

LONE FATHERHOOD, THE DEFICIT OF MOTHERLY LOVE AND INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION

Abstract. *The article critically reflects on the idea of motherly love found in the works of Fromm, Parsons and Bales and empirically examines how lone fathers understand this idea and how it is embedded in the actions of public institutions. Evidence from interviews show that lone fathers perceive motherly love as the only deficit in their care for their children. While through their day-to-day care they intentionally or unintentionally deconstruct gender norms and the boundaries of masculinity, they simultaneously restore them at the level of a less tangible emotional experience. The idea of motherly love being reproduced on the institutional level leads to discrimination against (lone) fathers and the marginalisation of atypical masculinities.*

Keywords: *lone-father families, motherly love, archetypes, fatherhood, masculinity*

Introduction

This article was triggered by the unexpected finding that most of the lone fathers we interviewed while researching care work and masculinities in Slovenia reported that the only thing they cannot provide their children with is motherly love. Further, their narratives showed that the argument of a special emotional mother-child bond ('motherly love') has been used by institutions to limit their parental rights. Informed by these two findings, I aim to investigate the idea of motherly love on the micro level, by questioning how it is understood by lone fathers, and on a mezzo level, by examining how it is embedded in the actions of institutions.

I start by assuming that lone fathers must inevitably reflect on their care roles in relation to two identities: the identity of a lone-parent family and the identity of a father/man. The former identity is burdened by the ideology of the family and the stereotype that two-parent heterosexual families are somehow better for raising children than sole-parent families. The other one is burdened by the archetype of 'sacred (motherly) love' and the stereotype

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that mothers are better at caring for their child than fathers. Being the head of a lone-parent family in a social context permeated by the ideology of the family and the mother archetype can trigger many doubts and feelings of guilt in lone fathers. Am I taking enough care of the child? Why don't I have a partner? Does the child lack another parent? Does the child lack a mother?

In considering where these two identities intersect, I first reconsider the theories of Fromm, Parsons and Bales about the family, present the findings of international research on lone-parent families and describe the results of our own research among lone fathers in Slovenia.

Holy Family and Holy Love

The first context within which lone fathers must reflect their position and identity is the ideology of the family, which may briefly be summarised as the belief that a heterosexual and heteronormative two-parent family is superior to other family forms, relationships and lifestyles. In line with this belief, people living in a partnership are considered to be happier than those living alone and that such an environment is most suitable for raising children (DePaulo and Morris, 2005: 58). The vast majority of people strives towards this social ideal and, without profoundly challenging it, also realise it. Conforming with the ideology of the family is thereby socially rewarded with economic, cultural and symbolic privileges. The ideology of the family is embedded in state institutions and policies and transmitted through political, media and professional discourses, as well as in people's daily interactions (Šori, 2015: 204).

The conviction that the heterosexual two-parent family is the 'core unit of society' also finds a substantial scientific basis in classical functionalist sociological theory and other theories building on the perceptions of psychology and psychoanalysis. Parsons and Bales (1955) considered the family as an essential institution for the functioning of society, thereby reproducing the ideal type of family from the 1950s when the father held the primary breadwinner role while the mother was the guardian of their children. In such a family, Parsons and Bales identified two key functions for raising children. The first function is socialisation in which the father plays a unique role as a link between the family and society; the second is the structuring of personality, which involves the assumption of social gender roles (*ibid.*: 19–20). According to Parsons and Bales, the normal psychosocial development of a child requires a maternal (expressive) and a paternal (instrumental) role, which differ and complement each other.

Since the 1960s, most of sociology has deviated considerably from the view that the family form or gender of the parents determine the child's development, but has instead identified as a critical factor the presence/

absence of compassion, love and respect in relationships between parents and children as well as in relationships between adults (Chancer, 2017: 483). Children need at least one responsible, caretaking adult who has a positive emotional connection with them and with whom they have a consistent relationship (Silverstein and Auerbach, 1999: 397). Despite the paradigm shift, we can observe that everywhere – in society, in politics, and in science – most of the interest is directed at heterosexual two-parent families and much less to lone-parent families. For example, the field of fatherhood studies mainly address fatherhood as an issue of gender equality and of sharing of responsibility and work between partners living in a common household. Lone fathers are thus omitted from this framework. These fathers perform all household and caretaking tasks, but do not correspond to the “new fatherhood” ideal established in Western societies through science and politics because they do not fulfil the unwritten precondition of living in a partnership, i.e. do not live in consistence with the ideology of the family.

Another social context within which lone fathers must reflect on their position and identity is the belief that women are more suitable for raising children due to the special bond between mother and child. In the field of sociology, Fromm (1956) in his famous work of *The Art of Loving* established the distinction between motherly love – supposedly unconditional – and fatherly love, which is conditional and can therefore be lost. Fromm shows how the shaping of motherly love starts through pregnancy, breastfeeding and nurturing, meaning that the differences between fatherly and motherly love are biologically determined as they derive from the role of women and men in reproduction. Like Parsons and Bales, he believes that for a child to grow up to become a healthy person, a balance is needed between female and male principles (ibid.: 38–46). Fromm stresses that motherly and fatherly love are regarded as ideal types in the Weberian sense or as Jungian archetypes,¹ yet many feminist readings have criticised the archetypal theory for its stereotypical view of men and women and as a projection of the male psyche (Wehrs, 1987). This is problematic insofar as stereotypes, that is generalised and typified judgements of individuals and groups, are one of the main reasons for discrimination, including discrimination on the grounds of gender (Kuhar, 2009: 19). As emphasised by Chancer (2017: 483), nurture can (or may not) be provided to infants regardless of *gender*, allowing empathetic and compassionate ways of associating with oneself and others to emerge.

¹ Jung (2014: 4–5) understood archetypes as universal images that have existed since the remotest of times and are part of the collective unconscious. The mother, for example, is a common archetype addressed by Jungian psychology, symbolised for instance in mythology as a goddess or a stepmother in fairy tales.

Critical studies of men and masculinities demonstrate that gender roles are not static and monolithic, but that the “ideologies and practices of separate spheres” are changing by altering physical-reflexive practices (Connell, 2012: 264). Both ideologically and in practice, over the last few decades the significance of what it means to be a father and a man has changed or at least shifted from a patriarchal fatherhood role, strongly connected to the breadwinner identity, to a more sensible fatherly role that ascribes equal importance to ensuring the family’s economic survival as to emotional support for children (Hrženjak and Humer, 2018; Rener et al., 2008). Nurturing of a baby – which men seem to be doing more of today than in the past – means the development of different abilities of the male body than those shaped by war, sports, or industrial work; it also means experiencing a different sense of pleasure (Connell, 2012: 11). However, care work remains one of the primary mechanisms of engendering since it is still equated with feminine and subordinated masculinity in society (Hanlon, 2012), thereby distancing men from care (Hanlon, 2009). An interesting question arises here, namely about the relationship between care work and masculinity in a family context, where the mother is absent for most of the time, as in the case of our interviewees. I attempt to answer this question in the empirical part of the article, but I first look at existing data and research on lone-parent families and fathers.

‘Are They Appropriate Parents?’ and Other Research Questions

A lone-parent family rarely appears on a person’s list of life choices. A survey of single people in Slovenia shows that a minority of respondents (25%) would form a lone-parent family, among them more women (31%) than men (17%). Moreover, 42% of respondents agreed with the assertion that children need a home that contains both a father and a mother to grow up to become a happy adult (Šori, 2015). Such views clearly point to the functioning of the ideology of the family but, as the research mentioned above reveals, they are often justified on purely practical grounds, such as the fact that raising children together is easier from both an economic and organisational perspective. In terms of economic survival, the lone-parent family is undoubtedly the least attractive form of family life. In Slovenia, the poverty rate applying to lone-parent families where the parent is employed is 19.6%, while in two-parent families where both parents work it is 2.1% (OECD, 2011: 41).

Lone-parent families are not a historical novelty and can be established for a variety of reasons: the divorce or break-up of partners, the death of one partner, or upon adoption by a single person or as a personal decision to have a child, but without a partner. In the past centuries, lone parenthood

was mostly a consequence of high mortality rates due to illnesses, during childbirth or during wartime, but also extra-marital sexual relations; only in the 20th century did divorce start to prevail as the main reason (Manes, 1996: 1). An important difference in this respect is that in the past lone-parent families rarely lived in a separate household, as mostly occurs today.

In recent decades, it has been observed in Western countries that lone-father families are growing in number faster than lone-mother families. The same trend can also be seen in Slovenia where between 1981 and 2018 the number of lone-father families increased from 9,645 to 28,418, or among all lone-parent families from 12.9 to 20% (Dolenc, 2016: 28; SURS, 2019). The reasons for this increase are not entirely clear. A meta study of American studies in recent decades shows that, by the 1970s, lone-father families were formed chiefly because the mother was unsuitable for raising children (mental problems, illness, no desire for children). Later studies reveal different reasons like the poor financial position of the mother compared to the father, the child choosing to live with the father at the time of the parents' divorce or fathers' desire to remain fully involved in the lives of their children. An older study also indicates that some fathers wanted custody of their children as a form of revenge against their former partners (Greif, 2002; Coles, 2002; Rosenthal and Keshet, 1981). No such research data are available for Slovenia, but we can elucidate the contexts in which lone-father families are formed by using statistical data. These show that the death of the mother is the cause of formation in about one-fifth of the cases (21.84% of such fathers are widowers). In other cases, we may deduce that they occurred due to a break-up of the partners since the possibilities of single men having children with the support of reproductive technologies are slim.

In 2018, 67 divorce proceedings in Slovenia saw custody of children being granted to the father, to the mother in 867 cases and to both parents in 246 cases (SURS, 2017). The conviction that mothers are more suitable than fathers for raising children is reproduced on the institutional and individual level. Since most divorce proceedings conclude with a common agreement, such role-sharing is accepted by most parents and supported by experts and the institutions involved. Data also show that in Slovenia the divorce and custody agreement in lone-father families is significantly less formalised and confirmed in courts than with lone-mother families. In 23.57% of lone-father families, the father is married, which according to the statistical definition means that the mother (wife) has her permanent residence registered at another address.² For comparison, the proportion of married women in lone-mother families is lower by almost 10 percentage points (13.98%).

² The Statistical Office explains that the share of single-parent families covered by the statistics is somewhat exaggerated due to fictitious notifications of residencies at different addresses.

Numerous studies dealing with lone-fathers build on demographic data and compare childcare and child accomplishments in lone-parent and two-parent families, and how both are affected by the gender of the parent. In performing childcare and household activities, lone-parent families show similar gender-marked patterns as in two-parent families. Lone fathers spend somewhat more time on work and leisure activities outside the home, while lone mothers spend somewhat more time on household work and private conversations with their children (Hall et al., 1995). In childcare, fathers who actively seek custody are better at it than fathers who did not have a choice (Wilson, 1988) or, according to marital status, single fathers are better than widowed fathers (Gasser and Taylor, 1976). Some studies reveal that in the exercise of childcare and in dealing with problems the gender of the child plays a role, e.g. some fathers more often expressed their desire to be role models for their sons than their daughters (Coles, 2002: 425) or reported difficulties having conversations about sexuality with their daughters (Mendes, 1976: 443), showing that engendering processes in child-rearing might represent a problem for lone fathers. Still, it is worth pointing out that there are many more similarities than differences between fathers and mothers and, above all, that lone fathers perform primary care (through which motherly love ought to be formed and emanated) in precisely the same manner as lone mothers do (Doucet, 2006; Edin and Nelson, 2013). The differences mainly lie in the engendered expectations and judgments that the fathers and mothers must manage in lone-parent families. As the identity of a man is firmly attached to financial provision and the labour market, fathers with low incomes or who are unemployed are under greater pressure than fathers who are better off (*ibid.*).

In particular, early American studies examined the outcomes of the upbringing and development of children in lone- and two-parent families. They established that children from lone-parent families used slightly more intoxicating substances and their learning achievements were marginally lower than those of children from two-parent families. However, as the main factor influencing positive results, they did not recognise the exact family structure, but the resources available to parents and children: "Because of the emotional and practical stress involved in child rearing, a family structure that includes more than one such adult is more likely to contribute to positive child outcomes" (Silverstein and Auerbach, 1999: 397-8). Similarly, studies comparing the results of child rearing in lone-mother and lone-father families found that the parent's gender does not significantly affect the psychological development and social success of the children. There are some differences in externalised behaviours (e.g. violent behaviour) and the use of intoxicating substances (cigarettes, alcohol, drugs) since children from lone-father families show higher levels in both cases (Coles, 2015:

157). Simultaneously, it seems that children from these families have better opportunities due to the higher incomes and higher permanent employment levels of fathers compared to mothers,³ indicating a combination of two factors: gender and class (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010).

Methodology

In the empirical part of the article, I analyse how ideological beliefs and archetypes about family and gender roles are mirrored in the narratives of lone fathers in Slovenia, with a focus on how they understand the idea of motherly love, and their experiences with institutions. I seek to answer two questions: How do fathers negotiate their gender role with the norms of masculinity? How are individual changes in masculinities determined by wider structures and organisations, how do they allow, modify or even penalise individual changes (Levt et al., 2015)?

The analysis is based on nine interviews with lone fathers living in Slovenia, that is, fathers who have full or primary custody over their children and live without a partner in the same household.⁴ Excluding the demographic section, the questionnaire contained 23 questions presented in four thematic sections: the respondents' current performance of care work, their experience with childcare through the course of life, the attitude to the engendering part of the childcare, and their view of the challenges, costs and benefits that such work brings. On average, the interviews lasted 60 minutes, all questions were of an open type, which enabled the interviewees to individually create narratives and express their emphases.

We obtained the interviewees using the snowball method, through announcements made on the Peace Institute's communication channels and contacts with other non-governmental organisations. The sample of fathers is quite diverse in terms of their age and socioeconomic position. The youngest interviewee was aged 37 at the time of the interview; the oldest one was more than 80 years old and was taking care of an adult daughter with special needs. All the others were taking care of children aged 3–18 years. According to their socioeconomic status, the respondents may be divided into three groups: "underclass" (four interviewees who had a severe illness, which made them unemployed, utterly dependent on the state,

³ In Slovenia, data also show a somewhat better economic position of fathers compared to mothers as the share of unemployed women in single-parent families is 6.85% and in men 5.3%.

⁴ We conducted the interviews in 2018 within the framework of the fundamental research project *Masculinities, Equality, Care Practice – MESP (2017–2020)*, funded by the Slovenian Research Agency, and carried out by the Peace Institute in cooperation with the University of Ljubljana - Faculty of Social Sciences. More information about the project see: <http://www.mirovni-institut.si/en/projects/masculinities-equality-care-practices-mesp/>.

and poor), lower class (two interviewees who were employed but whose incomes were close to the minimum wage) and middle and upper class (three respondents – a musician, a medical doctor and a retiree). Such a sample structure offers a good starting point for exploring fatherhood and masculinity at the crossroads of gender and class, which is especially important because most of the existing surveys include middle-class fathers.

The mother's inability to take care of the children (mental illness, incompetence, violence, unsettled living conditions...) is an important factor for the formation of lone-father families. Death of the partner explained the emergence of a lone-parent family in one case. In all the other cases, the partners had broken up. In four cases, the partners initially agreed that the children would live with their mother, but later there were suspicions of maltreatment and, in some cases, violence so the fathers submitted a request for full child custody. In one example, the partners agreed that the primary custodian of the children would be the father because the mother is unemployed and lacks a permanent residence, while the mother regularly visits the family and is involved in care work and household tasks. In two cases, the court has not yet rendered its decision on custody of the children, but the children live with their father. Combined with statistics, we may conclude that the vast majority of lone-father families in Slovenia are created in circumstances where the mother for different reasons was unable or is still unable to raise children. In line with the ideology of the family and the beliefs concerning the mother's role in raising children, the first solution most of the fathers considered after breaking up with their partners was that the children would "stay" with their mother.

Analysis

The Deficit of Motherly Love

The fathers we interviewed consider there are no significant differences between how they care for their children themselves and how a woman would do that. They perform all household tasks, try to be child-minded, help with school tasks, organise joint trips and so on. The only difference they perceive is that they cannot give children motherly love. Out of the nine respondents, seven voiced such concerns, and represented all socio-economic classes. I now present four distinct perspectives on motherly love that appeared in our interviews, sometimes individually, sometimes in combination. The first perspective defines motherly love as congenital to women, the second as being acquired through reproductive experience, the third as learned through the experience of the female body, while the fourth denies the premise that motherly love differs from fatherly love.

For some fathers, motherly love is simply something women have and is thus innate. This view does not challenge where motherly love comes from or what it means. It is different from fatherly love, it is unconditional. "Your mum is always by your side and always will be", said Ivo (37) while describing the difference. He became a lone father with a child only a few months old when his former partner experienced mental problems, and after psychiatric treatment cut all contacts with her former partner and the child. Ivo himself then became seriously ill; he is unemployed and lives in severe poverty. He craves for a perfect family. If he could choose, he would have opted for such an arrangement where the child would spend most of his time with his ex-partner. Ivo believes that a man can give equal care for a child as a woman, with one crucial difference. A father cannot provide motherly love, because he is a man.

I am trying to be like my mother and father, but I see every time that regardless of how much effort I bring, he needs this... women are gentle, mothers are gentle and good. That's what I think he misses the most. [...] I cannot, you cannot have what a woman has. (Ivo, 37)

Another view defines motherly love as the product of women's experience of reproduction (pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding), which allegedly fosters a special bond between mother and child, which is stronger than the father-child bond. "Mum brought you into the world" is how Damjan, 39, sees the difference between fatherly and motherly love. In his case, at first the child spent most of his time with the former partner according to the belief that a child belongs to his mother. However, when she found a new partner who, in Damjan's words, was "problematic", he decided to take the child. As he says, he even threatened his former partner to consent to him having primary care of the child. Damjan is seriously ill and lives with his son in severe poverty.

A third perspective on motherly love occurs with fathers with daughters. For them, motherly love is a product of the physical and sexual development of the female body. As men, they have no experience with menstruation, the growth of breasts, female sexuality and, therefore, they feel unable to provide support to their daughters. They say they are most proud of the fact that their daughters trust them, but in specific instances they ask other women for help. Zvonimir, 55, is a medical doctor, and at first had shared custody of his child, with the child living with his former partner for most of the time. Because the child was being neglected in the mother's care, he intervened and himself took the child. Zvonimir also thinks that his daughter is missing motherly love.

What I noticed recently is that she misses a female person. My daughter has had no contact with her mother for 3 years and misses her, misses one female type of love, the motherly type of love. My grandmother, however, took over one part of it, but it seems to me that in her everyday life she is missing something. (Zvonimir, 55)

Zvonimir gave an example of being unable to offer what he calls motherly love when describing the time his daughter started to menstruate. In his opinion, in that case, she would have needed a conversation with her mother or another woman. Clearly, a man who has himself never experienced menstruation cannot speak from his own experience about it and probably does not perceive it in the same way as a woman does. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that women and mothers provide better information to their daughters or even talk about menstruation with them. We cannot merely dismiss the biological argument derived from the experience of the female or male body, but simultaneously everyday practice significantly weakens it.

The fourth perspective directly negates the essentialist assumptions about motherly love and stems from the view that it is not a matter of gender, but the fact that everything is more manageable if responsibilities are shared with another person. "If you cannot surrender, relieve yourself of either this psychological responsibility or that specific responsibility, I find this to be a bigger problem than the fact of whether a man or a woman stays with the children", said Matic, who was the only one in our sample to employ this narrative. Matic is a 46-year-old musician who takes care of his children himself because his former partner left and went abroad where she joined a religious cult.

I think you can be as gentle as a woman, you can be as loving as a father as a woman. The fact is that the child develops in the mother's body for the first 9 months, and I do not doubt that there must be a special bond. Except I do not know what it is. [...] We always lack something because we have the ideal conceptions. (Matic, 46)

In the context of lone-father families, appears motherly love as the only feature which distances lone-fathers from mothering and femininity. As they say, they "try to play the role of the father and the mother", however most of them have experienced motherly love as a deficiency of their care for the children. For most of lone-fathers the weakness of a lone-parent family is not just that there is no one with whom you can share work and responsibilities, but that there is no partner with a complementary emotional gender role. Their understanding is close to Fromm's conceptualisation of motherly

love: it is unconditional and a more essential form of love than the fatherly one and involves a form of love that can only be produced and given by a female body and cannot be learned, acquired or given by a man. Yet this archetype can quickly turn into a stereotype, even with men who have experienced that motherly love does not pertain to all women. When there is no motherly love in a woman, as some of the interviews show, it is worthy of a scandal, contempt or social sanctions.

Institutional Discrimination

In the section above, we saw how the fathers themselves reproduce archetypal or stereotypical beliefs that mothers have stronger emotional ties with their children and that it is in the best interest of children after the break up to remain with their mothers. I demonstrate how these beliefs are reproduced through the functioning of the institutions by highlighting cases in which fathers were or may have been unequally treated by the police, courts and Centres for Social Work because they were men. I will not write about positive experiences, and there are also quite a few of those.

When Matic's partner disappeared, meaning the whereabouts of her and one of their children was unknown, and after she left two of them behind, he went to the police to file a missing person report. At the police station, he encountered the following reaction.

I could not even launch a search action because they told me at the police that 'mum went with the kids, as she is entitled to'. That's what they told me, and at the same time the policeman told me that if the situation were the other way around, they would be starting the search immediately. (Matic, 46)

Zvonimir was involved in a similar problem, but in a different role since he was the one who held the child with him because he suspected the child was the victim of violence perpetrated by his mother. The decision was risky, as he notes it was probably riskier than if the same had been done by the mother, but it was facilitated by a social worker who understood the situation and supported him. His former partner later agreed that the child could live with him.

Slovan, 38, tried to make his daughter spend most of her time with him after parting company with his partner. His first obstacle was the Centre for Social Work where they formed the opinion that custody should be given to the mother. A similar announcement was made by a judge, who presided over the divorce proceedings. She explained that fathers can stroll around and do not have a primary motherly instinct. Slovan himself

as well believes that there is such a thing as motherly love, for he describes, among other things, how he cannot give his daughter everything a mother can. Nevertheless, he also thinks that not every mother has this sense. Since Slovan was unable to convince the institutions that he was more suitable for being awarded custody than the mother, he took a different approach – by directly negotiating with his former partner and with the outcome that they now have shared custody, whereby their daughter spends most of the time with him.

It was turbulent because the Centres for Social Work and the courts are not sympathetic to fathers, so I had to use other approaches – communication, rhetoric with the mother and negotiations. I had to eat up a lot, so that I could... Why I insisted was because when we broke up, there was a period of 3, 4 months, when the daughter was always with her and I picked her up in the kindergarten and when mum came for her in the evening, it was such hysterical crying that I wouldn't afford that to anyone. (Slovan, 38)

During the divorce proceedings, Robert's wife falsely accused him of violence against her and children, causing him problems at the Centre for Social Work, the police and the court that lasted for more than 1 year. Nobody believed him that he was not violent. He had to enrol in an anti-violence programme at a non-governmental organisation, making him particularly frustrated. It was only before the court that the accusations were shown to be false and he was given custody over one of the two children.

We have seen by now that the underlying archetype of motherly love and gender stereotypes may influence the application of the law and the functioning of institutions, which has adverse effects on men who want to be or are in the role of primary caregivers. In the case of fathers in the 'underclass', apart from gender, there is discrimination based on health and economic status. Due to illness, these fathers are mostly unemployed and utterly dependent on the state. It is challenging for them to survive from month to month, and they resort to various state and non-governmental assistance programmes and are concerned about the stigmatisation of their children due to poverty. They have an ambivalent attitude to the institutions, in particular, they are disturbed by the procedures of the Centres for Social Work, which some describe as degrading. "You have to beg for everything", said one of the fathers while voicing his dissatisfaction. Not being breadwinners in the traditional sense, this group of fathers can be placed among marginalised masculinities, whereby the state and its insufficient support contributes to their exclusion and subjugation.

Conclusion

In this article, I have investigated how the norm of a heterosexual two-parent family, centred around the archetype of motherly love, affects self- and institutional perceptions of lone fathers. Most of the fathers in our research perceived motherly love as a deficit, as something that they as men cannot provide and is missing in their care for the children. In the context of care work, motherly love is often and sometimes the only aspect by which lone fathers self-determine the boundaries of their parental role and masculinity. While through day-to-day nurturing they intentionally or unintentionally deconstruct gender norms, they simultaneously restore them at the level of a less tangible emotional experience. The belief in a special emotional bond between mother and child was also detected in the procedures of institutions like the police, courts and Centres for Social work. Here, we encounter the paradox that fathers themselves ascribe mothers with a special role in the life of their children, while facing discrimination from institutions exactly due to this conviction. The state marginalises lone fathers and atypical masculinities and adds to their subordination, first by stereotypically ascribing men-specific gender and parental roles and, second, by holding them in extreme poverty, as we saw in the case of the 'underclass' fathers. On individual and institutional levels the archetype of motherly love often turns into a stereotype and may be seen as a powerful engendering mechanism that defines the boundaries of fatherhood and masculinity in lone fathers and men in general.

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