

Doing Fatherhood in the 21st Century: Connecting the Global North and the Global South

Background and rationale: Fatherhood is a universal phenomenon; fatherhood is constantly made and remade. In the globalised world of the 21st century, discussions about what kind of biological and social fatherhood practices are permitted, applied, and desired are widespread. In the Netherlands, debates around fatherhood and the reconciliation of family and work are currently high on the national political agenda – similar to many other European countries such as for example Switzerland. In West African countries, there have been recent debates on intimate forms of caregiving which counteract the predominant image of the 'violent black man' (Smith 2015, 2017, McLean forthcoming). Fatherhood is closely linked to masculinities and gender relations. An analysis of how fatherhood is practiced thus not only provides insight into the father-child/children relations, but also informs us about the relationships among men and between men and women.

Objectives and aims: In this study, fatherhood practices offer a lens to examine broader changes. Specifically, the research questions are: How are individual experiences of fatherhood interwoven with cultural, social, political, and economic transformations at the local and the global level? How does fatherhood intersect with other identities such as gender, age, class, ethnicity, race, education, mobility, family status, body, or sexuality? How do men deal with social expectations regarding 'good' fatherhood? How do norms regarding fatherhood change over the life course and across generations?

Concepts: This project focuses on emergent fatherhood to capture creativities, hybridities, and transformations in discourses and practices of fatherhood. I adopt the concept of globalized fatherhood as proposed by Inhorn, Chavkin, and Navarro (2015) as fatherhood is heavily influenced by global transformations such as the increase of female integration into the labour market, the hegemony of neoliberalism, the decline in birth rates, and the rapid movement of people. Discourses and practices around fatherhood depend on aspects of a person's diverse identities, thus I adopt an intersectional lens to analyse the socially constructed and subjectively informed ways of fatherhood.

Methods: The proposed project analyses fatherhood by researching two urban settings – one in the Global North and one in the Global South, namely Amsterdam in the Netherlands and Kankan in Guinea. I collect ethnographic data by applying the triangular Emic Evaluation Approach (Förster et al. 2011) based on the mapping of the social actors, on discourse analysis, and on practice analysis. Firstly, I map the social actors by using a broad snowball sample of men who represent the cities' heterogeneity. Secondly, I gather discursive data produced through interviews, focus group discussions, informal conversations, and through naturally occurring talk. I further use photo-narratives to explore the informants' subjective construction of fatherhood (Langa 2008). Thirdly, I apply the methods of participation and observation, especially by using the go-along method (Kusenbach 2003), to explore aspects of fatherhood practices which are not put into words.

Results and impact: Studying fatherhood through a non-Eurocentric research approach by using a variety of methods, the expected results will have a major impact on scientists, policy makers, stakeholders, and members of civil society organisations working on gender, global transformations, reproduction politics, as well as the reconciliation of family and work in Europe and Africa. These two, at first glance very different cases can inform a new perspective on global fatherhood in the 21st century. Overall, this research will contribute to the elaboration of new feminist, postcolonial theories and concepts which can overcome the North-South divide in research.