

## In the Name of the Father: A Discussion on (New) Fatherhood, Its Assumptions and Obstacles

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*Deliberation on the concepts of father and fatherhood and their literal and symbolic meanings makes the starting point of this paper. Furthermore, a short historical overview is combined with selected theories of fatherhood, which serve as a framework for placing the issues regarding modern fatherhood in the appropriate context. That context, it is concluded, rests on the historical interdependence of fatherhood, masculine identity and political power where traditional determinants of masculinity, such as aggressiveness and emotional detachment, represent a major obstacle to the fulfilling and positive father-child relationship. That relationship is partially discussed in relation to the concept of equal parental partnership, implying not only the new forms of fatherhood but the new forms of masculine identity as well. Unfortunately, there are still many obstacles to modern fatherhood, the most important one being gender inequality manifested through traditional male bread-winner and female child-rearer models. Subsequently data is provided on values and practices of Croatian men and women regarding childcare, that were collected and analysed in 2013 as part of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) and its survey on family and changing gender roles. The arising conclusion is that although many positive changes have been made the Croatian society has got a long way to go to both equal parenting and gender equality. Also, it is important to note that as a subject of political and legal controversy fatherhood cannot and must not be considered independently of the wider gender issues regarding motherhood, social status of men and women, as well as socio-economic assumptions of both fatherhood and motherhood.*

**Keywords:** father, fatherhood, masculine identity, political power, hegemonic masculinity, *pater familias*, gender roles, equal parental partnership, gender equality, parental leave, childcare, family.

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## INTRODUCTION

A *father* or a *male parent* is from a biological point of view a male person whose sex cell has been successfully joined with a female sex cell in the act of fertilization, thus helping to form a new organism. Fertilization was originally thought possible only through a sexual act; later, with the development of medical procedures, it was also made possible through other methods. A father is therefore the child's closest male ancestor. Biological meaning of the term is expanded with social and legal designations, making the father also the male person who adopted and/or raised the child. Although correct, the stated definitions of a father represent a simplified viewpoint that only indirectly suggests the deep historical significance of the term as well as legal, religious, political and cultural implications of its changes and its evolution. Closely related to the term *father* is the term *fatherhood* or *the state of being a father* whose modern understanding implies the successful performance of activities, obligations and responsibilities with regard to child's education and development (Tanfer and Mott, 1997).

The starting point of this paper is a discussion of the concepts of *father* and *fatherhood* and their literal and symbolic meanings. A short historical overview combined with selected theories of fatherhood serve as a framework for placing the issues regarding modern fatherhood in the appropriate context. By recognizing the link between the fatherhood and the wider socio-political context light is shed on the obstacles that modern fathers face in their efforts to become better parents. Fatherhood has throughout history been given multiple meanings, and the modern one has had significant and far-reaching implications not only on the changes in the under-

standing of the role of the father but also in the understanding of masculinity, male roles and male identity. It is also the subject of political and legal controversy that cannot and must not be considered independently of the wider gender issues regarding motherhood, social status of women, as well as socio-economic assumptions of both fatherhood and motherhood.

## FATHER(HOOD) THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Alongside the abovementioned primary meanings, the notion of *father* has been attributed various other, symbolic meanings throughout history, being used, among other things, to describe a male person that had a significant or crucial role in origin or early history of a social entity (e.g. *father of the nation*). It was often used for elders or doyens of a group or an institution, older persons worthy of respect, or for something that embodies the personified attributes of such men. In politics, a father was a symbol of sovereignty, leadership and of stewardship, which is aptly visible in the phrase *city fathers*. Also, in ancient times, Roman senators and dignitaries, i.e. male heads of leading Roman families were also called *fathers* (lat. *patricii*). Furthermore, this notion has a prominent place in religious terminology, as it is used in Christian theology referring to the first person of the Holy Trinity. Also, early ecclesiastical theologians, whose writings were theologically authoritative, were called (*church*) *fathers*; (*holy*) *father* is the synonym for the head of the Catholic Church, and a father or *pater* is commonly used in reference to priests.

These largely political and religious meanings of the term suggest that the father was a symbol of authority, possession, domination, and virtue throughout history. He was the benevolent provider of life, the

wise teacher about the world, stern punisher of defiance and resistance, traditional leader obeyed by his subjects and holder of great power. Chevalier and Gheerbrant (2007) claim that he is the “image of all authoritative figures”, lords, protectors and gods. The power that he inherently possesses is the power that often inhibits, discourages emancipation, restricts, humiliates, sterilizes and keeps in state of dependency; using psychoanalytical terminology, the power of the father is *castrating*. The father is also the symbol of rationality and of consciousness and as such stands in opposition to the instinctual and subconscious. He is also the representative of traditional values and the opponent of change. The mythical father is therefore often the creator of culture and civilization. In his book “Totem and Taboo”, Sigmund Freud, on the other hand, finds the beginning of social organization, moral restrictions and religion in the often-used mythical image – the original act of killing a violent father (Freud, 1984).

The key question that should be asked at this point is why the father became the symbol of power and the metaphor for a sovereign. Are power and authority the natural attributes of fathers? What is the origin of this identification and what are its consequences? Sebastian Kraemer (1991) offered possible answers to these questions by claiming that the power of the father began immediately with the inception of his concept, i.e. with the establishment of the connection between the man and a new human being. That connection has been unknown throughout much of the human history since it was not nearly as simple to ascertain as it was the case with a mother and her child. It was only with the development

of horticulture and domestication of animals that the relation between sexual intercourse of a woman and a man and the conception of a new human being was determined. Up until that time the procreative role of a man was attributed to nonhuman natural forces such as the wind, rivers or insects (Graves, 1955 according to Kraemer, 1991). It is the knowledge of the biological relationship between a man and the creation of a new human being, which was formed during the Neolithic or the first agricultural revolution, that Kramer deems pivotal for the origin of the traditional patriarchy, i.e. social relations based on the power and authority of the father. It is important to emphasize that these social relations were not based exclusively on observed biological role of a man; rather, they were also established in connection to economic and political changes characteristic for this early stage in history. The creation of a ruling class, as a direct consequence of great accumulation of wealth by individuals, implied the need for violent or nonviolent legitimization of authority, and the latter was possible through the establishment of a link between the authority and the supernatural (Kraemer, 1991). This is the origin of the evolution of myths in which the initial female<sup>1</sup> or animal supreme deities, or deities established through the forces of nature were replaced by the male ones. According to Kraemer, this evolution took place gradually, where the mythological man in the role of the procreator replaced the winds and rivers, first as a young seducer of a queen, than as a young king whose short-lived rule ended in ritual sacrifice, to be finally transformed into a powerful father-king who creates the world and names all of its creatures in the pro-

<sup>1</sup> As attractive as the notion that female deities suggest the existence of a primitive matriarchate might be, it is not true. Matriarchal societies, for which there is no historical confirmation, are often confused with matrilineal, matrilocal or matrifocal societies, none of which suggests real social power of women/mothers.

cess. It is that very father-king who is the central figure of almost all world religions.

The results of this evolution are institutions of gods, kings, fathers and forefathers, represented by temples, churches, palaces and tombs, as well as by the accompanying rituals. Kraemer claims that in case of fatherhood, those rituals pertained to marriage and adoption, while the fatherhood itself, established both on political and divine power, stood as a major evidence of masculinity and a necessary prerequisite of social power. Its social significance can be noted in several phenomena. For example Roman-law principle "*Mater semper certa; pater est quem nuptiae demonstrant*" („The [identity of the] mother is always certain; the father is whom the marriage vows indicate") (Petrak, 2013) suggests not only the age-old dispute over biological fatherhood but legal attempts of securing it. When biological fatherhood was not possible old Romans found a way of circumventing it without losing its social and political benefits. Men from upper senatorial class or even emperors often adopted sons<sup>2</sup> in order to foster or reinforce alliances and to ensure a smooth succession of their estate, family name and political power. Much broader was a dowry phenomenon that the family of the groom gave to the family of the bride and that could also have been returned in case she failed to bear a child. These practices mainly served to realize the right of fatherhood based on status and ownership, where the biological relationship with the child was not always of primary importance. Also, love and care for the child were often completely marginal. This is precisely wherein lies the tragedy of traditional fatherhood: its social positioning in the sphere of status and power made men leaders and owners, simultaneously depriv-

ing them of the possibility to connect on an emotional level with those whom they governed – women and children. “The paradox of patriarchy ... is that, while a father may be “head” of his family, simultaneously he is constrained from being a central character within it” (Lewis and O’Brien, 1987 according to Kraemer, 1991: 383).

This is precisely the kind of interpretation of the role of the father in the family and the society, although without drawing attention to the patriarchal matrix in its root, that Stephan Barth (1998) uses to begin his historical examination of fatherhood. From the patron-like father-son relationship in ancient Egypt, defined by the omnipotence of the father and his domination over the child, through early Hebrew culture where the father was the absolute ruler of family and children, whose protective and punitive role was equal to that of God the Father, all the way to the Greek polis of Athens where the biological (i.e. genetic) role of the father was crucial since it guaranteed citizenship and participation in the Athenian democracy, the meaning of the father was not based on his relationship with the child but on the relationship that he established with the wider community through owning a child.

The most vivid example of what was stated above is again the Ancient Rome where the term *patria potestas* (“power of the father”) in the Roman family law referred to the power that the male head of the family had over his children, regardless of their age, and which included, among other things, the right to capital punishment and the right to appropriation of all the children’s belongings. Although *pater familias* could allow a child to handle a certain part of the property, it still belonged to the father in the eyes of the law. Father

<sup>2</sup> The sons could even be older than their adoptive fathers.

lacked interest in raising and caring for the children, and if he refused to recognize the child as his own, it was left to die. Over time and with the accompanying changes in legislation, father's authority over life and death was reduced to minor punishments, and the sons gained the right to possession of goods acquired through military service, earned through other forms of labor or inherited from their mother (*patria potestas*, 2014). However, in defense of Roman fathers, Dieter Lenzen claims that their historical image is somewhat distorted because it is based on the interpretation of Roman legal documents, causing us to overlook their acts of mercy and caring, while accentuating those of cruelty (Lenzen, 1991 according to Barth, 2000).

Barth claims that the image of the father changes somewhat in the period of early Christianity, which he calls *the utopia of fatherhood*, since it was characterized by traits usually attributed exclusively to mothers - empathy and gentleness. Unfortunately, medieval changes in the Christian church, primarily the introduction of celibacy, i.e. the adoption of the prohibition of marriage for priests around year 100 AD, contributed to the increased lack of connection between the priests and everyday life (where family and relationship with children played an important role), to the social and religious elevation of spirituality motivated asceticism, followed by implicit devaluation of fatherhood as an aspect of masculinity. The 14<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by the crisis of papacy, Marian piety and the divinization of motherhood. Under the influence of the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, the spiritual role of the father was substituted by the one played by God, and

the educational one by the teacher. This left/put the father primarily in the role of a breadwinner and a protector. During the Renaissance and the Early Modern period, thorough changes in family relationships took place, which Lenzen attributes to indirect consequences of great epidemics. As the child became more valued, a more intimate relationship was established between it and its parents, primarily its mother. As men left home either looking for work or to wage wars, many children grew up without their fathers. With the Protestant reformation, the care for children was explicitly left to mothers, and under the influence of Luther's stance that marriage was not only a matter of church but also of state, preconditions were created for transfer of the father's role to the state<sup>3</sup>. With the Enlightenment and the introduction of mandatory education, the right to raise children, besides that of their mothers, was assumed by professional teachers.

Although affirmative towards the teaching profession, J. J. Rousseau in his 1762 book *Émile, Or Treatise on Education* condemned the common practice of fathers who, being committed to their careers, left the care for upbringing and education of children to hired teachers and servants. Even though he considered the duties of mothers to be greater, he nonetheless insisted on the importance of the father's care and the time he spent with the children. What is more, he elevated the role of the father as one of man's most important duties, duties which were significantly different from those of the mother: "As the true nurse is the mother, the true preceptor is the father" (Rousseau, 1979: 48). By criticizing the perversion of the father's rela-

<sup>3</sup> Although Barth implies that aforementioned transfer deprived fathers of their parental function, we argue that this function, by being elevated to the level of politics, was additionally strengthened in its tyranny and authority. He is, however, right in suggesting a social degradation of the fatherhood when it comes to love and care, as well as in the fact of future state interventions in family relations and raising of children.

tionship towards the children into tyranny, carelessness, and excessive severity, Rousseau created some of the spiritual foundations of the French Revolution.

The French Revolution has contributed to the abolition of ancient negative principles of fatherhood and through the slogan “liberty, equality and fraternity”, brought forth the liberty from the father’s monopoly and tutorship, equality of rights through abolition of differences established on (paternal) bloodlines, and fraternity as the principle for distribution of power within a generation. The revolution largely confirmed the attitudes of John Locke, *the father of classical liberalism*, who in his 1689 work “Two Treatises of Government” dealt harshly with the position of Sir Robert Filmer that the patriarchal family is the foundation and the perfect model of a political system (Locke, 1965). Locke’s philosophy was built on the idea that people are born free and equal and that no one, regardless of whether they invoke a natural or a divine law in the process, has the right to rule over others without their willing and contract-based consent. Locke considered family relationships, where the unquestioned acceptance of absolute submission to the father was founded in natural order and additionally justified with the debt owed to fathers due to the sacrifice they made and all the benefactions they provided for their children, to be an obstacle to the social system based on equality. The idea that “the natural duties of fathers and rulers do not differ in kind but only in “latitude or extent” [...] led some writers to identify paternal authority with political authority, or to treat it as the original and natural form of authority from which political authority is derived, or upon which it rests” (Foster, 1994: 644-645). This is precisely why Locke’s core requirement was one for change of family relationshi-

ps through negation of natural authorities, prohibition of punishments and gentler and more caring relationship of fathers towards their own children. The critique of traditional fatherhood by John Locke, even though primarily aimed at preventing rulers from acting like fathers, also resulted in preventing fathers from acting like rulers and was followed by an attempt to reform or abolish the patriarchal family.

Locke’s philosophy of social contract as well as noticeable liberal optimism regarding its potential for establishing liberty and equality was questioned by Carole Pateman (2000) who, although agreeing with Locke that paternal and political power were not (or should not be) one and the same, i.e. that the procreative power of the father was not the source of political right, claimed that Locke’s interpretation of the abolishment of paternal right as the condition for the abolishment of patriarchy was severely flawed. Pateman demonstrated that the paternal right was only one of the dimensions of the patriarchal society that by its disappearance did not abolish the patriarchy as such. The civil society is still patriarchal because political rights are created primarily from the rights based on sex, i.e. the rights of husbands over wives (men over women), and only secondarily from rights of fathers over children. The relevance of this political discussion is immeasurable, since it offers insight into theoretical and practical difficulties of establishing not only the modern fatherhood but liberal values of freedom and equality as well.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by the first industrial revolution initiated by the invention of the steam engine and its application in factories and in transportation. Factories and mines have mobilized a vast male workforce and brought about the division of labor to domestic work and the public one. The separation of the private

from the public sphere led to placement of fathers into the latter, while mothers, being deprived of the possibility to financially contribute to the family, were designated exclusively to care for the household and children. Of course, Barth claims, this division primarily concerned the members of the upper class who could afford to establish an intimate family environment and pay great attention to children and their education. The lower classes, farmers, craftsmen, and industrial workers were not nearly as much engaged with their children who were integrated into the workforce at a very young age. Regardless of the differences that existed between them, fathers in both models were reduced to breadwinners. Also, male members of the lower classes considered the inclusion of their wives into the workforce to be demeaning, and they strived towards the goal of keeping them at home. This additionally contributed to women taking over the household- and parenting-related duties, while at the same time it overemphasized their love towards the children.

The processes of urbanization and industrialization were accompanied by further dissolution of relationships between fathers and their children and, according to Barth, economic factors contributed to the postulation of “maternal instinct” and the glorification of motherhood. What’s more, there was an abundance of scientific literature stretching well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century that insisted on the exclusive importance of maternal influence in the process of socialization of the children, which led to interchangeable use of the terms “parent” and “mother” (Lamb, 2009). As was already mentioned, this was largely founded on trends in the social politics arena, leading to the construction of family theories according to which men were designated as

financial heads of the family, while women were assigned emotional roles of care and socialization of the child. The lack of maternal care was considered devastating for the child’s development while the father’s contribution was considered trivial or even harmful (Lamb, 2009).

The recognition of the father’s role in the development of the child, which is important to emphasize in the context of numerous contemporary anti-feminist charges, evolved parallel to the development of social movement for the rights of women. Their proponents have correctly identified the relation between gender and societal roles, along with the fact that the female roles were largely defined in opposition to the male ones so changes in one must necessarily affect the changes in the other. They believed that, if true gender equality is to be achieved, it was necessary to reform not only female but also male gender roles. From the feminist perspective, it was clear that women, burdened by both public and private obligations, will never achieve equal rights in the labor market and at home as long as men will consider that market exclusively as their basic and only area of interest and engagement. This was precisely why equal male participation in the care for the household and child rearing appeared exceptionally desirable. The conclusion of feminist theoreticians Nancy Chodorow (1999) and Carol Giligan (1993) that true gender equality will be established when fathers and mothers equally participate in child rearing appears to be markedly plausible, with the caveat that it should not be taken for granted that the required emancipation concerns only women. Men increasingly demand the right to equality in child rearing and the social acceptance of an active paternal role and in that context the argument by some essentialist feminists for

the defense of divinized motherhood appears to be seriously counterproductive from the feminist perspective.

### NEW MAN/NEW FATHER

Cultural roots of gender roles and accompanying prejudices led some distinguished theoreticians such as Erich Fromm (1986) to a conclusion that there are far-reaching differences between the love of a mother and that of a father. Speaking of the love between a parent and a child, Fromm claims that maternal love is unconditional while paternal is conditional. While a mother loves a child for no other reason than the fact that it exists, a father's love is guaranteed through child's merits. Fromm's terminology is conveniently patriarchal: maternal love is passive, representing nature, while paternal love is active, a symbol of "a world of thought, of artificially created values, law and order, discipline, travel and adventure" (pg. 42). Paternal love, being the love that has to be earned, is inconstant, uncertain by nature and conditioned by the need to fulfill the expectations of others and to perform duties. It demands obedience and submission to authority. Fromm's differentiation of maternal and paternal love implies that the care for the child during its first years should be undertaken only by the mother. Paternal conditioned love is manifested in child's later years, when it becomes capable of learning and understanding the father's role of *showing the path into the world*.

In Fromm's work, therefore, the categories of motherhood and fatherhood are not free from the features attributed to women and men, whereby the male ones are associated with rationality and sociability, while the female ones are related to emotionality

and naturalness. However, those features cannot be defined as *free-floating*; instead, from a social perspective, they are placed on a strictly hierarchized scale of values where those that are female are positioned significantly lower. Of course, when speaking of maternal and paternal love, Fromm felt the need to defend himself from potential accusations by stating that he used Weber's "ideal types" i.e. Jung's "archetypes", and insisted that not every mother or father necessarily loves in the manner described. Even though he mentioned a possible reversal of roles or disruptions in order of duties, Fromm implicitly condemned them since he derived both roles and obligations from the (assumed) nature of men and women, from male and female identities.

Even though one can disagree with Fromm's differentiation of paternal and maternal love and the roles that father and mother should supposedly play in the life of a child, Fromm's conclusions are important because they demonstrate a direct, and a particularly significant relationship between fatherhood and the male identity<sup>4</sup>, burdened by history, tradition and politics. When Nancy Dowd says that men's identities as fathers do not exist in isolation from their identities as men she implies that changes in fatherhood assume changes in masculinity and *vice versa* (Dowd, 2000). This is not a particularly simple task, according to Dowd, because as long as the dominant image of a man is grounded on its opposition to the dominant image of a woman, and the latter is characterized by emotionality, tenderness and caring, the idea of a new father will remain exactly that – an idea. Also, as long as fathers are identified by harshness, authority and emotional distance towards the child, it is not likely that new generations of sons will

<sup>4</sup> Of course, the same can be said about the relationship between motherhood and the female identity.



exhibit different traits both as fathers and as men. But misogyny and homophobia, as well as the social understanding of masculinity based on attributes of aggressiveness and violence, are precisely the largest obstacles to accepting other and different forms of identity. At the same time Dowd accentuates that masculinity, as well as femininity, is a social construct instead of a biologically essentialist characteristic, and as such it is susceptible to change. However, Robert Nye (2005) justifiably warns against adopting the postmodern visions of plastic identities, susceptible to being shaped at will, pointing to Bourdieu and his rejection of the performativity of identity in favor of embodiment, that is, the inscription of gender in bodies and structures. In other words, identities exist in dependence to values, experiences and unconscious internalized experiences of reality, they are a social product of power relations, which prevents them from being self-implicating. Nye also stresses that masculinity is not a monolithic category, thereby resonating key works of Raewyn Connell (2005) who identified the plurality of its forms, reflecting differences in class, race and sexual orientation and their relationship with the so-called *hegemonic masculinity*.

Hegemonic masculinity is a “culturally idealized form of masculine character” (Donaldson, 1993: 646). Borrowing Gramsci’s concept of hegemony which is related to the manners in which the dominant class maintains power through “persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways that appear ‘natural,’ ‘ordinary,’ ‘normal,’” Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as a form of masculinity that stabilizes a structure of dominance and oppression in the gender order as a whole (Connell, 1990, according to Donaldson, 1993: 648). Hege-

monic masculinity is founded and perpetuated precisely through the traditional forms of fatherhood established on the idea of fathers as emotionally distanced, disinterested family breadwinners whose engagement within the family is ultimately reduced to strict disciplining of children.

During the last couple of decades, fatherhood has become the object of major media and scientific interest. Mass induction of women into the workforce and their problematizing of the household work distribution, economic recession removing a large number of men from that same workforce, high divorce percentage leading to many men living separately from their children or as single parents and, lastly, introduction of legislation pertaining to mandatory child support and to the parental leave, suggest various aspects of responsibility that men have acquired in the new family context (Rosh White, 1994). Broadening of political tolerance towards alternative forms of family and lifestyles as well as public discussion on distribution of work in the household has prompted many men to question their own values and to expose the social, largely arbitrary and versatile, fabric of many seemingly biological aspects of their own identities. This is an additional argument in favor of the contemporary necessity of emphasizing “masculinities” as multiple and various forms of male behaviors and perceptions of self (Rosh White, 1994). “Discovering the affection, autonomy, and agency of babies and children, disconcerted by an unusual inability to cope, men are compelled to re-evaluate their attitude to themselves” (Donaldson, 1993: 651).

Modern fatherhood, according to Mira Čudina Obradović and Josip Obradović “requires not only the adoption of “maternal practice”, but also highlights the importance of showing warmth and emotions,

expressing protection, care and interest in child's health and progress in school and in society in general" (Čudina Obradović and Obradović, 2006: 258). Such stance, therefore, implies significant changes in the understanding of the male identity and represents a form of transgression from the established and traditional patterns of masculinity. At the same time, it implies that the involvement in the upbringing of one's own child is not exhausted by the amount of time a father is present in the life of a child, but that it also includes the sincere desire and the need of a man to accept the role of a parent in its entirety. Otherwise, the imposed role of the father as an occasional consequence of "necessity or rationality of family organization" (Čudina Obradović and Obradović, 2006: 259) can hardly result in successful fatherhood and successful upbringing. In that sense, the modern fatherhood is related to the concept of "equal parental partnership" implying the relationship between two parents who "reject traditional social pressures, common stereotypes of fatherhood and motherhood and gender segregation of work roles inside and outside the home. Through daily mutual agreements and by adapting to the situation, they make decisions on distribution of children-related duties and tasks, with children and for children, according to principles of effectiveness, economy and just distribution of effort and time, instead of according to the principle of "male" and "female tasks", "mother's" and "father's" duties" (Čudina Obradović and Obradović, 2006: 264). Furthermore, the model of equal parental partnership encompasses fatherhoods outside of those realized within the traditional marriage and family. Such understanding of parenthood implies a high degree of paternal involvement even

in cases when a father lives separately from his child. Also, it implies that a favorable upbringing can be provided by families of different kinds and structures, where the important thing is that the child has one responsible adult person at its side, to whom it may or may not be genetically related and with whom it will create an emotional bond.

The expansion of the degree of male participation in the upbringing of children is considered useful for men (husbands and fathers), women (wives and mothers), children and the society in general. Russell and Radin (2009) claim that taking care of children helps fathers acquire feeling of fulfillment through participation in the development of their children and creating closer bonds with them. The feeling of fulfillment mentioned here is unquestionably broader than the one resulting from traditional male efforts focused exclusively on the career. Lois Hoffman (2009) claims that the father's involvement lifts the burden off of wives and mothers whose satisfaction with life is significantly increased through reduction in household-related obligations and responsibilities, while Sagi and Nachman (2009) highlight the positive effects of fatherhood on society in general when individuals manage their family and public life according to their desires and interests. Society also benefits from relieving women from part of the family burdens, as well as relieving men from exhausting all of their capacities in the labor market. In the center of all this are the children who profit both directly and indirectly from the father's involvement in their life. The indirect benefits are derived, of course, from the increased satisfaction of the parents themselves.

The direct benefits are suggested in a series of research that demonstrate father's

<sup>5</sup> It is important to say that this only refers to the involved and nurturing fathers.

major influence<sup>5</sup> on child's cognitive development, educational achievement, psychological well-being, social behaviour and adjustment in adulthood<sup>6</sup>. Also, in recent years attachment theory by British psychologist John Bowlby was enriched by the dual attachment model according to which the relationship between children and fathers is much greater than it was previously thought. A shift in the importance we place on fathers allows us "to re-evaluate the importance of a father's role and to recognise that his significance in his child's history is equal to that of a mother's" (Bowlby, 2010: 28)

### CROATIAN EXAMPLE

There are numerous obstacles on a man's path to an engaged fatherhood. The first one develops in early childhood when male children on average have fewer opportunities to socialize and learn parenting roles. While motherhood, as we already stated, is perceived as an essential component of a woman's identity, followed by the social pressure on women to become mothers, as well as social sanctions should they fail to do so, the same mechanisms do not apply to men. Despite the efforts made by new generations of fathers to establish significantly different relationships with their children, many of them often remain insufficient. Many new fathers, unprepared for fatherhood as well as for establishing warmer emotional relationships with their children, often perpetuate the roles and models they adopted during their

own childhood. That way, intentionally or unintentionally, they prepare the children for their future roles in private and public spheres by encouraging gender based traditional behaviors and values.

Even though the common separation of women who stay at home to take care of children and the household and men who leave the home in order to earn the means for its survival is no longer dominant in the modern Western societies, the belief that women are still the principal child-rearers and men the major breadwinners still persists<sup>7</sup>. Equal opportunity employment as well as equal rights for men and women, regardless of them being major political objectives, still cause outrage among many (both male and female) citizens, even in highly democratized societies, and are often seen as an assault on family and society. The family in question is the one where men and women have strictly separated roles and both suffer the consequences of that separation. The labor market is proving to be equally conservative and men who do not make it a priority are viewed unfavorably. McGill (2014) points out that, as opposed to the women whose adaptation to new roles within the gender revolution has been the subject of numerous research projects, men and their experiences fail to attract sufficient scientific interest. In spite of the modern powerful social proclamation of dedicated fatherhood, the persisting model of a man as a breadwinner places fathers in a somewhat paradoxical situation where one model requires them to enhance

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed overview of research see Čudina Obradović and Obradović, 2006; Rosenberg and Wilcox, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Newer studies have shown that in numerous countries, the dominant male breadwinner model is losing ground to the dual-breadwinner model (The World Economic Forum, 2013; Lewis, 2003) or even the female breadwinner model (Wang, Parker and Taylor, 2013). However, others have contended that in many countries policies continue to rely considerably on maternal care and promote at best a one-and-a-half breadwinner model (Ciccio and Bleijenbergh, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Kaufman and Uhlenberg demonstrate that men earn more and work more hours when becoming a parent (which is consistent with the provider role) (McGill, 2014).

their engagement at work<sup>8</sup>, while the other requires them to reduce it. Fathers dedicated to their children are compelled to accept certain career setbacks that are often experienced by those deemed by their employers to be insufficiently (meaning not utterly and completely) dedicated to their work.

Even though many national family laws, including the one in Croatia, prescribe that the family relations are based on principles of gender equality and on the responsibility of both parents for child rearing and upbringing, as well as requiring both parents to care for the child equally, jointly and through mutual agreement, regardless of whether they live together or separately (see e.g. Family Act, NN 116/03, 17/04, 136/04, 107/07, 57/11, 61/11, 25/13), in practice this is often not the case. Data from 2010 provided by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics show that when dealing with the divorce of parents, the court practice was to assign the child to its mother in 85.1% of cases (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). This trend has been increasing over the past several decades (in 1960, the abovementioned practice was applied to 78.8% of cases) and suggests not only the possible discrimination against men, which has been rightfully emphasized by associations for equal parenthood and rights of fathers in Croatia and Europe, but also the discrimination against women as well. Namely, such actions perpetuate the framing of both men and women into traditional parental roles whereby a man's contribution to parenting is measured by financial, and a woman's exclusively by homemaking criteria. Unfortunately, such court practices

are strengthened by the dominant practices of fathers and mothers themselves, being based on both social and economic context as well as on the dominant values that are perpetuated through them and by them. For example, according to the 2012 data by the Croatian Gender Equality Ombudsperson, an overwhelmingly larger percentage of mothers make use of various forms of parental leave<sup>9</sup> (97.42% women as opposed to 2.63% men) (Gender Equality Ombudsperson, 2013). Since the Croatian Act on Parental Benefits came into effect in 2009, which made incentivizing fathers to make use of parental leave as one of its objectives, there has been only a slight increase in the number of such cases.

When examining the attitudes on principal characteristics of future family relations on a sample of 500 second- and third-year students at the University of Zagreb in 1998, Smiljana Leinert Novosel (1999) presented that 75% of those questioned agreed that in 20 years, husbands and wives will partake equally in the care for the children. Unfortunately, the future has proven to be somewhat less optimistic.

The results of the research on attitudes, opinions and behaviors related to family and gender roles conducted by the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb in 2013 as part of the international research project International Social Survey Programme on the representative sample of 1000 participants, citizens of the Republic of Croatia, show a somewhat different situation than the one students in 1998 had hoped for. Only 64.8% of women and 55.2% of men disagreed with the statement that it is a

<sup>9</sup> According to the current *Act on Maternal and Parental Benefits in Croatia*, there are several types of leave: 1) from 28 days (more if necessary) before the expected due date until the 42<sup>nd</sup> day after the childbirth – used by the mother; 2) from the 43<sup>rd</sup> day after the childbirth until the 6<sup>th</sup> month – used by both parents, depending on their agreement; 3) from 6 months after the childbirth in duration of 8 or 30 months, used by both parents or just one of them, up until the child turns 8. It is also possible to use the right for working part-time for childcare, as long as there is a need for it. This right can be used by both parents.

man's job to earn money and a woman's to care for the home and family. 75.5% of the participants thought that paid leave should be used exclusively or mostly by the mothers, 24% said that the mother and the father should each take half of the paid leave period, and only 0.5% felt that the fathers should use paid leave exclusively or mostly<sup>10</sup>. No male participants thought that the paid leave should be used exclusively by the fathers.

Three quarters of the participants (74.7%) thought that the most desirable way of organizing the family and work life of the family with a preschool child is the one in which the mother is at home or works part-time, while father works full-time, while only 0.9% of the participants thought that the reverse situation is desirable.

When asked to estimate the amount of time spent caring for the family members (children, elders, sick members or members with special needs), the women stated they spend an average of 21 hours per week caring for other members of the family, while men stated they spend only 10. Even though this question does not refer to childcare alone, the answers provide some potential conclusions regarding the differences in involvement between mothers and fathers. Even though half of the participants felt that the women should not have a bigger responsibility in childcare (50.1% of men and 61% of women), as much as 95.3% of men worked full-time while their child was of under school age, while 70.2% of women did the same. Also, as much as 97.4% of men, in comparison to 76.6% of women, worked full-time after the youngest child started school. One in five women (23.3%) stayed at home during the child's under school age, while only 2.4% of men

did the same. 20.1% of women and 1.5% of men stayed at home after the youngest child started school.

In addition, 25.8% of female and only 2.6% of male participants felt that they are the only ones to make the decisions on how the children should be brought up. Even though 61% of the participants felt that the decisions regarding children's upbringing are made on a joint basis, a significant difference in answers between men and women was noted (65.9% of men and 56% of women).

The stated results suggest that, in terms of parenting, the Croatian society has got a long way to go to both equal parenting and gender equality. The results also show how deeply rooted the traditional gender roles really are. Unemployment and low standard of living have an additional effect on establishment and reaffirmation of the stated values (Galić, 2012). However, slow but optimistic (modern) trends on a global level with regard to a more equal division of duties in the household and upbringing and a more just view on partner relations suggest that the stated data will probably change for the better in the upcoming years. While the gender revolution primarily referred to emancipation of women, the men are facing the same emancipation in terms of their own identity and the fatherhood as its key element. They will also have to fight the dominant, albeit archaic and unjust, social values and the discomfort regarding their own identity, the discomfort of their own fathers in their heads. Only then will fatherhood come into its full fruition and we believe that it will benefit not only the new generations of daughters and sons, but fathers themselves as well. The repercussions of the rehabilitation of the father and fatherhood are not just those within the

<sup>10</sup> There was no significant difference of opinion between men and women.

family; they also have a profound political importance. A decontamination of this term, clarification of its symbol from the age-old political connotations of authority, discipline and punishment is a precondition for establishing a more just and peaceful society, a society which will not create a worse world but a better one *in the name of the father*.

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### Sažetak

## ***U IME OCA: RASPRAVA O (NOVOM) OČINSTVU, NJEGOVI PRETPOSTAVKAMA I PREPREKAMA***

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*Razmatranje o pojmovima otac i očinstvo i njihovim doslovnim i simboličnim značenjima ishodište je ovoga rada. Nadalje, kratki povijesni pregled kombiniran je s odabranim teorijama očinstva koje služe kao okvir za smještanje pitanja povezanih s modernim očinstvom u prikladni kontekst. Zaključuje se da taj kontekst počiva na povijesnoj povezanosti između očinstva, muškog identiteta i političke moći gdje tradicionalne odrednice muškosti, kao što su agresivnost i emocionalna otuđenost predstavljaju glavne prepreke ispunjavajućem i pozitivnom odnosu otac-dijete. O tom se odnosu djelomično raspravlja u odnosu na koncept jednako roditeljsko partnerstvo, što ne ukazuje samo na nove oblike očinstva, nego isto tako i na nove oblike muškog identiteta. Nažalost, još uvijek postoje brojne prepreke modernom očinstvu, najvažnija od kojih je rodna nejednakost koja se manifestira putem modela tradicionalnog muškarca hranitelja obitelji i žene odgojiteljice djece. U nastavku se prikazuju podatci o vrijednostima i praksama hrvatskih muškaraca i žena u pogledu skrbi za djecu koji su prikupljeni i analizirani 2013. godine kao dio međunarodnog programa socijalnog istraživanja (International Social Survey Programme – ISSP) i istraživanja u sklopu istog o obitelji i rodnim ulogama koje se mijenjaju. Zaključak koji se nameće je da, usprkos tome što je došlo do brojnih promjena, pred hrvatskim društvom je još dugačak put do ravnopravnog roditeljstva i rodne jednakosti. Isto tako, važno je uočiti da se očinstvo, kao predmet političke i pravne kontroverzije, ne može i ne smije razmatrati neovisno od širih rodnih pitanja povezanih s majčinstvom, socijalnim položajem muškaraca i žena, kao i socio-ekonomskim pretpostavkama očinstva i majčinstva.*

**Ključne riječi:** otac, očinstvo, muški identitet, politička moć, hegemonika muškost, *pater familias*, rodne uloge, ravnopravno roditeljsko partnerstvo, rodna jednakost, roditeljski dopust, skrb o djeci, obitelj.