Brigitte Liebig
Mechtild Oechsle (eds.)

Fathers in Work Organizations

Inequalities and Capabilities,
Rationalities and Politics

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Barbara Budrich Publishers
Opladen • Berlin • Toronto 2017

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Reconciliation: The Different Political Goals of Organizations, Governments and Lobbies for Fathers and Children in Germany

Stephan Höyng

1. Introduction

The increase of the active participation rate of fathers in childcare has been a policy demand of the women's and men's movements since the 1980s in Germany. Since then, family research also has documented that fathers increasingly want to take care of children. Indeed mostly young fathers (of young children) want to contribute to family life and childcare instead of solely having a breadwinner role (Fthenakis and Minsel 2001; Walbiner 2006).

Since the beginning of the new millennium, the image of caring fathers has been strengthened by government policies, and supported by the media as well as men's and women's organizations, and it has become an important economic issue in Germany. Nevertheless, a shift away from the role of men as family breadwinner, or at least as the main earner still has to be made. Up until now, men who are involved in paid and unpaid labour ('earning and caring') are affected by a double burden and face the same risks as women face in the "rush hour of life" (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2006b). However, fathers have also start to seek for reconciliation measures and changes in working conditions today.

In this chapter, the author intends to look at current German policies for fathers from two different angles: a) the perspective of a social researcher, focussing on work and education, and b) the perspective of a political actor for men's interests towards caring masculinities. Most of the arguments will be based on my own research of male bonding culture in the realm of work (Höyng and Puchert 1998a), on men practicing unusual working patterns (Puchert, Höyng and Gärtner 2005), and on studies about the reconciliation of work and private life (Höyng 2012).

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2. Government family policy provides the framework

The field of family policy in Germany is represented by different actors: important stakeholders for fathers' policies are work organizations, trade unions and governmental institutions. Furthermore, education and care facilities, usually representing the interests of children, fathers, mothers and partners are relevant actors as well.

State family policies provide an important framework for balancing the interests of work organizations, fathers, children and partners. Current examples of these policies are parental benefits and parental leave regulations, or the guarantee of childcare facilities for children from three to six years. However, tax splitting for married couples or registered civil partnerships that fosters single-earner couples, and a maintenance law based on the dual-earner couple, also make clear that state frameworks influence decisions concerning the share of labour in partnerships, and strengthen different models of (un)equal gender balance.

The income-based parental benefit, in place since 2007, convinced a growing number of employed fathers to make use of it: an average of 29% (in individual cities and counties like Jena and Main-Spessart it is about 50%) of entitled fathers took the parental benefit (Statistisches Bundesamt 2014: 7–8). Nevertheless, the number of parental benefit months taken by fathers in Germany is only about 7.7% of all months taken (WSI Gender Datenportal 2015d). Since 2015 the *Elterngeld Plus* (a new model of parental benefit) supports the dual-earner/dual-carer model, within which both partners work part-time, and both care for children.

Since 2013 the guarantee for institutional childcare has been offered for parents in different family forms, but statistics show that it seems especially to meet the needs of single parents and dual-earners. As in other western federal states, the legal claim for institutional childcare for children up to three years was related to the parents' employment, training or studies until 2013 in Germany. But the guarantee itself did not (yet) change reality. A great demand for more care facilities still exists, especially in the western part of Germany.

Currently it seems quite difficult to picture governmental messages concerning active fatherhood: state campaigns provide a new caring image of paternity, the creation of a maintenance law based on the dual-earner model, and measures such as parental benefit focus on an active role for men in childcare duties. But at the same time, an even more important legal framework sends contradicting messages to all unmarried fathers-to-be through the first legal steps they have to take: The recognition of paternity, child custody and maintenance obligations primarily emphasizes the assumption of financial responsibility and neglects the social responsibility of fatherhood. The legal

framework therefore encourages men to take responsibility for children only in a particular way. Simultaneously, the fact that child custody is given to all unmarried mothers without questioning the right and duties of care and education also illustrates a traditional image of motherhood in society, in which children are ('naturally') associated to women. The difference between messages of campaigns and laws illustrate the conflicting incentives in state activity.

3. Family policy is challenged

Over the last few years family policy in Germany has been challenged, especially by two mega-trends: the formation of more diverse lifestyles (individualisation) and a declining birth rate (cf. Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2010).The first trend is characterized by an increase of diverse lifestyles, models of relationships and ways of life (cf. Wippermann, Calmbach and Wippermann 2009). Family models are becoming more and more diverse; and the numbers of separated parents and dual-earner families are increasing. Particularly men's fear of insecure social and economic conditions leads to less interest in having children (cf. Huber 2015). Secondly, as a consequence of the declining birth rate, a shortage of skilled workers is emerging in some regions and economic sectors (Scambor et al. 2013). Executives and policy makers are looking for labour force reserves, and support women's and mothers' employment as well as a later retirement age and lifelong learning.

Within this context family policy supports and strengthens certain images of the family. It takes position in an area of political conflict around images of family between traditional and progressive ideals (cf. Schneider et al. 2015). And current government policy is still trying to adapt to the interest of traditional voters. It still picks up on the interest of most employers to take advantage of their male workers as much as possible, for example by means of income splitting and care benefits at home.

Today, family policy is facing the challenge of stopping the declining birth rate, while at the same time supporting the integration of more women into the labour market as a result of a growing skill shortage. Government family policy also intends to strengthen dual earner/dual-carer-families, and fathers' family work. Parental benefits can be seen as an instrument for this:

> *In retrospect, it can therefore be stated that supporting active fatherhood in the context of 'sustainable family policy' is created as a by-product of the political agenda, while originally it was to increase the birth rate and not*

primarily to produce justice with respect to the division of labour between the sexes (Baronsky et al. 2012: 35, translation by the author).

The political measure of an income-based parental benefit simultaneously reflects social tensions. These politics are based on the assumption of employed parents, and particularly high-earners, who avoid having children because they fear decreased standards of living as well as career disadvantages (ibid.). This is exactly the social group that is privileged by parental benefit. For low-earners, in contrast, wage replacement of about 67% of their income is not enough, and people without gainful employment will not feel supported by an income based welfare regulation; they come away with a fixed allowance or empty handed.

As we see different motives for and different ideals in family policy, it seems obvious that incentives are sometimes conflictive. A progressive diversity policy has to reflect on this situation and especially take notice of the needs and equality of all the groups involved in society.

4. Different needs of organizations, children, fathers and partners

In the above-mentioned area of conflicting interests, it can be helpful to work out the resources and needs of the groups concerned and the interests of the stakeholders. The following is an outline of the different interests and needs of organizations, fathers, children and partners in the context of fatherhood and reconciliation in Germany.

4.1 Organizations want to gain, bind and benefit from qualified specialists

Usually organizations are interested in growth and profits. This matches with a work culture based on male bonding in which employees in leadership positions experience payed work in the organization as the starting point of all activity and as the main focus of life (Acker 1992). In this dominant work culture, performance is defined by availability, commitment, physical capacity and participation in informal networks. Informal rules have to be accepted and personal loyalty has to be shown to the management (cf. Höyng and Puchert 1998a). One condition for being promoted is to demonstrate social homogeneity and similarity (Ohlendieck 2003). Long-term disadvantages of this

work culture, for example impairments of health and the exclusion of personnel (those who do not bond), are often ignored (Höyng 2012).

In fact we do not see a general skills shortage in the labour market, but bottlenecks and labour market adjustments in individual regions, industries and professions (cf. Czepek et al. 2015). Reconciliation policy used to be an instrument to increase the labour market participation of women (cf. Czepek et al. 2015). Yet such a promotion of work roles for women is quite limited. In recent years it has become the norm for organizations to offer their reconciliation measures to both genders. Nowadays the management of organizations offers work-family balance measures (e.g. temporarily part-time work, flexible working models) for men (and women) in order to keep workers with high potential in their organization. Less attractive fields of work, like the defence industry or the military, polish up their image not only by certified family-friendliness, but also by special measures for fathers (cf. Liebig, Peitz and Kron 2016). It is *en vogue* for human resource departments to present attractive work-family balance measures like childcare and flexible worktime models for men in order to reach out to highly skilled workers. At the same time, organizations intend to profit from the labour of their employees as much as possible. The experiences of reconciliation measures for women usually show a glossy presentation and a poor daily practice.

4.2 Children need a family, healthy conditions and protection

Family policies reflect the relevance of ensuring every child is as qualified as possible for the future. Since it has attracted public attention that early childhood education is highly relevant for later achievement (Thole et al. 2008), there has been more attention given to quality in kindergartens and day care. Education deficits because of class, origin, gender or other socially relevant markers should be reduced. Taking the interests of children as a starting point, early childhood education has to be a place of informal learning and development.

The United Nations state that children's rights are protection, participation and promotion (United Nations 1989). The German children's lobby organization "Deutscher Kinderschutzbund" defines similar needs of children: protection from violence and from poverty, healthy food, family time and a child-friendly living environment are only some of the outlined needs (Deutscher Kinderschutzbund, 2014: 30–33, 16–17). Fulfilling these needs generates a huge responsibility for parents and for the whole society. Fathers and mothers have to provide the economic base, care for the children's safety and health, and be active in improving their environment in their favour. But there should also be time left to spend with the children. This sounds like an

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excessive demand for parents as long as the community takes little responsibility for a child-friendly environment or for the protection of children from poverty.

In recent years educational experts have assigned more importance to men with respect to the upbringing of children – at home and in institutions of care and education (cf. Hurrelmann 2012; Hüther 2008; Rohrmann 2012; Brandes et al. 2015). From a psychological perspective an active relationship between the child and the father is important for socialisation: the father provides a male identification figure and, according to bond research, is important for the development of social skills (Klinger 2015). Research on fathers shows, for example, that they play in a more rough, exploratory, stimulating and challenging manner than women. They seem to favor different types of interaction, making activities exciting and exploring dangerous areas (Brandes 2010). However, Brandes also illustrates that the positives for children are less due to a special 'male' nature or a gender-typical approach. Instead, he assumes systemic effects on children of two highly involved parents who are complementary in their educational qualities (ibid.). Children therefore do not benefit from a specific male education but from parents with their own attitudes, and men in professional child care as role models for caring men (Brandes 2015).

4.3 Fathers wish for more time for their children

Many fathers wish for less work in favour of spending more time with their children. Current research shows that fulltime working fathers would reduce paid working hours, and part-time working mothers would increase their paid work for about the same amount of time (Absenger et al. 2014). If there was no gender pay gap, many couples could turn these wishes into reality without financial losses.

Actually, most fathers do not reduce their work hours, but even work more than men without children. The average weekly working hours of fathers is 41–42 hours in Germany (cf. WSI Genderdatenportal 2015a). Only 5.6% of fathers work part-time, but 9.6% of employed men without children do (WSI Genderdatenportal 2015b). It seems too easy to conclude that fathers just pay lip service. There are a lot of fulltime employed fathers with other working-time preferences. 41% of working fathers fear that parental leave could have a negative impact on their careers (Burkhardt 2015: 37). They need security that their valuation and professional recognition does not depend on assumptions, but on their activities and abilities.

Many fathers do not want to gain negative attention in their organizations (Gärtner and Bessing 2015) as they still feel responsible as breadwinner and

provider. Instead of special regulations for working fathers, organizational changes for all employees and changes in work culture would help fathers much better. But currently it is not likely that concerned fathers in different statuses of paternity, with a variety of social backgrounds, incomes, time and mobility requirements, will engage for change in the dominant patterns in their organizations.

Reconciliation measures such as shift work or telework will definitely suit some of the differing needs of fathers. Sustainable support could provide a culture of reconciliation (Gärtner 2005), in which it would be common for employees to make deals around working conditions that fit with private and/or family duties. If not only men, but also organizations wanted men to care for their children, a working culture could be expected in which a strong link is drawn between paid and unpaid labour (Höyng 2012). Measures would be more flexible, including not only shift work, but also reducing and increasing work hours without disadvantages for the employee. "Time sovereignty" (Mückenberger 2015: 2) would allow more time for and flexibility in the organization of family work, without sacrificing the job.

Fathers without permanent and full time contracts are not often reached by family policy; unusual forms of paternity and of work-care patterns are not even touched. There are many different needs of fathers who do not participate in the labour market, are unemployed or receive a precarious income, for example as trainees, students or freelancers (Halrynjo and Holter 2005). Most fathers without standard employment are highly interested in a more stable, secure and also responsible connection to the organization (cf. Höyng 2010: 255f). In order to spend more time with their children, fathers need working conditions which allow some time sovereignty.

Good working conditions are not enough; to be content, fathers also need a new self-image as a male carer. Most young fathers between 20 and 39 years of age see themselves in contradiction to society: their personal role models and overall strategies include egalitarian partnerships (Lück 2015); yet they believe that the majority of society follows the model of a complementary partnership with a breadwinning father and caring mother. If most young fathers do not represent this model, for whom is a complementary partnership relevant? Is it predominantly represented by older generations, the media or the elite, or is it just a tradition developing a life of its own (cf. ibid.)? Constructing themselves in contradiction to society seems to be important for these men. But these competing cultural models may also illustrate a role conflict: the ambiguity of reaching for both the care role and the provider role at the same time (ibid.: 230f). As long as the role of a male carer is not a masculine one, active fatherhood is setting men apart from hegemonic masculinity, and that makes it difficult to create a self-image as a man (cf. Scambor et al. 2005). By

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imagining themselves as courageous and avant-garde, young fathers can care and simultaneously see themselves as brave, which is a pattern of hegemonic masculinity (Seehaus 2015). They need "a new definition and public recognition of male sexual identity, including caring, child-oriented attitudes and behaviours of men" (Huber 2015: 135, translation by the author).

In order to spend more time with their children, fathers need a close cooperation with mothers. If mothers believe that dealing with children is an excessive demand for fathers, and do not share the responsibility, they are discouraging men (Seehaus 2015: 72), and many fathers will give up trying sooner or later. Seehaus (2015) concludes, based on research which concentrated on fathers, mothers and parents of the middle and upper classes, that mothers seem to be very ambivalent about the integration of their partners. These mothers wish to maintain the definition of power in regards to care work, which can be seen as similar to reserving sovereign rights. Fathers need mothers to have confidence and allow them to have access to the child.

4.4 Needs of partners

Most partners of fathers want a fair division of domestic work and care, but find limited conditions for combining paid and unpaid labour (Höyng 2009). In Germany 38% of employed women without children work part-time, while 70% of employed women with children do (WSI Gender Datenportal 2015b). Many of them want to increase their working hours.

As only 5.6% of employed fathers work part-time, mothers retain the main responsibility for domestic work and children (WSI Gender Datenportal 2015b). Regardless of the labour force participation of mothers, the division of responsibilities in families is traditional: family labour is still allocated to women (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2010: 191). 82% of women in Western Germany, but only 53% in Eastern Germany, claim that familial care is the reason for their part-time work (cf. WSI Gender Datenportal 2015c). For a fair division of domestic work and care, both partners should be responsible; this includes the presence of fathers at home. Fathers should be available in special situations, in order to organise daily duties (for instance taking a free day in case of a child's illness). Until now, in such situations only a few fathers take over (Volz and Zulehner 2009).

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5. Changing work cultures – overcoming obstacles

In regards to fathers' reconciliation of work and family life, there have to be improvements on the level of the employers, the institutional childcare and – in a more personal sense – at home. Some of the most important aspects shall be pointed out below.

5.1 Changing work culture in organizations

In order to solve the problem of skills shortage, in the last decade the recruitment of women for STEM[1]-occupations was fostered by state-funded campaigns. As that is not enough, employers have to devise new recruitment strategies. Now companies and organizations want to recruit young men by attracting them through their needs; the support of active fatherhood as one among others. This is provided for by economic and governmental policy campaigns, including meetings and conferences with the German chancellor Angela Merkel (Bundesforum Männer 2014a, 2014b).

Obviously, organizations and businesses competing for skilled workers are about twice as active in fostering reconciliation measures: "Companies are considerably more active in the area of reconciliation if they expect difficulties in finding skilled workers" (Czepek et. al. 2015: 4, translation by the author).

Analysing the list of certified family-friendly organizations in Germany we find a lot of organizations with mainly female employees, or organizations with highly specialised jobs (Audit Beruf und Familie 2015). But a few technical measures like telework or working time accounts will not reduce the stress for parents. A certification has to be only the beginning of a change in working culture. The cultural change needed in politics and business, and in the minds of employers and employees, is much deeper: we need a culture of reconciliation (Gärtner 2011; Höyng 2012).

Organizations could develop a new work culture which fosters satisfied, healthy and committed employees. They would perform better with open networks instead of male bonding. Active fathers, and of course women, would participate. Such family-friendly working conditions and sustainable products can provide satisfaction and success. Some small community orientated organizations no longer reward a permanent presence or an overload of tasks. They already benefit from a new understanding of performance and working time (Oya 2015).

Trade unions request that employers take responsibility for common welfare. The 'Confederation of German Trade Unions' is agitating for the hu-

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1   STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

manisation of work (Magazin Mitbestimmung 12/2014 and 1+2/2015), for gender equality and for a general shortening of working time (Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut 2014, 2015). Some organizations do not count working time anymore, but rather performance. However, this is not a reconciliation measure, as performance-only orientated work does not solve parents' problems. If wages are only performance related, this also places a very heavy burden on workers (Lott 2014). Therefore, time should still be relevant for the measurement of wages. On the one hand the organizations usually expect far too much from their employees. On the other hand, many employees have internalized responsibility for their job such that they engage themselves until self-exploitation. Protecting workers from self-exploitation and consequences like burnout and other serious illnesses is in the responsibility of themselves as well as the organizations.

5.2 Changing work culture in education and care facilities

The educational system in Germany seems to be outdated with respect to working culture. Educational institutions and care facilities still seem based on structures of the industrial age, while trying to prepare children for the digital age. For example, the daily time-frame of day care centres and schools is related to the industrial workers' time structure of former times: from eight o'clock am to four o'clock pm and with collective annual holidays. But a decreasing number of parents work in this way. The inflexible time structure of care and education hinders fathers and mothers with different work patterns. In the field of tension between adaptation to current employment, (de-)regulation and parents' and children's needs, new modular structures have to be generated (cf. Frühe Chancen 2015). Modular structures imply various learning offers for pupils at different stages of learning. Educators and teachers have developed adapted models serving different interests and different approaches to learning (Debus 2014: 116).

Some children's institutions seek closer ties with fathers. For instance, fathers are often in kindergarten during the acclimatisation process, but then somehow disappear. Experts assume that more male educators could improve this situation (Rohrmann 2013). Many child care institutions are looking for ways to recruit more male educators (Koordinationsstelle 2012). New family education programmes address fathers in order to keep them close to their child's development (Mikoleit 2013). A gender reflective development of institutional childcare will also bring female educators into better cooperation with fathers (Koordinationsstelle 2014).

5.3 Changing culture and overcoming obstacles at home

Many fathers do not follow their wish to care personally for their children. Sometimes they abandon their claim of work reduction in fear of career disadvantages. In some organizations this fear is superfluous. Fathers could represent and bargain for their requirements with more self-confidence (Gärtner 2012). As employers need skilled workers, the coming generation of employed parents will have an increasing chance to make their wishes for equal division of labour come true. The skills shortage gives skilled fathers the chance to choose an employer with real family-friendly conditions. A researcher of Generation Y (today's 20–35 year-olds) put it in these words: "We have the privilege to claim and put into practice our wishes and needs, for that was already fought for in the generation of '68" (Burkhart 2015: 36, translation by the author).

But even when well designed working conditions exist, an equal division of domestic work and childcare has still to be negotiated. Fathers have to increase their domestic work. That means giving up privileges and getting involved equally in family-work and housework. Taking full responsibility means, furthermore, to be available for their children – even in special care situations. In such a change, mothers have to transfer their part in the field of childcare to fathers. For a trusting cooperation with fathers, a new division of care work has to go hand in hand with dividing responsibility and definitions of power.

After separation and divorce, especially in partnerships based on the housewife-breadwinner model, men suddenly become aware of the costs of limited familial commitment. Children then often go to live mainly with their mothers. Some mothers and judges do not comply with fathers' demands to spend as much time with their children as mothers do. Therefore, some lobbies of fathers in separation and divorce claim that mothers are supported by law and fathers are not treated equally (Bundesforum Männer 2014c). Those groups often complain of general social disadvantages for men, and claim feminist control, but they ignore the social privileges and disadvantages for other groups (Scambor et al. 2014). It is not easy, but care of children has to be negotiated on the basis of equality and respect.

The social acknowledgement of the 'masculinity' of male carers is a socially relevant phenomenon, but has to be negotiated in relations as well. This would protect against men's temptations to valorise themselves by referring to hegemonic masculinity (Seehaus 2015). There are hints that a caring masculinity is starting to become a norm in European societies, although with big variations all over Europe (Scambor et al. 2013). This upcoming caring masculinity has to be promoted and explained to men and fathers who fear changes and uncertain gender roles. It also has to be defended against men

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who react with extreme traditionalism to these transformations, or who fight against gender equality.

The ideal case for children would be family time with both parents and an educational cooperation and partnership between parents and care-institutions (Deutscher Kinderschutzbund 2014). What promotes children's development really needs to be considered. For example, for some parents children's time needs to create "a qua natural predetermined childlike time structure; this proves in practice to be unable to be circumvented and therefore socially not a modifiable setting" (Seehaus 2015: 71, translation by the author). An educational cooperation between parents and care-institutions could be a frame for reflecting these very high expectations aimed at parents and parents' self-expectations.

6. Conclusion for government policy

Current family policy follows the goals of increasing birth rates and human capital for the labour force. Economic arguments lead to the aim of a balanced division of work between men and women. Therefore, female labour market participation and the balanced division of family care between parents is supported. This means to support male care participation. The risks of too much paid/unpaid work in the "rush hour of life" have to be reduced by reconciliation measures, while not limiting the economy too much. Early childhood education improves educational success. Such an economically guided social and family policy is not only reacting to new forms of living and working and the increasing relevance of a dual-earner model, it is part of their creation. A policy like this considers the needs of fathers, mothers and children only as far as they correspond with its economic goals.

For parents the changes in work and employment increase the possibilities of modernizing the reconciliation of work and family and gender, but also make it necessary to negotiate the conditions (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2010). "But as much as parents endeavour to cope with these structural fragmentations and differentiations of modern societies, these challenges are best handled by families with the appropriate resources. The structural problems cannot be solved at the individual level of the family" (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend 2006b: 261, translation by the author). It seems that families need more and other kinds of attention and support from government policy.

Organizational and governmental time-use policy has to create measures that fit for the different life situations of families, and to consider the needs of

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fathers, mothers and children. It has to find measures supporting patterns as different as the breadwinner model and the dual-earner model. More or less, actual reconciliation measures such as the guarantee of kindergarten places may help dual-earner couples. But even those couples need another kind of freedom: "It takes both opportunities and conditions to adjust working hours in the course of life according to respective living conditions" (Nelles 2015: 27, translation by the author). Government policies have to give incentives for a change in work culture and the division of responsibility in the family. In organizations this would be reflected in a culture of reconciliation.

Further, general work-related measures can improve conditions for most parents. The Deutscher Frauenrat and the Bundesforum Männer (German Council of Women and the Federal Forum for Men) are demanding, in a joint declaration, a general reduction of work hours and more income equality. This is seen as an opportunity for fathers, organizations, children and partners. A general reduction of work hours and more fulltime jobs would be useful for many parents, in order to spend more time on child care without being disadvantaged. Parents would be able to have family time and community involvement in a child-friendly environment. They might sometimes be less available for their employer, but for a longer period of time they would be more satisfied and presumably healthier (cf. Deutscher Frauenrat und Bundesforum Männer 2015).

Family formation behaviour could be polarised in terms of existing resources (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2010). The living conditions for fathers and mothers with low or precarious income security, few professional opportunities and little acknowledgement should be increased. A general reduction of income differences and more equal wages regardless of the position in the hierarchy and working areas could also improve the conditions for care in many families (cf. Deutscher Frauenrat und Bundesforum Männer 2015). It must be possible to gain an income which is high enough to secure subsistence and retirement, even with reduced general workhours.

Government family policy does not focus enough on the needs of children, as yet. But children need care and education possibilities regardless of the work situations of their parents – and policies have to be developed to guarantee this. Overall, the best way to foster children's development is to reduce children's poverty. Children's needs may be responded to by addressing and securing a basic income directly to every child (Bündnis Kindergrundsicherung 2015).

A fathers' policy that is based on gender equality and social justice should address the limits of policies which are related only to economic goals. It has to acknowledge that the far-reaching perspective of gender equality goes hand in hand with measures for social justice. The more equal the living con-

ditions of a population, the higher their health and wellbeing (Pickett and Wilkinson 2010). Øystein Holter argues, in his transnational macro study on gender equality, well-being and health: "The combined new evidence, as a whole, points to gender equality as a benefit for men as well as for women" (Holter 2014: 541). Fathers policy should be directed towards fathers', mother's and children's well-being. It should locate itself as a part of an integrated agenda for a social strategywith the aim of a better quality of life for families and in general. Therefore it has to demand systematic attention to gender related questions, innovative social solutions and the adaption to different requirements of families (Wissenschaftlicher Beirat für Familienfragen 2010). It would set the reduction of children's poverty, income differences and work hours as generally basic measures at the top of the political aims.

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