

Parenting from an Intercultural Comparative Perspective – a Focus on Fathers

**International Commission on Couple and Family Relations
14–16 November 2019 in Rome**

Yasemin Uçan & Samia Aden

Department of Socialization with Emphasis on Migration
and intercultural Education (Prof. Dr. Manuela Westphal)
University of Kassel



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1. Debates about fatherhood and migrant fathers in Germany

Ideal image of **active fatherhood**

- Being engaged as a father beyond the breadwinner role, e.g. taking on early childhood care, reading out stories etc.
- Emphasis on migrant and refugee parents as deficient
 - Need of long lasting institutional care for children from these families to compensate for deficient socialization

(Westphal/Motzek-Öz/Otyakmaz 2017)

- *“Parents who – due to their situation in life – tend to show rather **adverse parenting** and interaction patterns and who are not able to offer a sufficient conducive learning environment to their children“*

(12th Children and Youth Survey, p. 230; cf. Otyakmaz/Westphal 2013)

- Image of the patriarchal migrant father as „Muslim, male and disintegrated“

2. State of research: Fatherhood and Migration

- Family as a neglected issue in the field of migration research
(Nauck 2007, Pries 2008, Krüger-Potratz 2013)
- Research emphasis is mainly on motherhood/mothers
- Begin of research on fatherhood and migration during the 1970s with FAFRA (Westphal 2000; Herwartz-Emden 2000)
 - *All three groups* show a concept of fatherhood that is going beyond the breadwinner role
 - *Lacking resources, e.g. time* → Tension between concepts of parenthood and conditions for parenting
 - *German fathers*: Absent father and demands of their partner
 - *Work migrants from Turkey*: Parenting for upward social mobility
 - *Former USSR*: Loss of participation and influence opportunities on children; demands of children

3. Theoretical Framework: Parenthood & Concepts of Parenthood

- Are **subjective definitions** of maternal and paternal responsibility, understanding of the parents' role, beliefs about the ability for being influential on child development and all relevant pedagogical practices

(Kalicki 2003)

- Is subject to historical, cultural und social change
- Gender as an important analytical category

(ibid.; Young 1999; Herwartz-Emden 1995)

- *Relational character* of **concepts as dynamic and processual**; status, social position and positions within the family system are continually changing due to internal and external influence

(Matzner 2004)

- **Migration and therefore reflection about the ideas and structures of fatherhood from the host society**

- Depending on framing conditions **like personal, financial and temporal resources**

(Westphal 2000)

4. Studies about migrant and refugee families in Germany

“Perspectives of parents in and from Turkey on early childhood, child development and parenting”

- Duration: 2014 – 2017
- 60 problem-centred interviews (Witzel 2010) in German und Turkish language
- Mothers and fathers (1st and 2nd generation) of pre-school aged children
- Case analyses and structuring content analysis (Kuckartz 2015)
- Project leaders: Prof. Dr. Manuela Westphal and Dr. Özlem Otyakmaz, University of Kassel

Self-representation and intergenerational negotiation of fatherhood and gender roles

I: Well, do you remember what was important to your father regarding parenting?

B: Yes, it was really all about respect, discipline, school was very important for him, too. But my dad didn't really spend much time with me or my siblings, I'm not too sure about them, but he didn't spend much time with me. **My dad was also working in a two-shift roster, he left Turkey back in the days to work in Germany.** Yes, they didn't know any different. Parenting wasn't such a big thing back then. **Getting information wasn't as easy** as it is today. Yes, it was like this, my mother was always doing the preschool run, right? Saying it like it is. **Now my partner and I, we are either taking turns getting the kids to preschool, or most of the time we are doing it together.** But with us kids back then, it was always my mum who was getting us there and picking us up. **He just didn't have spare time to do it. He was always working, during that period he was also self-employed, right? While he was working, he just never had any time for those things.**

(Homer Simpson, father, 2nd generation, retail salesman)

Reflecting on racism and discrimination in parenting

I: Can you explain why **emancipation** plays such an important role for you? What does emancipation mean to you?

B: Yes, I want her to – well, we're still living in a society..., well she has Turkish roots, if I can still call it Turkish roots. I just want her to be able to stand her ground, towards men or just towards and, well, **to be free and independent in her decisions and that she doesn't need to take into consideration: ,I am a female, I am a Turkish woman or a women with Turkish roots.'** As I said before, she's 4th generation, **I'm not even sure, whether we should still be talking about Turkish roots**, but she should be free and self-confident and not and not let anybody tell her any different.

(Selim Karasu, father, 2nd generation, insurance broker)

Reflecting on framing conditions for active fatherhood

Reflecting on experiences with one's father for constituting own father role:

- Acquisition: abstract values like politeness, social justice
- Also: transforming values according to today's conditions, especially gender and generational relations

Reflecting on framing conditions:

- Awareness of limited resources of the first migrated generation due to uncertain circumstances, (shift) workload, and insufficient information opportunities
- Reflecting on experiences of racism and discrimination
- **Political frame conditions:**
- Lack of affordable pre-school spots, lack of flexibility
- **„Sometimes I have the impression that we live in a society hostile to children.“ (Selim Karasu)**

First empirical insights on fatherhood within the context of flight and asylum in Germany

Qualitative baseline study „Somalis in Germany“

- over 82 biographical narrative and structured interviews (languages: English/Somali/German) in different German cities
- 62 % male, 38 % female, born between 1950-2004
- part of a 3-year research initiative (2017-2020) on Migration of the **Max Planck Society**. „***The Challenges of Migration, Integration and Exclusion***” (WiMi) from (Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale)
- Project leaders: Dr. Tabea Scharrer, MPI Halle & Dr. Markus Höhne, University of Leipzig
- period of data collection from April to December 2017
- Data analyzed according to the coding paradigm of the Grounded Theory (Glaser/Strauss 2005)

Requirements of fatherhood under conditions of flight and asylum

Entitlement of actively shaping fatherhood beyond intergenerational relations

„I am a representative of the advisory board for foreigners in my city (...), **I partake on parent's evening in my school or pre-school... Well, I'm trying my very best to take every opportunity to shape, or move anything. (...) Well, I am an active person, I'm very involved in everything concerning Somalis and migrants and politics in general. ...Whether it's security policies, social policies, housing, just about anything political in my suburb – I'm in. Even though I don't have a voice. (...)**“ (Abdullahi, 35)

Requirements of fatherhood under conditions of flight and asylum

Implication of political legal uncertainty on parenting practices

„The challenge is whether I can keep living here (...) and whether I can raise my children here. It might not be working out because there is a possibility that I return to Somalia. **As long as we don't have German citizenship (...) it's possible that Somalia is doing well, and all of us Somalis are going to return to Somalia.** That's a good thing. On the other hand it's challenging because you have a plan (...) and because you still don't have German citizenship there's no chance/opportunity to stay in Germany for good.“

Simultaneity of the uncertainty of return and national integration

“...despite the challenges I was telling you about right now, is that **I want to-, my plans are to achieve a professional qualification and I want to graduate from university and I want to raise my children.** But that is not functioning properly, because it is possible that I have to return to Somalia”

(Abdullahi, 35)

Requirements of fatherhood under conditions of flight and asylum

Implications of racism and discrimination on parenting practices

„It makes you a bit sad that you can't tell your children you are at home here. I cannot tell my children, "Hey, you are German." Although they were born here, although they will grow up here, of course, but that I can't say, oh, you are. Or even if they are going to receive a German citizenship here, of course after 18 years, that's a huge challenge. **That there is someone in the office who sometimes dislikes the colour of their skin or their religion, and that racist experiences or difficulties they may face, that's what worries me, and I say, "My Children, you are not Germans, you are Somalis"**“.

That is, so that later they will not be disappointed if they eventually face racism. That's one way or the other, we are Somalis, we are not at home here.” (Abdullahi, 35)

5. Comparative conclusion



- Negotiation with the ideal image of active fatherhood:
 - Adoption vs. boundaries in realization of ideal parenting (T)
 - National integration vs. transnational responsibilities and activities (remittances, phone calls etc.) (S)
- Legal and political conditions:
 - Insecurity of legal status und uncertainty of return (S)
 - Second and third generation of labor migrants reflect on better conditions in Germany compared to the first generation of fathers (T)
 - compatibility of family and career (S and T)
- Racism and discrimination:
 - Obtain perfect German skills and encourage self-confidence (T)
 - Encouragement of ethnic identity and religious belonging (S)
- Knowledge about being observed as deficient migrant father
- Pressure and need for self-justification in their fatherhood

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