

TWO DIFFERENT STORIES? ACTIVE FATHERING AND EQUAL DIVISION
OF FAMILY LABOUR IN SLOVENIA

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the phenomenon of new fatherhood in Slovenia, which is usually defined by the more active involvement of men in family labour, especially with regards to child care. According to empirical evidence, two models of fatherhood seem to prevail in Slovenia: the complementary (based on the traditional division of family labour involving the passive involvement of fathers, not based, however, on the traditional notion of the father as a bread-winner) and the supportive model (with more active involvement of fathers in family labour, however based on the notion of fatherhood as assistant/supportive parental role and motherhood as primary parental role). "New" fatherhood in Slovenia is new in the sense that it is significantly different from traditional notion of fatherhood as a distant paternal role (traditional bread-winner role with paternal authority). Yet, it seems that changes have occurred mainly on the level of paternal identity and related values, and to a much lesser extent in the area of fathering practices. This article discusses the social contexts and factors that influence the way in which new fatherhood in Slovenia is contributing to the evolution of, among other things, structural gender inequalities and the persistence of the traditional division of family labour, strong female family networks, the persistent ideology of the mother as primary parental care giver etc.

Key words: fatherhood, fathering, family life, childcare, division of family labour

DUE STORIE DIFFERENTI? LA PATERNITÀ ATTIVA E LA RIPARTIZIONE EQUA
DI LAVORI FAMILIARI IN SLOVENIA

SINTESI

L'articolo tratta del fenomeno di un nuovo tipo di paternità in Slovenia, di solito caratterizzata da una partecipazione più attiva del padre nei lavori domestico-familiari, in particolare nella cura di bambini.

Prove empiriche dimostrano la prevalenza di due modelli di paternità in Slovenia: il modello complementare (basato sulla ripartizione tradizionale di lavori familiari, con la partecipazione passiva del padre, ma non basata sul concetto tradizionale del padre come 'breadwinner', cioè colui che porta i soldi a casa), e il modello di sostegno (con una partecipazione più attiva del padre nei lavori familiari, eppure basato sul concetto di paternità come ruolo genitoriale assistente/di sostegno e di maternità come ruolo genitoriale primario). La nuova paternità in Slovenia è nuova in quanto significativamente diversa dalla nozione tradizionale di paternità come ruolo genitoriale distante (il ruolo tradizionale di breadwinner con autorità paterna). Tuttavia, sembra che i cambiamenti si verifichino in maggior parte sul livello d'identità paterna e i relativi valori, e molto meno sul livello di pratiche di paternità.

L'articolo studia i contesti e i fattori sociali che influenzano il modo in cui la nuova paternità in Slovenia si sta sviluppando, tra cui anche le disuguaglianze strutturali di genere e la persistenza della ripartizione tradizionale di lavori familiari, forti reti familiari femminili, persistenti ideologie di maternità come ruolo genitoriale primario ecc.

Parole chiave: paternità, vita familiare, cura di bambini, ripartizione di lavori familiari

INTRODUCTION

Sociologists who study families agree that changes in fatherhood represent one of the key dimensions of structural family changes in the last few decades (Williams, 2008). This is also one of the most researched phenomena in the field of sociology of families. Today, fathers are said to be different from previous generations, being more involved in family life. It is interesting that feminist authors were among the first to show the shifts in cultural, social and other definitions and the change in the understanding of masculinity and fatherhood (Segal, 1990) and through critical analysis of gendered division of labour also on changes in division of family labour¹ (Hochschild, 1989). The eighties and the nineties of the 20th century were characterised by the interpretative divergence regarding the sociological explanation of the phenomenon of the new fatherhood with, on the one hand, empirical evidence that confirmed these changes (Knijn, Mulder, 1987; Van Dongen et al., 1995) and on the other hand, data that still indicated a strict gender division of family labour and no changes in this respect (DeVault, 1994; Delphy, Leonard, 1996; Lupton, Barclay, 1997). In the last decade the sociological analyses of the phenomenon of new fatherhood extended to various changes in this family role, including fathering after divorce, fathering within re-organised families, gay and lesbian families etc. Fatherhood identities and practices are now studied in all its plurality and diversity.

Based on empirical evidence on the new fatherhood and fathering, the authors discuss various characteristics and aspects of the phenomenon in the Slovenian context, stressing the similarities with the general European trends, as well as cultural and social specificities of the Slovenian context. The findings confirm that the trend towards active fatherhood is not so intensive in Slovenia as in some other Western countries and changes are still far from active fathering and equal division of family labour. The latter is still gendered and practices of fathering are usually selected, reduced and mainly supporting (understood as assistance to the female partner). These practices are followed by some new social images of active fathering which reflect (ideological) social expectations regarding greater paternal involvement in family life. In an attempt to explain these trends, the article focuses on fathering practices in relation to gendered division of labour, and the gap between fatherhood identities and perceptions of active fathering as two main characteristics of fatherhood within a Slovenian context.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The main research question deals with differences in distribution of family and child care work between women and men. The phenomenon of active fatherhood is not based only on father – child relationship and child care, but also contains the distribution of family labour between partners. The empirical data used in this paper come from two empirical projects "New Trends in Parenthood: Analysis of Fatherhood and Proposals for Policy in this Field" (2004–2008)² and the doctoral research project led by Živa Humer for her Ph.D. thesis entitled "Ethics of Care, Gender and Family: Processes of the Relocation of Care Between Private and Public Spheres".

In the first project the empirical material used in this article is taken from five same-sex focus groups with 28 mothers and fathers of pre-school children (Renner et al., 2008). The aim of the project was to explore and analyze father's perceptions and understandings of the paternal role, division of family labour and child care, and reconciliation of work and family life in terms of their active role in family life. Besides, the project identifies main gender differences in the way partners divide family labour and child care, and reconcile work and family life.

In the second project the empirical study is based on 60 semi-structured interviews with women and men – parents with small children, grandparents and nannies (Humer, 2009). The empirical material includes the participation of 36 parents with pre-school children, 20 of whom are female and 16 of whom are male, most being middle class, 12 grandparents, who daily or occasionally look after grandchildren and 12 nannies, who perform informal, paid childcare work. For the purposes of this article, interviews with women and men of pre-school children are presented and analyzed. The central point of attention are the processes of relocation of care and care practices within family life (as) between genders and within private and public spheres, with a strong emphasis on child care. The fundamental research questions are made up of the following: how is care defined within everyday family life? Who is taking care of whom and what sort of care is taking place in families? Care practices give rise to social hierarchies, reproduced and enabled by them, which demonstrate through the social analysis of the phenomena of mothering, fathering, grandparenting and a critical reflection of the notion of a 'work of love'.

1 By "family labour" we mean all activities that are necessary for everyday functioning of the family and all family members: household chores, child care, financial and administrative work (paying the bills, shopping, communication with different institutions etc.), technical repair (in the house, in the garden etc.), kinship work (maintaining kinship relations and communication), and relational labour (maintaining relationships, solving problems and conflicts etc. within the family).

2 Research team: Tanja Renner (project leader), Alenka Švab, Tjaša Žakelj, Živa Humer; Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana; financed by Research Agency of the Republic of Slovenia and Office for Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Slovenia.

MEN AND GENDERED DIVISION OF FAMILY LABOUR

Active fatherhood is most often defined and measured by the father's involvement in childcare and other family labour (Knijn, Mulder, 1987; Van Dongen, 1995; Arendell, 1997; Wall, Arnold, 2007; Renner et al., 2008). In this context, it is often interpreted as a result of wider social changes, especially the mass employment of women. However, expectations that the changes in the labour market will be followed by changes in the private sphere leading towards a more egalitarian division of family labour have been proven wrong or at least overly optimistic.

This is especially the case in Slovenia, where there is a long tradition of full participation in the labour market by women (promoted during the socialist era), while division of family labour remained practically unchanged. Changes in the private sphere are happening more slowly than those occurring in gender relationships in the public sphere. At this point we can mention the results of the international study dealing with the issue of the harmonisation of family life and employment conducted in Slovenia by M. Sedmak and Z. Medarič (2007). Their findings are unambiguous: young females in urban Slovenia are much more involved in childcare and other "private" activities in comparison with young males regardless of their employment status. In other words, young women employed full time spend more time on household chores, childcare and caring for other family members than their partners, even in comparison with women in other European countries such as Italy, Germany and Poland.

Regarding this phenomenon, American sociologist A. Hochschild (1989) speaks about the so-called "stalled revolution". The data emerging from numerous studies of the involvement of fathers in family labour reveal the complexity of the phenomenon of active fatherhood as created by different factors. Fathering and parenting practices are not only influenced by the social context, cultural representations and ideologies but also by diverse, completely subjective factors or contexts, such as an individual man's, his female partner's or their families' expectations and experience, family relationships, age, education level, employment status and employment stability, availability of different family members for family work in terms of time, availability of their psychological, social and economic resources (Van Dongen, 1995; Arendell, 1997), with the key factors influencing fathering practices being employment stability and the requirements of the work sphere (Ranson, 2001).

According to some data, the more active involvement of men in family labour does not stem from the idea of an equal gender division of labour or men doing more work, but rather from women doing less family labour than they used to in the past (Craig, 2006, 260). Namely, the redistribution of family work has occurred

parallel to women's full-time employment: part of the domestic work previously performed by women-housewives as unpaid work has now been transferred to either paid services performed by other women, or is even left undone (Saraceno, 1984; Craig, 2006, 260).

However, the changes seen in the ratio of male to female contributions to family labour are not necessarily the result of a reduction of the range of work and its redistribution to the sphere of paid work, but rather in *redistribution to the sphere of informal unpaid work*. The findings of Slovenian research into new fatherhood show that the use of unpaid work sources, at least where these are available, occurs more often than recourse to the use of paid services (Renner et al., 2005; 2008). One of the key factors in the redistribution of child care and family labour to paid work depends on where people live (Renner et al., 2008). While in urban areas the hiring of household services (mainly house cleaning) is quite common, in rural areas this practice is much less widespread. In rural areas the traditional beliefs held by those in that environment are that care for the home and family are the duties of the woman/housewife, and the hiring of cleaning services indicates her incompetence in this respect. This prevents women from hiring paid household services: *"If I hired a cleaning lady from our neighborhood this would mean I am incompetent. And if I even took an hour for myself, to go jogging, while hiring a cleaning lady, this would be a disgrace"* (Suzana, 28) (Renner et al., 2008). In rural areas, access to paid services of help in the home is also much poorer compared to urban areas, while it is true that the unpaid kinship support is much more available in rural areas.

Informal kinship networks (mainly parents or grandmothers) and friends are an important source of help in household work and especially with regards to childcare. Similar findings were revealed by research done in Germany (Rerrich, 1996) which states that in the process of a change in the division of family labour rather than in the gender distribution of family work, a transfer is occurring from female partners or mothers to other women, meaning either unpaid work (relatives, friends) or paid work (paid domestic workers, babysitters). This creates a *specific contradiction* of informal support networks which perform unpaid domestic work representing indispensable help, while at the same time acting as an obstacle to changes within the family – towards a better gender division of labour and active fathering. However, in the wider context of employment conditions and longer working hours as well as in the existing and deeply rooted structural gender inequality this situation still seems to be more a functional solution than a side effect.

Speaking of the transfer of family labour to either other sources of paid or unpaid work or involving the reduction of work, there is an essential difference between childcare and other chores within the range of family labour. Research shows that while women do

share household chores, they are less willing to limit or reduce the amount of time they spend with their children (Craig, 2006). Childcare is work which involves a special (emotional) relationship between the child and the parent and is in this sense seen as different from other forms of family labour (Craig, 2006, 260). However, the consequences of this situation may not be entirely positive as it can lead to women becoming overburdened or even withdrawing from the labour market altogether. In the Slovenian context this is reflected in several ways, both direct and indirect. First, a certain reservation regarding the use of paid child day-care is noted (Rener et al., 2008): *"I am thinking and deciding, but I just cannot make up my mind to simply leave my little girl with a babysitter. I do not know. However, sooner or later I think I will make use of this"* (Tina, 36). Second, there is a trend in Slovenia where part-time work immediately after parental leave is becoming more common, at least for a certain (short) period of time. After concluding their maternal and paternal leave, about 4% of parents are reported to decide to return to part-time work only, among them 90% of women (Kanjuro Mrčela, Černigoj Sadar, 2004).

The research on new fatherhood (Rener et al., 2005) showed that, when starting to work again after their childcare and maternity leave, women mainly opt for work schedules which are shortened by an hour or two in order to be able to balance their child's day care with their work schedule. Here, certain pressures have been detected: a participant in a focus group who decided to have a 7-hour work schedule after returning to work from her maternity leave described her experience of pressure exerted by her colleagues at work (mainly female colleagues): *"My colleagues complained that they all worked for eight hours, why would I now only have seven hours. ... When I came back, in the first week everybody asked me, 'will you really only work for 4 hours', and, I don't know, all sorts of information was going around"* (Tina, 36) (Rener et al., 2005).

Often, the daily care of small children (mostly those under three years of age) is undertaken by grandmothers or grandparents, and increasingly more often also by babysitters. In the 2006/2007 school year approximately 58,127 children were included in day care, representing 64.8% of the pre-school population of children or 28.7% of one-year olds, 70.1% of 3-year olds and 86.3% of 5-year olds (Statistical Office of the RS, 2007). Other children are included in different forms of informal day care carried out by babysitters, grandparents and other relatives.

If comparing the division of child care between partners, the research into childcare shows that women spend more time with their children than in the past which adds a degree of relativity to quantitative data showing that fathers are spending more time with their children than in the past (Craig, 2006). Research strongly

indicates that the time women spend with their children is two to three times longer than that spent by men (Craig, 2006, 261).

FATHERHOOD MODELS IN SLOVENIA

On the basis of empirical data which reveals a series of the different types of fathers or fatherhood practices, Russell (1995, 222) speaks about the following four types of fathers: disinterested fathers (who do not spend enough time at home), traditional fathers (who spend more time at home, but their involvement with the family is limited to playing with the children), 'good' fathers (who are willing to provide nursing and care for their children and offer help to their partners) and 'non-traditional fathers' (who share the domestic tasks (including child care) equally with their female partners).

In Slovenia, two dominating models of fatherhood have been identified (Rener et al., 2005; Rener et al., 2006; Rener et al., 2008). The first one is the *complementary* model which does not presume the major participation of fathers in childcare. Fathers only rarely and exceptionally (when necessary) participate in childcare and other family work; they mainly do tasks traditionally carried out by men, and among child care tasks they usually play with children in their spare time. This model is similar to the Russell's traditional model of fatherhood, with one important distinction: in Slovenia fatherhood (as an identity and family role) is not tied to the notion of man as a main bread-winner, which can be explained by a long-term tradition of female participation on the labour market, making men and women financially equally responsible. The second model, increasingly present, is the *supportive model* in which fathers' involvement in family labour is greater than in the complementary model, however the labour is still unevenly distributed between the partners, and childcare and other family labour are, implicitly, considered to be primarily women's work. Whereas in the first model it is clear that the majority of family labour is done by women, the complementary model often involves a perception of the active involvement of fathers in both childcare and family work in general, although mainly as *support*, with the argument that women are overburdened and need help to cope with all of their typical female work. The help required does not necessarily come from the man; rather he is being increasingly replaced by kinship support networks (which offer unpaid services, such as child care) or, mainly in urban areas, paid housekeeping and childcare services.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDCARE

One of the basic, essential specificities of childcare is that it is not always merely a *direct* activity, which makes

the time spent by parents on childcare very difficult to measure. More often than *direct care* or *primary activity*, care for children is carried out as a *secondary* or *simultaneous* activity.³ Research shows that apart from direct or primary childcare (play, nursing, feeding etc.), childcare also requires at least twice as much time in the form of secondary or simultaneous care (Craig, 2006). Similarly, Slovenian research has also revealed key differences between the genders when it comes to carrying out direct and simultaneous childcare. As a rule, men perform childcare only as primary care. When they spend time with their children in ways such as playing with them, that is all they are doing. Apart from doing the majority of primary childcare, women also do the majority of secondary and simultaneous childcare, such as doing numerous other household chores together with their children (Rener et al., 2005; Rener et al., 2008):

"My games are more practical, 'let's do the laundry', 'will you help me, let's fold the clothes, red things over here, others over there', because I am always pressed for time. We also play, we draw, but I must say that if I have time and stuff we would prefer to go outside, to a playground, outdoors, with a bicycle, a ball, anything. When I am indoors I use more of those useful games" (Nina, 32).

"The children play with each other, when they are not arguing. ... I talk to them, but I never seem to be 100% focused. Only when I have cleaned everything up I sit down and we play ... whereas when a man dedicates attention to them, he really dedicates 100%. Women do not. You really must have the whole place cleaned up; at least this is how it is with me, for me to be able to play" (Maja, 32).

Also differentiation between domestic work, especially household tasks and child care activities plays an important role in the division of domestic and care work between partners. Child care activities contain emotional elements, it's also rewarding emotional work for care givers (Humer, 2009):

"If I feel like lying down and watching a movie or doing something with my daughter, this is more important for me than making lunch" (Luka, 35).

A downside of childcare as a multi-tasking activity requiring more focus and energy is the limited options available for doing other household work while caring for the child at the same time. Apart from essential gender differences regarding secondary childcare, there are also gender differences in terms of who takes care of the more demanding jobs involved in childcare (Craig, 2006, 263).

According to past research which reveals a greater participation of fathers in childcare (Craig, 2006, 262) the following is noted:

- both men and women are capable of emotional and nursing interactions with a child;
- the range of activities carried out by fathers is expanding;
- the greater frequency of the father's participation in childcare increases the probability of the participation continuing in the future; and
- fathers are more active on weekends.

While the first three findings paint an optimistic picture or trend, which could lead to a more even gender division of childcare in the future, the data about "week-end fathers" corroborates the assumption that employment or professional obligations are an important factor, that is an obstacle to active fatherhood and to the abolition of the gender asymmetrical division of household work, and that men have greater manoeuvring space or possibility of choice regarding agreements on the division of family work, or that, within this constellation, priority is given to the demands of their career (Rener et al., 2008).

In everyday childcare practices there are essential gender differences in ways of labour division between the partners, and how they reach agreements on sharing their work (Hochschild, 1989; Van Dongen, 1995; Craig, 2006; Wall, Arnold, 2007). Gender is the main factor in different parenting practices even when the partners share all tasks and in the case that they are both employed, regardless of other socio-demographic characteristics (Craig, 2006).

On the basis of empirical data, we identified gender differences in parenting and domestic labour practices in the following aspects (Rener et al., 2008; Humer, 2009):

a.) Men do nicer and less routine work (conversations, reading, listening, and play) and perceive their role as a father on more of an educational level. More pleasant child care activities, often perceived as quality time, function therapeutically:

"Well, yes, at our place the main play is with Lego bricks, and marbles have been in lately. And, yes, she [his daughter, author's note.] has one big obsession, her favourite, well, basically I watch a lot of films, and at those times she immediately sticks closely to me ... As I say, sometimes we draw, watch books. As I say, this goes on for quite a while; we put the bricks together and build castles. She always wants my castle because she likes mine the best" (Simon, 36) (Rener et al., 2008).

"There are certain things we do together ... I taught her to count, I tried to be as educational as possible, I try to motivate her for sport and ... we talk a lot, because she is curious and you have to explain everything to her" (Luka, 35) (Humer, 2009).

3 Care as a direct or primary activity here means that child care is the only activity that is carried out at the moment, while care as a secondary or simultaneous activity means that some other activities, e.g. household chores, are carried out while at the same time caring for a child or playing with a child.

"... when I come home from work, I spend two hours 100 percent with children, which is better for me as well, because it's also relaxing and I relieve my partner so she can do other things" (Borut, 40 let) (Humer, 2009).

b.) Women do more direct child care, physical chores, such as nursing, feeding, washing, clothing etc.:

"In our family I have basically always taken care of the children more. He took the initiative and started to brush our daughter's teeth, and sometimes he bathes her or both children if they are bathing together. Also dressing them is no problem. He often changed my little girl's nappy when she was younger, but with our son he never did this. He is not so involved with our son" (Katka, 32) (Renner et al., 2008).

"I don't know, maybe I even do a bit more, well with the part concerning the children being done by my wife. She dresses them in the morning, changes their nappies and packs their things away, and in the evenings puts them in their pyjamas, washes them, puts them to bed. This is mainly her work" (Simon, 36) (Renner et al., 2008).

c.) Men do work which is less time-limited or is time-flexible or time-unlimited:

"I'm dedicating myself to my child considerably, but as the rhythm of life dictates, unfortunately I am away often, yet I certainly find time when I engage myself in play with him; well, the little girl is only three weeks old..." (Andrej, 31) (Renner et al., 2008).

d.) Men have greater possibilities of reaching an agreement about when they will be involved (such as spending more time with their children on weekends):

"Otherwise, during the weekend there is more play, basically, you are with him all day from morning until he falls asleep, doing anything, playing and everything else. It also depends on what my other duties are, for example our employer educates us a lot and as for this Internet education, it takes place in the afternoons" (Jernej, 33) (Renner et al., 2008).

"... I am also absent and I also study a little in the afternoon. So I don't have so much time during the week. If there's time, I dedicate myself, at least by the way, or else more during the weekend, say, I take time so that we are really together a lot, and then we also play in the morning" (Vlado, 30) (Renner et al., 2008).

e.) Compared to females, male participation in child-care is more optional (they can choose situations and the work they want to do):

"... if I'm doing something, a household chore, and if he's at home, and he isn't doing anything in particular, then he does it. She can also distract herself now" (Anja, 28) (Renner et al., 2008).

"... I try to discipline myself so that when I'm home I absolutely dedicate some time, planning it, to play" (Marko, 40) (Renner et al., 2008).

f.) Male participation is supportive and helping (men help but the main responsibility for care is held by females, women play the role of a manager, they bear the

responsibility for planning and organising, even when the partners share their work relatively evenly):

"I'm far behind her; she does the majority of work at home. Sometimes I help to hang up washed clothes, sometimes I put dirty clothes in the washing machine, I sometimes clean something, once a month, for example I vacuum. What else? We agreed that I work in the garden, this is my obligation, mowing, and things like that. And I help with children, normally, to change the diapers, put clothes on, and other things, which are logical to me that men need to do them." (Rok, 31) (Humer, 2009).

"Otherwise he also hangs up the laundry, does the dusting, vacuum cleans, and this is not difficult for him, if he does not have something to do outdoors or in the workshop. I ask him, and he does it" (Suzana, 28) (Renner et al., 2008).

g.) Women often carry out child care as a simultaneous or secondary activity, while men often carry out child care as a primary activity:

"My wife is capable of doing something and at the same time watching over our little girl and directing her to some play, or joining her for 5 minutes and then resuming her work; while I get confused by this" (Marko, 40) (Renner et al., 2008).

"My wife does it more by the way, she is doing something, and by the way she also does this, while I only play. And then, this is real play, we build Viking castles. I mean we really build them; it is not just by the way" (Simon, 36) (Renner et al., 2008).

h.) Fathers perceive their role as active and important when the child is a bit older (not a baby anymore):

"I often take her with me to basketball games. Now when she is older [she is 4, comment by Ž. Humer], I always take her, just two of us go and I think, when the child is not a baby anymore, I can give her much more attention" (Luka, 35) (Humer, 2009).

i.) Fathers usually take care of children when mothers are absent due to work or when they have to do some household chores:

"What does my partner do in the meantime? Well, if we are not playing together, it means she is either not home at all, that is, she's at work, or she is studying something or she is at a meeting or something like that. Also probably some household chores, some ironing" (Marko, 40) (Renner et al., 2008).

"Well, me, when we play, my wife uses this time for household chores" (Klemen, 30) (Renner et al., 2008).

"When I play, my wife does household chores" (Bor, 29) (Renner et al., 2008).

In the context of gendered family labour, the key obstacles to active fatherhood also include the *social construction of motherhood* and the mother-child relationship as the primary parental relationship. In this parental constellation fathers mainly play *an assistant or supportive role* (Craig, 2006; Renner et al., 2005; Renner et al., 2008; Wall, Arnold, 2007) complementing and support-

ing the parental relationship between the mother and the child. In this role, the father acts as a surrogate parent who usually takes on an active role in the mother's place when she is unavailable or not present, and the like. According to Backett, the very cultural construction of fatherhood as a supportive parental role is creating beliefs and norms about who is an active father. In her opinion, an active father today is not identified by men and women as someone who evenly shares childcare with his partner or as someone who has built a direct and mother-independent relation with the child (Smart, 1999).

GAP BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF ACTIVE FATHERHOOD

Past research brings two key findings on the phenomenon of active fatherhood. First, shifts towards active fatherhood are mainly visible at the *identity level* (Hoschild, 1989; Van Dongen, 1995; Renner et al., 2005; Renner et al., 2008). New fathers wish to take more active roll in the care of their children, they enter into closer relationships with them than their fathers used to, and they are ready to increase their participation, especially if their female partners are employed. Yet a *considerable gap* exists between the father-identity and the subjective perception of fatherhood on one side and the reality of everyday fathering practices and the division of labour on the other (Craig, 2006; Renner et al., 2005; Renner et al., 2008; Wall, Arnold, 2007; Humer, 2009). Many fathers understand participation as their willingness and capability to be involved in childcare, rather than actual practices or time spent with their children (Ranson, 2001, 23).

A well-known study on the sharing of family work conducted by A. Hochschild (1989) revealed relatively small actual changes in the sharing of *family labour*, but clearly seen changes in couples' perception of it with most couples in her research expressing their wish for an equal division of labour, while at the same time they believed that their division of labour is even. Something similar applies to *parenting*. Research shows that both men and women express egalitarian views of parenting, and men express a wish to spend more time with their children (Renner et al., 2005; Craig, 2006). Therefore, it is more about the change of rhetoric which does not expand itself to the actual division of tasks between partners (DeVault, 1994, 103), but rather shifts toward a *social ideal of an active father*. New fatherhood perceived as a social role starts rather passively, especially concerning the basic care and nurture the new born child needs:

"... When the child is small, and with the first one and with the second, my role in the first five or six months is very secondary. Mother is the one, the first connection with the child and on the one hand she is a dominant as mother. It's not that she wouldn't let me close, because I don't push, but she protects the child

...now it's changing, the children are starting to communicate and parental roles change ... because before I was not that interested, if child cries a lot and now needs to have its diapers changed, this is physical work for me. And I wasn't like that, to sing a song to a child, to talk with him or her; it's just that you need to do the work. Now it's different, when there is a response, also my response is different" (Bojan, 40) (Humer, 2009).

In some cases, the gap between the perception of the division of labour and actual male participation in family work is clearly seen *between the partners*. German researchers found that in the early 1980s women more frequently than men reported doing more work than men, while in the 1990s the studies revealed the opposite with men reporting they do less work, and women reporting on their sharing of work with men evenly (Hearn, Pringle, 2006, 375). Australian research showed the opposite situation: men believe that they share the work evenly, while women disagree, revealing gender differences in the ways of carrying out childcare (Craig, 2006). Differences in perceptions regarding male participation could also be a result of the degree of male participation in family labor. It can be assumed that men who actively participate in family work have a better overview of and can better estimate what is included in family work and how much of it they do. In turn, active fathers could have stricter criteria for and be more critical in their estimation of the share of work they do. These different perceptions are creating double standards and a distinction between motherhood and (active) fatherhood, which justifies the father's smaller amount of activity concerning childcare compared to the child's mother.

The gap between the perceptions, wishes, expectations and everyday situations of women and men is also seen in the case of paid work and labour market. The perception of the need to choose between family and paid labour is evident and realized in a gendered way, where one of the partners builds the career (usually men) and the other one (usually women) beside paid work also takes care of the family (Humer, 2009). The common understanding, based on capitalist ideology, goes in the direction that one cannot have both, work and family. The ideology of motherhood as the natural disposition of women plays an important role in 'rational' decisions in relation with paid labour.

"Where I see it and where the real role (laughing) is, basically it's difficult to confront wishes and expectations with reality. Of course I see my partner's active role in the family. But on the other hand I realize, that he works a lot, that his work doesn't allow him to come home at 2pm. And the fact that he comes at 6 or 7 pm, ok, sometimes at 5 pm, I wish then, that he spends some time with the [our] son. And he does. On the other hand you realize you cannot have everything. So, what we'll have, are we going to be together, are we going to have

jobs, to have bread? ... On one hand there is a wish that we're all one big happy family, while on the other hand I see that when he's at home, he is relaxed, doesn't think about his job and spends some time with our son" (Teja, 30) (Humer, 2009).

Gender differences are also reflected in the perception and practices of domestic work, childcare and similar which can lead to *disagreements between partners* (Renner et al., 2005; Humer, 2009). Often, women prefer to do the work themselves rather than asking their partner:

"... I have a system which gives me and I think also my child a sense of security, and a routine which makes sense to me. Then I sort of expect that he will also function according to this principle. If he just does things his own way, with him being different and all, it is not that my little girl does not enjoy it when he does it, but I then ask 'did you wash her with this', 'No, I did not', and this makes me very upset. But I can see that essentially one needs to let go here, otherwise it will always be me bathing her" (Spela, 32) (Renner et al., 2005).

"Well, he said, he'll do the vacuuming and I would walk around and would say, 'this spot isn't good, there is still some dust there', and he threw the vacuum cleaner into the closet and said 'if you're such a grumbler, you should do it by yourself'. And from then on he rarely does the vacuuming, because I'm [likely] to grumble" (Lana, 30) (Humer, 2009).

"We have a lot of small conflicts and we talk about it a lot, because there are always these fights between us. And it's just because you cannot do something right that moment when someone wants you to do it ... an example: she always says to me in the evening 'come and help me to hang/dry the laundry'. And at that moment I'm watching TV and I cannot just jump. But OK, I got used to it and I stand up and help her for these three minutes" (Rok, 31) (Humer, 2009).

Disagreements between partners appear because of the unequal division of domestic work, partner's expectations related to the implementation of domestic tasks and time dimension, when certain work should be done. Often female partners present a barrier for men to get more actively involved in domestic work, because of their control over domestic sphere. Men's limited share in domestic and care work at home maintains and reproduces a gendered division of the work and maintains the status quo of men's role as helpers, assistants of their female partners in domestic sphere. But searching a guilt in women for men being only partially involved in domestic and care work transfers the responsibility for domestic and care work from men to women. On one hand traditional gender roles still play an important part, which puts more responsibility on women for taking care of home and family, and which on the other hand results in women's requests, wishes and demands for their partners to do domestic tasks. One of the common

strategies for solving the conflicts are paid domestic help and the strategy usually used by women, which is to suppress dissatisfaction for the sake of family harmony and partners' relationship and to accept men's small share in domestic and care work at home in terms of 'better than nothing'. It also includes the economy of gratitude (Hochschild, 1997), where women express their gratitude to partners even though their share in domestic work and child care is small and unequal.

CONCLUSION

Gender differences in parenting practices have an important impact on everyday life, especially on the balancing of work and the family which is socially perceived as the problem of women. The balancing of work and the family is especially stressful in the period when children are still small, requiring more direct and physical nurturing and childcare; this is more typical of the care provided by women and less of those kinds of care provided by fathers (such as playing). Especially stressful for women is the period after the parental leave (mainly used by women), when they return back to work (Renner et al., 2005).

Research shows that in the process of balancing work and the family, it is the professional career of the man which sets the limits and range of male participation in family work, despite the principled and declared egalitarian orientation of the couple (Ranson, 2001; Renner et al., 2005). Also in those cases where fathers are more involved in childcare, the degree of male participation is always adjusted to the demands of work, while adjustments in the opposite direction are rare (Gerson, 1997; Ranson, 2001). The fathers who were the most willing to resist work demands and refused to limit their time to be spent with their families were those who had already achieved their professional or career goals, as shown by Canadian research (Ranson, 2006). Seron and Ferris (Ranson, 2001, 23) came to similar conclusions: professional obligations are becoming increasingly intensive in their demands for flexibility at work and prolongation of the time a person is available for work, which is being extended on account of the time which would otherwise be devoted to the family. This is how the vicious circle of the gender division of labour gets closed, in which the balancing of work and the family is socially perceived as a female affair.

The main obstacle in the way to active fatherhood today mainly relates to employment and labour market requirements. The neo-liberal market with its imperative of an independent employed individual brings insecurity into employment or work life, which applies to both men and women (Hearn, Pringle, 2006, 374), along with their enhanced exposure to unemployment. Experience with employment or the labour market, a sense of security, and the availability of alternative sources of income

have turned out to be factors which have had the greatest impact on fathering practices, much more than class or ethnicity, education or even personal characteristics (Ranson, 2001, 22). In this respect, family life is subjected to professional life not only for men but also for women, which clearly represents the key obstacle to changes in the gender division of labour occurring in the family (Rener et al., 2008). Thus, modern active fatherhood stems from the need to balance work and the family (and not from the idea of a balanced gender division

of labour) which, paradoxically is more an obstacle than an encouragement for active fatherhood and the changes in the asymmetrical division of labour.

However, in identifying the obstacles to active fathering, the fatal factor seems to be the very combination of these different factors. Structural gender inequalities go hand in hand with the limiting factors of neo-liberal capitalism (precariousness of employment and intensified work requirements) creating conditions which are anything but supportive of active fatherhood.

DVE RAZLIČNI ZGODBI? AKTIVNO OČETOVANJE IN ENAKA DELITEV DRUŽINSKEGA DELA V SLOVENIJI

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POVZETEK

Fenomen novega očetovstva potrjujejo številne študije, ki so si enotne o dveh spremembah: očetje danes preživijo več časa z otroki v primerjavi z generacijo njihovih očetov, vendar sodobni očetje v primerjavi z ženskami še vedno preživijo disproporcionalno manj časa z otroki. Obrat od očetovske avtoritete, utemeljene v modelu hranitelja družine v modernosti k 'novim' očetom v pozni moderni, zaznamuje predvsem obrat k senzibilizaciji praks očetovanja, ki presegajo izključno materialno in finančno zagotavljanje preskrbljenosti družine. Na podlagi dveh empiričnih raziskav "Novi trendi v starševstvu: analiza očetovstva in predlogi za izboljšanje družinske politike na tem področju" (2004–2008) in raziskave v okviru doktorske disertacije Ž. Humer "Etika skrbi, spol in družina: procesi relokacije skrbi med zasebno in javno sfero" avtorici tematizirata novo očetovstvo in očetovanje v slovenskem kontekstu. Temeljni raziskovalni fokus se osredinja okrog vprašanja o kvalitativnih razlikah med spoloma v distribuciji in načinu opravljanja družinskega dela in skrbi za otroke. Novo očetovstvo ne vključuje zgolj aktivnosti, ki so vezane na skrb in nego otroka, temveč tudi gospodinjstva opravila. Na podlagi empiričnih podatkov (Rener et al., 2005; 2006; 2008) članek izpostavi dva prevladujoča modela očetovstva v Sloveniji: komplementarni in podporni model očetovstva. Komplementarni model predpostavlja vključevanje očetov v skrbstvene prakse in družinsko delo le redko oz. kadar je le-to nujno, pri čemer moški opravljajo večinoma tradicionalno moška opravila in se ukvarjajo z otroci predvsem v prostem času. Medtem ko podporni model označuje aktivnejšo vlogo očetov tako pri skrbi in negi otroka kot pri družinskem delu, vendar je delež očetov percepiran kot podpora, pomoč partnerki. Na podlagi empiričnih raziskav avtorici identificirata temeljne razlike med spoloma v starševanju (skrb za otroke) in distribuciji družinskega dela (Rener et al., 2008; Humer, 2009):

- Moški opravljajo manj rutinska in bolj prijetna družinska opravila (pogovarjanje, branje, igra) in percepirajo očetovsko vlogo zlasti na edukativni ravni.

- Ženske opravijo več neposrednega dela z otroki, predvsem fizičnega, kot je npr. nega, hranjenje, umivanje, oblačenje ipd.

- Moški opravljajo manj časovno zamejenih del.

- Moški izpogajajo lasten angažma (preživljanje časa z otroki zlasti med vikendi).

- V primerjavi z ženskami je vključevanje moških v skrb za otroke opcijsko.

- Moški angažma je podpornega značaja (pomoč, podpora moških, medtem ko glavna odgovornost ostaja v domeni žensk, če tudi je družinsko delo in skrb za otroke deljeno med partnerjema).

- Ženske se pogosteje ukvarjajo z otroci kot simultano ali sekundarno aktivnostjo, medtem ko se moški pogosteje ukvarjajo z otroci kot primarno aktivnostjo.

- Očetje percepirajo svojo vlogo kot aktivno, zlasti ko otrok malo odraste.

- Očetje se pogosteje ukvarjajo z otroki, ko so partnerke odsotne zaradi opravljanja gospodinjskih del ali zaradi službe.

Spremembe se pojavljajo predvsem na ravni očetovske identitete in s tem povezanimi vrednotami ter precej manj na ravni očetovskih praks.

Ključne besede: očetovstvo, očetovanje, družinsko življenje, skrb za otroke, delitev družinskega dela

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