then be confronted with her everyday life once again. Moreover, a man who has been banished to the waiting room for twenty minutes is unlikely to become any gentler or more cooperative as a result.

In many respects, pregnancy conflict counselling or counselling in accordance with Article 219 of the German Criminal Code [Strafgesetzbuch] is a very special type of

counselling. It is characterised by a high degree of complexity, and the involvement of the male partner is only one aspect of many. Viewed in this way, my article cannot but remain fragmentary and one-dimensional.

With a small number of exceptions, pregnancy conflict counselling is carried out by female counsellors. I therefore refer to female counsellors, but at the end of the article I will look at the opportunities which I believe could lie in using a male counsellor.

Function of the male partner in the counselling context

When a man sits down with the client and me in the consultation room, I first have to build up a picture of his role in the client’s life and his function in the consultation. Unless it becomes clear from the first things that are said during the introductions, I ask whether this man is the client’s partner, whether he is responsible for the pregnancy, whether he is primarily there to support the pregnant woman or brings his own concerns to the table, and what significance his presence has for the client.

As a result of the compulsory nature of pregnancy conflict counselling, female clients sometimes develop fears and defensive attitudes before the consultation. They feel (understandably) that decisions are being made for them and initially go on the defensive. If they bring their partners with them, this is often in the role of protector. The man acts out the role of an armed knight. When he detects a supposedly offensive movement from the counsellor, he enters into battle. It then becomes difficult to hold a constructive counselling session with the couple. However, if the counsellor first recognises the man in his role as a protector and displays understanding for the couple’s reservations, then both parties, the woman and the man, can come out from behind their shields and the man can lay down his weapons. “Mrs X, I suspect that one reason it was important for you to have your husband here with you is because you expect to have to defend yourself here and therefore believe that you could really use support”. Mrs X nods. “So what do you want from your husband in this situation? Should he speak for you straight away or only step in when you feel under pressure?”

And if this whole role of the defendant is not so necessary after all, should he then say what he himself thinks about all the questions raised here, or should he stay in the background with his own opinion?” After an appropriate reply from the woman. “Does that suit you, Mr. X, or do you feel that you’re getting a raw deal or are in the wrong place here? What matters would you personally like to bring up in this conversation?” After a reply from Mr. X. “Mrs X, would you find it appropriate if I continue to try and involve you both in this conversation and to find out how each of you sees the situation and what needs each of you has?...”

Neutrality as the fundamental attitude of a counsellor

Besides the classics empathy, congruency and acceptance, I regard neutrality as one of the most important fundamental attitudes that a professional counsellor must display. This encompasses neutrality with regard to definitions of problems, perspectives on solutions, ethnic and moral convictions, life philosophies, models for partnerships and people. By no means do I understand neutrality to mean indifference, but much more openness and impartiality.

When there are two people sitting opposite me in the consultation room, I try to give physical expression to this attitude, for example by the position I sit in and the way I visibly turn to each of them in turn. During the conversation, I repeatedly involve the parties in turn, by means of circular questions and reassurances: “Do you see that the same way? Do you agree with your (female) partner here? How do you think that sounds to your (male) partner?”

In my opinion, this neutrality also includes addressing the objective circumstances directly. In these conversations – which are usually one-offs – the focus is on the pregnant woman, her feelings concerning the unwanted pregnancy and her decision, which she must ultimately make alone. However, the man’s wishes and worries form part of the client’s context, should be recognised and have a role to play in the decision. Ultimately, the male partner cannot make a decision on what course to take with an unwanted pregnancy, but he may express wishes and fears which relate to this and identify suggestions and boundaries.

The man in the time-lag

Male partners generally learn of the pregnancy with a certain time delay. Women often perceive hormonal changes very early and notice when they miss a period. They anticipate a possible pregnancy with their thoughts and feelings, sense their ambivalences, their fears and their hopes.

Men do not have this lead time. When they learn of the pregnancy, their partner is days or sometimes weeks ahead of them with her internal debate. Moreover, the women have already played out their partners’ possible reactions in their minds many times. In this regard, they have tackled their boldest hopes or their worst fears, but very rarely have they considered rules for constructive communication. “Listen, I want to tell you something: I already know that you’re going to say no, but it’s clear to me that you can’t lay down the rules for me. So, I’m pregnant and I’m going to have the baby!”

It is not surprising if a man initially feels defensive in this situation. Men then often react like dogs (excuse the

comparison!). When they feel under pressure, they growl. And they might even bite! This may happen if their partner tries to tackle them now. At this stage, it is better to calm the situation and work towards a cease-fire. “Mr. X, could it be that you have not yet had sufficient time to consider this pregnancy, and that right now you feel as if something has already been set in stone without your involvement?” Mr. X nods. “Mrs X, do you think it would perhaps now be possible for you to explain what point you have reached in your considerations, perhaps also with all the ambivalences that may come into play here, so that your partner has a little time to sort out for himself what his real views on the pregnancy are? How much time do you think you’ll need, Mr. X?”

The right to have a say does not entitle the man to make the decision

Although male partners can decide for themselves what they would like and what they don’t want under any circumstances, when it comes to the pregnancy they cannot ultimately decide what happens. A man can be a father without wanting to be, without having made that decision. On the other hand, when only the man wants the child, he cannot become a father against the woman’s wishes. Although a woman can become pregnant without wanting to be, she must not become a mother without wanting to be one, she initially retains one “opportunity to put things right” , although it is not an easy one.

Counselling should not sweep this inequality under the carpet. It is more helpful if the difference and the inferiority of the man in this regard is directly addressed. “I suspect that this is a pretty worrying and threatening situation for you, Mr. X, because you can see that, whatever you may want, you cannot make the final decision. Is that right?” Mr. X agrees. “Despite this, I would like to encourage you to express your view of things, your needs and your boundaries very clearly. After all, it is important for your wife that she knows how you will feel if she decides one way or the other. And we could talk about how your decision one way or the other, Mrs X, might impact on your relationship as a couple. Would that be a helpful way to proceed?” Of course, at this point you could also ask whether either partner had discussed whether they wanted children and who was responsible for contraception before the pregnancy, and how clearly they had voiced their wishes. However, too much talk of “would have, would have been, if” does not generally help the discussion to progress.

In my opinion, it does not mean that men are putting pressure on their partners, from a criminal law point of view, if they state clearly what they (do not) want. Not even if they talk about a possible separation. The fact that the man may leave (which might be morally reprehensible, but certainly not a criminal offence) is one variable in the solution which women must incorporate into their decision. However, one of my tasks as a counsellor is naturally to address the conceivable ways that the man’s behaviour might be judged: “What would your friends think? How does that fit with your previous concept of partnership?” and flag up the statutory boundaries if he actually does attempt to exert pressure: “Mrs X, you already know, don’t you, that you can turn to advisory centres and, if necessary, to the police at any time should your partner threaten you, and that there are many initiatives offering help should you require support and protection?”

I work on the understanding that it can indeed be a

woman's own decision to do what her partner wants, for example because she finds that the price to pay for the alternatives is too high. This price may vary greatly between women in different situations, this is just one way in which life is not fair. For one woman, it may "only" be a matter of putting up with her partner's disapproval. Another may be threatened with serious disruption to her life plan. However, it is up to her to decide which price she is prepared to pay and which she isn't, and she is responsible for this decision.

The two mandates in a for and against broadcast

Partners often divide roles between themselves, depending on their respective abilities and strengths. One is generally calm and composed, whilst the other is spontaneous and frivolous, one likes to take responsibility and make decisions, whilst the other prefers to go along with things. This type of complementary division of labour within a partnership can function excellently, often for the long-term, but a counsellor may decide to reflect on this situation. In the event of a pregnancy conflict, both partners sometimes divide up their own intrapersonal ambivalence and then have the impression that they have a serious interpersonal conflict. It can be a relief when someone reinterprets this confrontation and depicts it as a responsible division of tasks. With this constellation, the partners ensure that both sides of the ambivalence receive adequate serious representation, meaning that, as it were, both parties have taken on one mandate in a very committed manner. Sometimes it is possible to ask them to swap sides for a short time, as a game. "Imagine that your husband now said "Yes, it's great about the pregnancy, I'm looking forward to this child, no problem at all, what would you then say, Mrs X?" The answer is then frequently: "I would be happy at first, but then I would also be a bit frightened and ask how we would manage with money, when we don't have my salary, and how we would manage in terms of time, with the two older children." If the opposing fronts have been somewhat disarmed in this way, it is easier to look for possible ways out of the conflict situation.

The many meanings of parenthood and partnership

Pregnancy and the birth of a child represent a transitional stage in the life of a woman and of a couple. Unwanted pregnancies, in particular, often occur in the context of another forthcoming change, in so-called threshold situations. When it comes to reaching decisions and dealing with such situations, it can be helpful for both parties to discover what importance each of them attaches to events.

A partnership has many levels. It is a working group, a love match, a sexual relationship, a hobby club, a life insurance policy, an association of house owners, a meal ticket and much more. In the event of pregnancy conflict, the primary level is that of (mutual) parenthood. During counselling, it is helpful to make a clear distinction between the levels and to place them in their reciprocal relationship to one another.

If they are considering having the baby, pregnant women often identify strongly with this as people. If the man takes a dismissive attitude towards the pregnancy, they therefore

also feel completely rejected as people and consider that the entire love relationship has been called into question. As a counsellor in such cases, I try to broach the issue of the contexts of meaning, which may differ from one another. "Mr X, how do you think your wife interprets it when you say that you don't want to have a child (any more children) with her now? Will this also make her feel rejected by you as a person, or will she read between the lines that you currently want more from her as a wife/partner/lover/comrade-in-arms... and that you don't want to lose her in the role of a mother?" "Could it be, Mrs X, that your husband's statement also contains a declaration of love?" Conversely, you could ask what it means for the man and what significance both see it as having for the relationship if the woman does not want to have the baby, perhaps despite the fact that the man wants to have a child with her. Does she feel neglected as a lover or business partner if he wants to force her into the role of mother?

Parenthood lasts longer than partnership

When a baby is carried to term, two people become mother and father of this child for life, completely irrespective of whether their loving or sexual relationship is good or bad or present at all, whether they eat dinner together and play tennis or not. Parenthood creates a life-long bond, even if none of the other levels work (any more). Bringing up this fact during the consultation may be a relief or may cause pain, but is generally illuminating.

Once the contraception stage is past, a man can no longer protect himself from unwanted fatherhood, although he can refuse to act as a father and to accept responsibility. "What would it mean to you, Ms. X, if you were the mother of a child whose father is this man here, yet this man does not want to have anything to do with you or the child?" "What would you do then, Mr. X, in order to escape your responsibility, would you prefer to emigrate to Australia or give up your job than to pay child maintenance?" "Ms. X, how would you like your partner to live up to his role as the father, even if you are no longer together as husband and wife?"

Can a man be a pregnancy conflict counsellor?

As a counsellor I must also be able to hold a consultation with a man on his own, perhaps because he has relationship problems or is worried that he will become a father against his wishes.

More and more, it annoys me when I hear from advisory centres with male counsellors that, on registering by telephone, female clients are asked whether they are happy to be counselled by a man. Is the 42-year-old mother of four children also asked whether she wants to talk to someone who is just starting out in the profession? When registering, is the young punk warned that she will be faced with a white-haired old woman in a grey suit?

As professional counsellors, we must be able to adapt to a very wide range of living conditions and cultural affiliations among our clients. In my opinion, a counselling session is particularly helpful when I can provide the client with external points of view, expand her perspective on the matter and enable her to reflect for herself. I can best achieve this by

asking her many systematic and solution-oriented questions. A male counsellor should be virtually predestined for this task, as he cannot himself know what it is like to be pregnant (and not to want the child). Moreover, could it not be an enriching experience for a female client to meet a sensitive, empathetic and respectful man as a counsellor?

As a counsellor, I must constantly make an effort to summon up agreement, empathy and acceptance and to remain neutral, no matter which person or how many people sit before me. If it is a man or a couple, then I address that: "As a woman, I don't always succeed in according due consideration to the male point of view. I would therefore ask you, Mr. X, to resist this energetically if necessary". In the opposite situation, a male counsellor could handle this in a similar manner.

Obligatory pregnancy conflict counselling may be an imposition for the women affected; in any case it is a challenge for the counsellors and, due to its complexity, makes high demands of their professionalism. As I see it, whether the client experiences a consultation as helpful has a great deal to do with quality, yet little to do with gender. The clients who come for pregnancy conflict counselling have to deal with a difficult life situation, they possess and develop strengths and competences and take on responsibility. I regard them as being stable enough to withstand the conflict with their partners and even the hour long interlude of speaking to a male counsellor. I do not believe that we need to wrap anyone up in cotton wool!

Jutta Franz



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Fathers at the birth – cultural achievement or wrong turn? Taking stock

In Germany, it is now regarded as self-evident that expectant fathers will be involved with the birth of their child. According to estimates, approximately 90% of them are present at the birth. If the man is absent, this is generally because the couple is separated, going through a crisis or because other events at the time prevent him from being present. However, this seemingly self-evident truth conceals a cultural and historical change that is as fundamental as it is little regarded.

Starting point

After approximately 30 years of fathers in the delivery room, it is time to take stock. We are witnesses to the rapid and radical change of a tradition dating back centuries (or more probably millennia), in which giving birth was seen as a woman's domain. This cultural change is exceptional, but currently meets with little recognition from the scientific community. Internationally, only around two dozen studies on the topic exist, which is scarcely believable in an age with a pronounced weakness for quality assurance, studies and evidence-based approaches. Even at conferences of alternative obstetricians, the role, influence and needs of the father at the birth rarely feature on the agenda.

Scientific overviews of obstetrics over the last three decades list numerous new developments, yet the appearance of the father in the delivery room is not generally one of them.

However, the break with tradition is so noteworthy that we must ask ourselves the following question: Is everything running smoothly or does the pioneering model of "fathers at the birth" require revision, correction or optimisation?

New-age fathers – new-age parents – new things that are taken for granted

"I took it for granted that I would be present at the birth. It was so obvious that we didn't even need to talk about it. The child belongs to both of us, so we will have it together. I didn't have to think about it any further" (Ralf, 29)

"I think it's extremely important for the relationship. I love my wife, so I also want to be there at the birth. That is my way of showing closeness and love" (Thomas, 31)

"We had a difficult birth. The drama of the situation and my powerlessness really got to me. I would be afraid of another birth." (Sven, 34)

"For most men, it is self-evident that they will be there, but most of them have to take a deep breath if things become difficult." (Sophie, 27, midwife)

Fathers who are present at births – a successful model

From an historical point of view, fathers have progressed, in no time at all, from being "sources of infection" who were most definitely not wanted at births to accepted "observers, supporters, trainers, coaches, mediators and lawyers" for their partners and, incidentally, to planned but unpaid members of the delivery room team.

This is obviously a successful model: 90% of men accompany their partners. If the birth has gone well, most men report that they are happy and proud. If the birth has been difficult, they are more likely to say they are unsatisfied, with some referring to themselves as traumatised. The findings cannot be quantified or evaluated as there are hardly any studies looking at the ways in which being present at the birth impacts on the man's psyche, partnership, sex life and on the course of the birth.

Being involved in the birth has come to be taken for granted. However, the question remains of whether it is also self-evident that what is experienced is dealt with well.

Available research

As the course of the birth is extremely susceptible to disruption and the health of the mother and child are at stake, it is vital that the precise circumstances of birth are continually examined and improved. Given this fact, there is a small amount of research available on the phenomenon of fathers in the delivery room and/or at birth, with around 20 studies. The few studies that are available come from various countries, ask questions on various aspects, look at small numbers of cases and are not designed along the same lines. There is no accurate overview of the latest international research and no representative (long-term) studies. It is not possible to draw scientifically reliable and generalising conclusions from the results of the investigations to date.

There is no scientifically founded information available on:

- The fathers' emotional situation during and after the birth
- Their role alongside the midwife and doctor
- The fathers' influence on the course of the birth, for example on the use of pain relief

- The impact of the fathers' stress, fear, helplessness
- The value of their support for their partners
- The effect of the birth experience on the couple's sexuality
- The impact on the father-child relationship
- The take-up of antenatal courses currently available for men.

In addition to the medical point of view, the perspectives needed here include those of behavioural research, endocrinology, psychology and educational science, but also that of cultural anthropology, as the significance and impact of the extremely long tradition of exclusion and the extremely short "tradition" of male involvement in births have received no attention up until now.

Birth as a woman's domain – The history of a long tradition

At almost all times and in most cultures, birth was purely a matter for women, being directed by midwives and women who had experience of birth. Men were generally excluded from direct involvement in the birth. However, up until the end of the 19th century, men did have various tasks concerned with the birth, which were intended to ensure that things ran smoothly. For example, they were responsible for providing wood, water and wine (to fortify and to relieve the pain), went to find the midwife, ensured that the event was entered in the register of births and issued the notice of the christening. In addition, there were various customs through which the father recognised the newborn baby as his legitimate child and accepted it into the family (LABOUIE 2000; www.schwanger-info.de).

In some regions, fathers had the task of protecting the course of the birth from evil spirits, by means of ritual actions. During pregnancy, birth and puerperium, women were regarded as particularly helpless and were reliant on the help of men in warding off harmful powers.

With the gradual relocation of birth into hospitals in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, it was passed into the hands of third party professional obstetricians. This change was largely completed after the Second World War and, from then on, it was no longer even possible for men to have indirect contact with the events at the birth.

Now, the man's task was reduced to waiting – as a rather sad figure outside the door of the delivery room or, according to legend, in the pub. A loss of significance to which hardly anyone gave a second thought.

Male tradition – couvade

In some cultures, parallel to the birth, men developed various forms of their own ritual birth process, which is known as couvade (French "couver": "hatch"). Various rites and customs connected expectant fathers with the birth and served as a ritual of transition to fatherhood. For example, fathers imitated the birth pains or other physical and mental symptoms of birth. They made sacrifices before the delivery, fasted, went without dance, music and extramarital sex and sometimes even stopped work (KUNZ 2003). Couvade and the couvade syndrome create a break between the old life and the new life with the child. As with all major transitions in life, rituals are important here and provide support. It is worth noting that,

through the couvade rites, the man leaves the intellectual plane and enters into a trance or exceptional state similar to that of the woman giving birth. A not insignificant secondary effect could perhaps be that the woman is better able to give herself up to the instinctive course of birth as directed by her brain stem, without being brought down to earth and the actual situation by male intellect.

Radical break with traditions dating back millennia

How can such a deeply internalised and seemingly stable culture of giving birth as the exclusion of fathers from the direct action of the birth change so fundamentally in such a short time? In point of fact, the change largely took place in just under ten years.

There were three major reasons for the rapid entry of fathers into the delivery rooms, which take their impetus from the radical critique of society provided by the student and women's movement. This critique was also picked up by sectors of the media, and pioneers of obstetrics such as the French gynaecologists LÉBOYER and ODENT developed visions for more humane obstetric practices, which quickly met with broad agreement at the end of the 1970s and were implemented without delay.

Reason 1: Traumatising torture

As late as the 1970s, birth principally signified pain and loneliness in tiled, cold rooms similar to operating theatres. A lack of encouragement, a coarse tone when dealing with the woman giving birth ("It's not going to come out as easily as it went in"), shaving of the pubic hair, painful induction of labour (in order to enable the "programmed birth"), episiotomy as a routine measure (generally without anaesthetic), days spent in a supine position and bandaging of the stomach after birth for better involution, the giving of an injection to stop breast milk with the consequence of frequent breast inflammation and suppuration..., the list of physical and mental injuries incurred during labour goes on.

There was no scientific justification for many of these measures. Most of them were subsequently abolished as unnecessary, ineffective or liable to be damaging.

Given this scenario, fathers were not wanted at births and it was also not possible for them to be present, as there were usually several women giving birth in the delivery rooms, separated only by curtains.

These frequently traumatising conditions in the delivery room, coupled with their effect on sexuality and partnership, led to calls for partners to be present.

Reason 2: The country needs new-age fathers

A further reason was a backlash against the reduced significance accorded to the role of the father, with fathers having lost their positive authority for many young people during the post-war years, being absent, punitive or politically incriminated. Many of the men and women who had grown up having a problematic relationship with their fathers were looking for "new-age fathers": fathers who were present and loving and who cared for their children. When it came down to it, many were looking to heal an ailing father-child relationship.

In addition, the first generation of parents in the delivery room were still influenced by the Cold War. Consequently,

many also hoped that men who were present at the birth would be less likely to go to war, due to a desire to protect their children.

Reason 3: Removal of the division between the sexes

During this period, there were explicit endeavours to remove the division between the areas of life regarded as the domains of men and women and thereby to find a new emotional path to the respective other gender. Couples experiencing birth together constituted a logical part of coeducation, the implementation of equal rights under law and the removal of the division between the male and female domains.

At that time, "fathers in the delivery room" was a conscious politically and psychologically motivated step, both for women and for men, which, supported by many obstetricians, did actually make the situation in delivery rooms more humane.

Breaking taboos ...

When the first generation of fathers to enter the delivery room (and the corresponding mothers) conquered the strange territory, they were still in something of a revolutionary frenzy, which helped them deal with their doubts and insecurities. Now the territory has been conquered and the man has arrived at the sober delivery room and naked reality of birth – largely unprepared and without any tradition to rely on. Time for the question "Do I really want this, do we really want this?" "Where is my place" "How have I prepared for this experience?"

Cultural upheavals, even those that were wished for and brought about by those involved, as with the presence of fathers at births, are also always a great challenge for the mind, which initially loses its sense of security. Although reason quickly helps out with new pragmatic rules, allowing us to deal with mental insecurities, the mental confusion caused by the break with tradition and therefore the broken taboo continues to have an effect at a subconscious level.

What is more, the birth is also a many-layered mental experience for fathers, awakening their own biographical expectations and fears, which then have an effect on the process of birth.

... and the consequences?

The effect of traditions and possible mental entanglements at such an emotional event as birth is an explosive and underestimated mix.

Symptoms displayed by men, such as depression after birth, temporary inability to work, sexual problems, possible feelings of guilt depending on how the birth has gone and uncertainties with regard to entering this woman's domain may be consequences of this "culture shock", although this is not necessarily true. Whatever the case, they should be recognised and taken seriously.

We must also consider that it was only for a short time, up to about the mid 1980s, that men were present at the mystery of a largely undisrupted birth. Now, however, 30% of fathers are confronted with the mystery of an abdominal operation known as a caesarean section, whilst most of the rest witness various forms of highly-medicalised obstetrics: induced labours, the use of ecbolics, epidurals, episiotomies,

forceps or ventouse births. Around 90% of births take place with medical obstetric interventions. With such a high rate of intervention, many suspect that men in the delivery room experience certain things that leave a trace.

However, when it comes to the huge increase in the number of caesarean sections, the critics enter the debate (if they have not done so already) and suggest a possible connection between fathers' involvement in births and the rapid mechanisation of obstetrics in the last 30 years, a connection between a poorly prepared father and his hope for technical aid in an unknown difficult situation. This is another area where we should not be afraid to keep an open mind when searching for answers.

Preparation for birth

To recap: birth is an event that is susceptible to disruption and where the health of mother and child is at stake. In this respect, great importance is placed on how all of those involved in the birth process are prepared. No data has been collected on the preparation of expectant fathers and/or their participation in antenatal courses. In line with rough estimates by midwives, between 30 and 80% of men take part, depending on the town/city, district and choice of location for the birth. Participation means being present on selected evenings, or less frequently for the whole course.

The fact that the courses tend to be poorly attended by fathers indicates that they do not yet meet men's needs, but also that the necessity of preparing men to become fathers has not yet been seen.

A recent study shows that men who had taken part in a course specially designed for expectant fathers, held in the Sankt Joseph hospital in Berlin, subsequently gave a more positive assessment of the birth than those who had gone along to a normal antenatal course targeted at women (SCHÄFER et al. 2007, p. 99–107).

However, in addition to pragmatic preparation concerning the course of the birth and everything that expectant fathers can expect, an antenatal course tailored to fathers should also communicate the fact that all the positive and negative emotions which the man takes with him into the delivery room have an effect on the birth. This is no superfluous self-awareness, but rather takes into account that the birth is not like two people meeting for a cup of coffee or a technical launch, but is a sensitive event and must therefore be attended with caution.

The fact that there are currently only isolated birth preparation concepts tailored to fathers, that the health insurance funds do not accept the costs of these initiatives and that there has been no survey looking at fathers' participation indicates that the significance and impact of the fathers is judged to be low, or is misjudged.

What is just as important as preparation is that, after the birth, fathers have places and opportunities to talk about difficult experiences of birth. Consideration should also be given to these aspects.

To recap: the idea of *couvade*

The break with tradition described meant that it was also not possible for any tradition to be passed on from fathers to sons. The sons and new-age fathers have to invent and design their tradition themselves. To date, there is no new culture of becoming a father that takes the cultural change into account. However, the large number of internet portals, from *vaeterglueck.de* to *vaeternotruf.de*, and the extensive literature on the topic show that fathers are working on creating their open space and thereby also their own rituals.

It would therefore be possible to reconsider the idea of *couvade* – here it would be important to distinguish between specifically male solutions (comparable to gathering in a “men’s house” as practiced by some ethnic groups) and a partnership solution that would generally involve spending a great deal of time together. The evolutionary logic of spending time as a couple means that men alter their hormonal balance with female pheromones and therefore find it easier to establish a bond with their child; although the question remains of whether men want this and of whether they want the same things as women do in this situation (KUNZ 2003).

Conclusion

After thirty years of having fathers present at births, the issues can be summarised as follows:

- Having fathers present at births is a historically recent social compact. This has great significance as far as the (after) effect of traditions is concerned.
- We must find an answer to the question of whether the presence of the father is a “value in itself” which must be maintained, without it giving rise to an obligation for every father. For example: Does early “bonding” during pregnancy and birth intensify the father-child relationship? Does it establish a better basis for fathers later caring for their children in an empathetic way?
- As men were historically excluded from direct involvement in the birth, they now lack a supporting tradition with regard to the birth process. What could replace supporting traditions? There must be discussion concerning suitable preparation and the possibility of follow-up meetings after the birth.
- There is no scientifically secured knowledge regarding the father’s influence on the course of the birth and concerning the repercussions of highly-medicalised births on the father. In view of the extent to which the course of birth is susceptible to disruption, there is an urgent need for studies if we wish to avoid acting negligently.
- As most of today’s fathers experience a birth with multiple interventions, they lack knowledge of a “normal birth”. What consequences does this have for them and for obstetrics?
- Consideration must be given (and allowed to be given) to a possible link between mechanisation of births and the presence of fathers.
- Medical professionals, obstetricians and researchers must take the person and influence of the father into account. Behaviour that excludes the father, such as the common linguistic convention “doctor-mother-child” found in many publications, should be noted and changed.
- It is hard to escape a feeling of historical *déjà vu* when

considering the development of obstetrics: throughout the world, women are looking to have natural births with professional support, but without medical interventions (SCHÜCKING 2007). Perhaps this could be a new task for fathers? Perhaps, with appropriate preparation for birth, they could once again protect women and children from unnecessary medical interventions, as in the late 1970s, and make a contribution towards a new humanisation of birth?

Whatever the case, the discussion should not be directed against fathers, but rather aimed at clarifying the prerequisites that must be met by all parties in order to enable a good birth and give the child a good start with its family.

Petra Otto

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Evaluation of the booklet “I want to be part of it! Becoming a father”

The evaluation which forms the subject of this report looks at the questions of to what extent the booklet “I want to be part of it ...” reaches its target group, men at the point of transition to parenthood, whether it is regarded as helpful and whether the men believe that it contains important information.

For many men, becoming a father is one of the most important experiences of their lives. Their partner’s pregnancy marks the transition to a stage of life that does not only promise much joy, but also brings completely new challenges. In order to support men in adapting to this new situation, a task which is sometimes also connected with feelings of ambivalence, and to meet their desire for discussion and information, the Federal Centre for Health Education has developed the booklet “I want to be part of it! Becoming a father”.

The booklet’s target group is expectant fathers who are interested in pregnancy and birth and wish to support their partners. “I want to be part of it!” provides the most important information and a series of practical tips for men. For example, the booklet discusses feelings of ambivalence that may be linked to learning of the partner’s pregnancy, sexuality during pregnancy, the role of the expectant father in preparing for birth, the birth and the first days with the infant. Questions relating to pregnancy and what to expect in the future as a young family are discussed from a male point of view. Individual copies of the booklet may be ordered by men who are interested. However, “I want to be part of it!” is frequently passed on to expectant fathers by gynaecologists or midwives, or left out in doctors’ surgeries.

Evaluation

The question is now to what extent the booklet reaches men at the point of transition to parenthood, whether it is regarded as helpful and whether the men believe that it contains important information. In order to look at these issues and to obtain hints on how to optimise the booklet in a subsequent edition, the BZgA has commissioned the external research institute IFUMA¹ to carry out a scientific evaluation of “I want to be part of it!”.

Random sample and method of data collection

In January and February 2007, 60 expectant fathers each took part in two face-to-face interviews, which were held approximately one week apart. Both interviews took place in the subjects’ home environments. During the interviewer’s first visit, the booklet was handed over to the expectant fathers. After the men had had around one week to read the booklet, the interviewer visited them again. In order to permit a differentiated evaluation of the booklet’s effect, the random sample was apportioned by age, education and ethnic background.

Important topics

What are the most important topics in the area of pregnancy, birth and fatherhood? In the initial interviews, the subjects answered this question before having the chance to study the booklet in depth. The most important topic for the expectant fathers is the health and development of the unborn child. On a 7 point scale, this topic attains the value 6.5. From the point of view of the fathers, the issues of parental allowance, financial need and support are almost as important.

In an open interrogation, the men were asked to name topics that they regarded as particularly difficult and which they would like to learn something about in the booklet. 38% of the fathers named topics that related to future life with the child and the general changes expected (dealing with the baby, the first days as a family of three, stability of the marriage). 34% regard questions concerning financial needs or financial support as difficult and problematic.

Sources of information

The men questioned principally obtained information on pregnancy and fatherhood from conversations. 75% of the expectant fathers stated that their knowledge came from conversations with friends and acquaintances. 57% benefited from conversations with their partner and almost as many from conversations with parents or relatives (56%).

¹ Institut für Marktforschung (IFUMA) [Institute for Market Research], Cologne, see internet for address

The internet is the most important form of mass media for expectant fathers: 43% obtain information on appropriate websites. However, usage of the internet depends greatly on education – whilst around one third of men with diplomas from *Hauptschulen* (secondary general schools) and *Realschulen* (intermediate secondary schools) search for information on the internet, almost twice as many men with the *Abitur* (equivalent of A-levels) use this medium.

First impression

The first impression is what determines whether men look at or take home the booklet, for example when it is left out in doctors' surgeries. This is the prerequisite for reaching the target group. The findings show that, through its design and theme, the booklet "I want to be part of it!" succeeds in generating high reading interest among men: 85% of the expectant fathers spontaneously make positive comments on the booklet. The overall impression is judged to be good. The men expect that the booklet will be interesting, informative and helpful. As seen by the test subjects, "I want to be part of it!" is compact, clear and well-structured.

Assessment after reading

Once the subjects had had a few days to read the booklet in their home environment, they were again asked for their impressions during a second visit by the interviewer. For 80% of the expectant fathers, the overall assessment was positive. "I want to be part of it!" appealed particularly to men with diplomas from *Hauptschulen* and *Realschulen* (88% and 81%). In an open interrogation after reading the booklet, they judged it to be informative, helpful, extensive and detailed. A somewhat more critical assessment was given by subjects educated to a higher level and older men, with some finding that the booklet is too general and provides little new information.

Comprehensibility, liking and new content of the individual chapters

The expectant fathers were asked to assess each individual chapter with regard to comprehensibility, liking and new content. Irrespective of their level of education, almost all men found each individual chapter very easy to understand. On a seven point scale, the chapters attained average values of 6.4 and 6.5 with regard to comprehensibility.

To what extent were the individual sections of the booklet accepted by the target group? On average, the majority of expectant fathers judged the individual chapters as "good" or "very good". The test subjects liked the section on "The first days as a family of three" best, giving it an average mark of 5.9. In the opinion of the test subjects, the chapters "Preparations for the birth", "Day of the birth" and "The first days as a family of three", had a high level of new content compared to the other topics addressed in the booklet.

Assessment of the content

The majority of the men judge the depiction of the topics in the booklet to be successful. Particularly the younger men, many of whom are becoming fathers for the first time, feel they are being addressed personally. The level of personal address attains an average value of 6.0. The majority of the younger men also think that the choice of topics is of practical significance to them personally (average value 6.0).

Assessment of the value background

80% of those questioned judged the booklet's openness with regard to various forms of cohabitation and family to be a positive aspect. This assessment was justified by citing the way in which this attitude closely reflected reality. Furthermore, almost 80% of men found the weighting accorded to reconciling family and profession in the booklet appropriate. Here, the men from Islamic-Turkish backgrounds constituted an exception: from their point of view, too much emphasis is placed on questions of the woman's professional focus and childcare carried out by the father (53%). Three quarters of the expectant fathers believe that the booklet projects a contemporary image of fatherhood and the male role with regard to work and family.

15,000 orders are placed for "I want to be part of it!" every month. This means it is one of the booklets that are in particular demand.

Ilona Renner



Ilona Renner is a sociologist. Since 1999, she has been working in the BZgA's department of sex education, contraception and family planning as a research and evaluation officer.

Contact:

*Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche
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*Abteilung Sexualaufklärung, Verhütung
und Familienplanung*

Ilona.Renner@bzga.de

BOOKLETS

Neue Chancen für Väter [New opportunities for fathers]

In Lower Saxony, the number of fathers taking time off work to be with their babies has more than doubled in the past year, with the introduction of parental allowance and the right to parental leave. 23.7% of fathers take 12 months parental leave. The regional working forum "Aktive Vaterrolle" [Active father role] wishes to exploit the positive trend connected with parental allowance and, by means of targeted informative work, motivate still more young fathers to use parental allowance and parental leave as an opportunity to better reconcile job and family and to implement cooperative models with regard to child rearing. With the support of the Lower Saxony Ministry of Social Affairs, the forum has now published the leaflet "Neue Chancen für Väter" [New opportunities for fathers] which provides clear information on parental allowance and parental leave and highlights the possible ways in which parents can divide the months when they can claim parental allowance freely between them. Moreover, the leaflet provides indications of further information points where fathers can obtain comprehensive advice on their new opportunities.

Address for orders:

Niedersächsisches Ministerium für
Soziales, Frauen, Familie und
Gesundheit
Poststelle
Postfach 141
30001 Hannover
postausgangsstelle@ms.
niedersachsen.de

Auf Nummer sicher mit der "Pille danach" **Man nehme ein Kondom, das passt ...**

[Playing safe with the
"morning-after pill"
Take one condom that fits ...]

Accidents can happen, even with sex and contraception. Two new booklets from the pro familia federal association are targeted specifically at young people and provide information on how to avoid such accidents and what to do in the event that contraception goes wrong.

"Playing safe with the 'morning-after pill'" draws together all you need to know on the subject of contraception failures and follow-up contraception, whilst the objective of the booklet "Take one condom that fits ..." is to impart information on the various types and sizes of condoms and on how to use them safely.

With the new booklets, young people have access to extensive and reliable information on the "morning-after pill" and condoms. The booklets can be ordered free of charge from the pro familia federal association and are available for download from the website.

Address for orders:

pro familia-Bundesverband
Stresemannallee 3
60596 Frankfurt am Main
Telephone +49 (0) 69 63 90 02
Fax +49 (0) 69 63 98 52
presse@profamilia.de
www.profamilia.de

STUDIES

Contraceptive Behaviour of Adults

The findings of a representative survey carried out by the BZgA in 2007 and looking at the contraceptive behaviour

of 20-44 year-olds in Germany are now available in an English translation. The publication comprises 30 pages and can be ordered free of charge.

Address for orders:

BZgA
51101 Köln
Fax +49 (0) 221 89 92 257
order@bzga.de
Order No. 13317170

Experience of pregnancy and prenatal diagnosis

The findings of the representative survey that was carried out in 2004 looking at experience of pregnancy and prenatal diagnosis are now also available in English. The booklet comprises 54 pages and is available free of charge.

Address for orders:

BZgA
51101 Köln
Fax +49 (0)221 89 92 257
order@bzga.de
Order No. 13319270

MAGAZINES

Happy Girlsday! Zwanzig Jahre "Betrifft Mädchen" [Happy Girlsday! Twenty years of "Betrifft Mädchen"]

To mark the 20th anniversary of the magazine, the editorial team has commissioned an evaluation of the 52 editions published to date and offers an illuminating insight into the development of work with girls, with the new 2/2008 edition "Happy Girlsday! Twenty years of "Betrifft Mädchen". Numerous anniversary contributions from the areas of research into women's and gender issues, practical work with girls, the women's movement and thematically related areas highlight prospects for work with girls

and the "Betrifft Mädchen" magazine. The publication bears witness to change and the quality of work with girls, to the competition for positions and the joy in the work.

The editor is the Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft (LAG) Mädchenarbeit in NRW e.V.

Address for orders:

Juventa Verlag
Ms. Steinmetz
Telephone +49 (0) 6201 90 20 25
steinmetz@juventa.de

CONFERENCES

**14. Kongress Armut und Gesundheit
[14th Conference Poverty and Health]**

Under the motto of "Fairness creates better health for all", the "Poverty and Health" conference to be held on 5 and 6 December 2008 in Berlin will this year focus on the health consequences that arise as a result of the unequal distribution of the opportunities for education, work and income. In more than 70 individual events, the health problems of socially-disadvantaged people will be discussed in conjunction with those affected. In the discussion involving players from the areas of science, politics and practical work in the field, the potential of health promotion related to social circumstances will be presented.

The themes are both measures for and with individual target groups such as older people, children and young people, families and the homeless and unemployed, as well as setting-related approaches in schools, nurseries and companies. The agenda for the conference, a joint initiative by several partners, simultaneously includes the local, municipal, national and international health promotion strategies that should make a contribution to reducing health inequality. Last but not least, quality assurance and improvement of health-promotion interventions will constitute an important topic.

Further information on the conference or on opportunities to take part can be obtained from the organiser.

Contact:

Gesundheit Berlin
Telephone +49 (0) 30 44 31 90 60
congress@gesundheitberlin.de
www.armut-und-gesundheit.de

**Fachtagung zur Jungenarbeit
[Specialist conference on working with boys]**

On 25 September 2008, the FUMA Specialist Department Gender NRW is organising a regional specialist conference in Dusseldorf Adult Education Centre as part of the regional initiative "Working with boys in NRW" and in collaboration with the regional working group "Working with boys in NRW".

Results, experiences and five model projects carried out as part of the regional initiative "Working with boys in NRW" will be presented and discussed. Anyone interested can obtain further information on the current state of plans for this scheduled conference via the websites given below or from the newsletter issued by the FUMA specialist department (see heading "Internet").

Contact:

www.initiative-jungenarbeit.nrw.de
www.gender-nrw.de

TRAINING SESSIONS

**Aktuelle Weiterbildungs- und Seminarangebote des isp
[Current training sessions and seminars offered by isp]**

In the second half of the year, the Institut für Sexualpädagogik (isp) will be offering two public seminars: "Sexualpädagogik im interkulturellen Alltag. Hintergründe und Praxishilfen" [The educational science behind sex education in the intercultural everyday world. Background information and practical help] on 11 and 12 September 2008 in Bensheim and "Als Frau mit Jungen zum Thema Sexualität arbeiten" [Working on the topic of sexuality with boys, as a woman], a further training initiative for those working in the area of educational science on 24 and 26 October 2008 in Remagen-Rolandseck

Registrations are now being accepted for the course "Weiterbildung Sexualpädagogik" [Further education in the area of the educational science behind sex education in Germany], which will commence in 2009.

Contact:

Institut für Sexualpädagogik e.V.
Dortmund
Huckarder Straße 12
44147 Dortmund

Telephone +49 (0) 231 14 44 22
info@isp-dortmund.de
www.isp-dortmund.de

**Lokale Bündnisse für Familie – Workshopangebot
[Local alliances for family – Workshop offer]**

The service office of the project "Lokale Bündnisse für Familie" [Local alliances for family], which is established throughout Germany, is offering "reflection workshops", in which local initiatives can address issues such as "Is our structure still suitable?" or "How do we involve further players?" In these individual workshops, the service office will provide help in answering these questions and in searching for the right way of expanding the network further. Possible content could include the characteristics of an effective alliance, questions regarding the relationship between the municipal administration and the alliance, the development of guidelines, the organisation of collaboration between supra-regional alliances with alliances at a local authority level and much more.

Contact:

Jan Schröder
Director of the Service Office
Lokale Bündnisse für Familie
Postal address:
Argelanderstraße 1
53115 Bonn
Telephone +49 (0) 180 52 52 212
Fax: +49 (0) 180 52 52 213
info@lokale-buendnisse-fuer-familie.de
www.lokale-buendnisse-fuer-familie.de

INTERNET

**Forschungskanal Sexualaufklärung
[Research channel Sex education]**

By searching for the key word "Vater" [father] or "Väter" [fathers] in the BZgA's research channel, interested parties can find information on studies such as "männerleben" [men's lives], as well as booklets and other media focusing on the topic or dealing with it as an aspect in other contexts.

Contact:

www.forschung.sexualaufklaerung.de

Internetnutzung von Migrantinnen und Migranten
[Internet use by male and female immigrants]

Investigations looking at internet use in Germany provide answers to questions concerning the age, sex, level of education, size of household and income of the internet users. However, no studies to date have considered whether those surveyed come from immigrant backgrounds and, if so, whether this background has an influence on the type and scope of internet use.

The "Digital Integration" division of the Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancengleichheit e.V. is dedicated to this issue. Here, current information on internet use by immigrants is collected and processed. The preliminary results can be found by entering the key words "Bevölkerung, Lebensstile, Daten und Fakten" [population, lifestyles, data and facts] at www.kompetenzz.de/vko6/digitale_integration.

The background to the new website is formed by the survey "Online-Kompetenz für Migrantinnen und Migranten in Deutschland" [Online competence for immigrants in Germany]. The objective of this survey is to highlight prospects for future initiatives that will increase immigrants' interest in internet use. The preliminary results will be discussed with experts at a specialist conference in autumn 2008, with the aim of developing recommendations for action to be presented to the public in spring 2009.

The project "Online competence for immigrants in Germany" is funded by the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

Contact:

Ute Kempf
 Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancengleichheit e.V.
 Digital Integration
 Press and publicity work
 Telephone +49 (0) 521 106 73 48
 Fax +49 (0) 521 106 71 54
kempf@kompetenzz.de
www.kompetenzz.de
 PDF download:
http://www.kompetenzz.de/content/download/14493/116877/file/PM_2-2008.pdf

Internetbibliothek zur sexuellen und reproduktiven Gesundheit
[Internet library on sexual and reproductive health]

The European Society of Contraception (ESC) has a website with background information for facilitators in the area of the promotion of sexual health and prevention. It contains international examples of good practice in sex education and information and is intended to provide support particularly in the countries where there is little experience in this field of work.

The site contains links to pages with information and tools for experts, indications of good sites for clients themselves, tools and downloads.

The library is currently being compiled and contributions are welcome.

Contact:

European Society of Contraception (ESC)
 Central Office
 Opalfenweg 3
 B-1740 Ternat
 Belgium
 Fax +32 (0) 2 582 55 15
library@contraception-esc.com
www.contraception-esc.com/weblibrary/index.htm

Newsletter der FUMA Fachstelle Gender NRW
[Newsletter of the FUMA specialist department Gender NRW]

The FUMA (Frauen unterstützen Mädchenarbeit – Women support work with girls) specialist department promotes the development and implementation of gender-differentiated and gender-conscious educational science. It offers a wide range of differentiated qualification, advisory and information initiatives, as well as material and projects for introducing gender mainstreaming, for work with girls and work with boys.

The April edition of the newsletter of the FUMA specialist department Gender NRW offers extensive current information on the topic of gender, including seminars, model projects, media reports, further training initiatives and much more.

Address for orders:

FUMA Fachstelle Gender NRW
 Rathenaustraße 2-4
 45127 Essen

Telephone +49 (0) 201 18 50 88 0
 Fax +49 (0) 201 18 50 88 9
fachstelle@gender-nrw.de
www.gender-nrw.de

FILM

Die Heide ruft
[The heather is calling]

The documentary film "Die Heide ruft: Sexualbegleitung für Menschen mit Beeinträchtigungen" [The heather is calling: sexual support for people with impairments], by Mirjam Mirwald, Danilo Vetter and Marius Zierold, students at Humboldt University in Berlin, which was shown for the first time in February 2008, follows three men with learning difficulties ("mental handicaps") during a weekend at an erotic workshop. The documentary deals with the issue of sexual support. In addition to interviews with the three protagonists, as experts in this matter, the film includes the views of those who provide sexual support, sex counsellors and carers.

The film project received funding from Berlin Senate Department for Education, Science and Research, as well as from other sources. The 60-minute film is available as a stream, for download (www.disgenderbility.de) and for dispatch as a DVD.

Address for orders:

Mirjam Mirwald
 Burgherrenstraße 3
 12101 Berlin
 Telephone +49 (0) 30 78 53 93 9
mirjam@freenet.de
mirjam-mirwald@disgenderbility.de
www.disgenderbility.de

Neue Videoproduktionen des Medienprojektes Wuppertal
[New video productions from Wuppertal Media Project]

In FORUM 1/2008 we drew your attention to the three-part DVD series "Lust und Frust" [Love and Frustration] produced by Wuppertal Media Project. As always, this series was produced using young people, under the direction of professional film makers.

Further productions of relevance to the science of sex education are "Sexualisierte Gewalt 2" [Sexualised violence 2], eight stories of girls affected by this issue, and "Lebenszeichen"

[Signs of life], a film looking at self-harm and self-damaging behaviour.

The films are available as DVDs and video tapes, for purchase or to rent. The Media Project provides more information on prices and further projects, as well as other topics, in a 52-page booklet.

Information and sales:

Andreas von Hören
Medienprojekt Wuppertal e.V.
Hofaue 59
42103 Wuppertal
Telephone +49 (0) 202 95 63 26 47
Fax +49 (0) 202 44 68 69 1
info@medienprojekt-wuppertal.de
www.medienprojekt-wuppertal.de

THEATRE

**Teenagerschwangerschaften
[Teenage pregnancies]**

In cooperation with advisers working in the field of sex education, the educational theatre team Duo Q-rage from Ludwigsburg has put together a play that can be used to help prevent teenage pregnancies. The prevention project concept is made up of three parts:

- Play (approx. 40 minutes)
- Subsequent work in small groups, with experts from pregnancy advisory centres (approx. 60 mins)
- Resources for further follow-up work on site

To date, there have been more than 40 performances in total in Baden-Württemberg with subsequent follow-up work. According to the organisers, the play is very well received by young people and offers an introduction to the issues of “love, partnership, sexuality”. By working in small groups following the play, there is the opportunity to look in more depth at the play’s messages. For the specialist staff on site, an aid has been developed that picks up on the topics and contains methodical suggestions for further follow-up work in schools and youth centres.

Interested parties can find more information on the project, including flyers, press reports and photographs, on the following site: www.q-rage.de/html/praeventionstheater.htm

Contact:

Sandra Hehrlein, Jörg Pollinger
Duo Q-Rage
Friedenstraße 36
71636 Ludwigsburg

Telephone +49 (0) 7141 64 88 76 5
info@q-rage.de
www.q-rage.de

EXHIBITIONS

**Rollenbilder im Wandel
[Changing role models]**

Prejudices and role models influence our lives together and are frequently causes of discrimination, particularly in the world of work. It is much rarer for women to make it into managerial positions, whilst men are mocked if they decide to pursue a “typical woman’s job”. Consequently, hardly any men choose to work in the field of social work, which offers good prospects, whilst, from an early stage, women often follow paths that lead to a lower salary and fewer chances of promotion. In Germany, unfortunately, those who have children and wish to be involved in bringing them up are still far too often faced with the question of whether family responsibility can be reconciled with a professional career.

Dismantling gender-related role models is therefore a central objective of the EU 2010 roadmap for equality between women and men.

The travelling exhibition “Rollenbilder im Wandel” [Changing role models] from the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the Federal Labour Agency is made up of short videos in which men and women relate how they deal with the challenges in their everyday life, make use of the opportunities open to them and counteract stereotyped roles. It grows larger with every stop, as any woman or man can be filmed and thereby become part of the exhibition and an ambassador for gender equality.

You can obtain details on the exhibition’s 12 stops in 2008 and further information on the topic from the internet, and a flyer is also available.

Contact:

Publikationsversand der
Bundesregierung
Postfach 48 10 09
18132 Rostock
Telephone +49 (0) 1805 77 80 90
Fax +49 (0) 1805 77 80 94
publikationen@bundesregierung.de
www.bmfsfj.de
www.arbeitsagentur.de

Reports

- 3 Equal opportunities policy needs men and men need equal opportunities policy
Christian Hoenisch
- 10 Every child needs a father (even if he is absent)
Rainer Neutzling
- 17 Fathers in everyday family life.
The gulf between attitudes and behaviour
Andreas Lange, Claudia Zerle
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Michael Tunç
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cultural achievement or wrong turn?
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Petra Otto
- 35 Evaluation of the booklet
“I want to be part of it! Becoming a father”
Ilona Renner

Infotheque

- 38 Booklets, series of specialist publications, magazines, conferences, training courses, internet, film, theatre, exhibitions

FORUM *Sex education and family planning*

A series of publications from the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA).

Department of Sex Education, Contraception and Family Planning

Ostmerheimer Straße 220
5109 Köln

www.forum.sexualaufklaerung.de

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Abteilung Sexualaufklärung, Verhütung und
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