

Summary

From Swiss Army knife to organizer - the fathers' roles and lifestyles presented here are as diverse as they are complex. Nevertheless, a closer look reveals certain aspects that are common to all the fathers presented here.

The biographies collected here occupy a key position. From a scientific perspective, profitable suggestions for further research on fathers and/or gender can be derived.

In all interviews, a fundamental turning away from, or at least a reflection on, traditional **gender roles** can be clearly seen. The father concepts described are part of a concept of masculinity that is no longer based purely on gainful employment, but also to a large extent on family work (cf. Meuser 2011). In this context, the problem of reconciliation, which for a long time was predominantly a female concept, is now also being transferred to fathers, although ambivalences between self- and family roles are emerging.

The results show that there are differences in the fathers' perceptions of others as well as in their claims about themselves and others. It can be observed, for example, that all fathers perceive the role of the

tenor is rather that the role is "a bit of everything," as Kai Schmidt aptly puts it. The tenor is rather that the role is "a bit of everything," as Kai Schmidt aptly puts it, "kind of a mix" of different types. The breadwinner role is often associated with

the memory of their own father or of role models from the 19th century, from which most of the men interviewed, however, want to distance themselves.

What is interesting here is that the existence of a societal expectation is presupposed, according to which fathers are currently no longer allowed to be only breadwinners. "The model no longer works today," says Andreas Rabe, referring in this context to feminist emancipation movements that have fundamentally changed not only the image of women, but also that of men. At the same time, however, fathers on parental leave are confronted with reactions that correspond to the traditional ideas that are apparently still firmly anchored in society and that are still presented to active fathers with extreme skepticism. Carsten Feßler's observation that he and his friends are still "looked at like aliens" when they go to the zoo with their children in the morning sums this up.

What is also exciting in this context is the Description that **networks** among fathers de facto do not seem to exist at present. On the contrary, those fathers who participated with their children in activities such as baby swimming reported that they were largely "alone among mothers" and found it difficult to get into these groups. Likewise, in the

everyday life, making new contacts is still primarily initiated by mothers, as Andreas Rabe makes clear by pointing out that his wife "is an expert in this. At the same time, however, all of the fathers state that in one way or another they are to exchange ideas with other men, be they friends or new acquaintances. Kai Schmidt sums up in this regard that it is good "to know a few other fathers, otherwise you can't stand it. This cynical interjection, however, points to an obviously existing need for discussion on the part of the fathers, which, however, has so far been negotiated primarily on a personal level. Moreover, the desire for targeted (in-)formal networks is expressed primarily by fathers who have taken parental leave. This ambivalence between individual wishes and a weakly developed infrastructural offer has hardly been registered in theory and practice so far.

Despite recognizable modifications, the **professional and financial situation of** fathers continues to play a central role in their own role definition. Thus, although all fathers emphasize that they reject the "breadwinner role," in most cases they nevertheless cannot deny having to fill it to some extent. At the time of the interviews, six men are sole breadwinners, one woman is currently in training, and only one man states that his wife currently earns more than he does. These rather classic-looking breadwinner-

Joachim Kreische justifies housewife models by pointing out that "this also has to do with material circumstances".

The relevant factor here is the wage and employment gap between the genders: women earn on average 23% less than men with the same qualifications in western Germany and - especially in the case of maternity - work part-time much more often (cf. BMFSFJ dossier 2009). The lower income is more likely to be forgone and the lower-earning woman reduces her working hours. On the other hand, the problem of scarce and highly sought-after daycare places plays an almost paradoxical role: if family income is reduced by part-time work, the costs of a childcare place still have to be paid, which makes a second income necessary for many couples. Last but not least, Carsten Feßler brings into the discussion that not all parents are willing to leave their offspring in the hands of others as early as possible, thus addressing a mental issue that is often left out of the compatibility debate. The fathers presented here want to spend time with their families and be involved in their children's lives.

Interestingly, the fathers' **career definitions** consistently do not correspond to a classic, consciously forced career advancement narrative. Without exception, the most important career goal is fun.

and flexibility on the job. The latter stands for the possibility of being able to react spontaneously in an emergency and, if necessary, to be absent from work. Career and family play a predominantly equal role in the lives of fathers.

In some cases, the family is even placed in the foreground. At the same time, however, fathers are confronted with working conditions that do not always accommodate their desire for time for the family. This reveals a difference between the scientists interviewed on the one hand and the administrative employees on the other. According to their own statements, the former spend a great deal of time in their jobs and therefore put family life on the back burner. The high pressure to publish mentioned by Alexander Schnurr and the fixed-term employment contracts produce a constant pressure for advancement, which hardly allows for a longer sabbatical, e.g. parental leave, and which, moreover, has a burdening effect on family life. The self-demand for a largely uninterrupted presence at the workplace appears to be very pronounced here and correlates with a traditional culture of science, whose dictates of presence can impair family commitment (cf. Döge 2007).


Professors Wolfgang Sonne and Andreas Hoffjan report on problems that arose due to various moves and stays abroad on the way to becoming professors. The fact that the majority of fathers took no parental leave at all or only two months is surprising.

not from this perspective. Kai Schmidt points out that as a scientist you "have to make a career" if you want to have security (cf. Selent/Schürmann/Metz-Göckel 2011). In contrast, the administrative employees see themselves as The scientists are in a comparatively carefree position professionally. Their view of the future focuses on family issues, such as the further development of their children, while the scientists' outlook primarily concerns economic circumstances. In view of this very ambivalent juxtaposition of individual desires and institutional constraints, all fathers - scientists or administrators - see the future in terms of their family.

- urgent need for action, because "a temporary job is poison for a family," as Andreas Rabe succinctly sums up.

The present interviews thus not only present role models for other and expectant active fathers, but also provide insights into an extremely tense, complex structure of identity constructions at a moment of change in traditional forms of society. The classic image of the family is currently undergoing a fundamental reform, which entails a conflictual renegotiation of existing mother and father roles in the heterosexual family model.

This gives rise to exciting questions, both for the individual and for policy and science, which urgently and broadly



should be discussed. What are family-friendly working conditions at a university today and how can they be created, especially in the field of science? How can the ambivalence of traditional and modern concepts of family be countered? What can be done to encourage the emergence of fathers' networks? This brochure may have provided an impetus of thanks to these and other questions.

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