Caring Paternity: Convergence between Changes, Tensions and Continuities in Families. *

Paternidades cuidadoras: convergencia entre cambios, tensiones y continuidades en las familias.

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Abstract

Objective: To present the results of a research study carried out between 2021 and 2022 in Manizales, Colombia, with 19 fathers participating. The topic was family care during the pandemic. Methodology: The study adopted a social participatory approach, structured around the phases of exploration, focus, and in-depth analysis, as outlined by Galeano (2004). Results: Parental care involves changes, tensions and continuities within families. Conclusions: Progress has been made towards male inclusion in the world of caring and sharing responsibility for the upbringing and socialisation of children. This contributes to breaking down beliefs that pigeonhole men into the public sphere. The pandemic situation was not found to be a pretext for fathers to take on caregiving responsibilities, as family agreements and arrangements had already been established. However, the pandemic did serve to readjust routines, time and space, bringing families together around caregiving.

Key word: Family caregiving, the parental role, changes, continuities and tensions, men as parents.

Resumen

Objetivo. Presentar los resultados de una investigación realizada entre los años 2021-2022 en la ciudad de Manizales, con una población de 19 hombres-padres. El tema fue el cuidado familiar en tiempos de pandemia por COVID 19. Metodología. La investigación fue social participativa, a partir de los momentos: exploración, focalización y profundización, que plantea Galeano (2004). Resultados. El cuidado paternal es una convergencia[1] entre cambios, tensiones y continuidades en las familias. Conclusiones. Existe un avance frente a la inclusión masculina en el mundo y la práctica del cuidado, la responsabilidad compartida en la crianza y socialización de los hijos e hijas, lo cual contribuye a romper

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[1]The word convergence in the context of this article refers to the coexistence of these three dimensions - although distinct or even contradictory - **manifest together in the phenomenon of caring fatherhood**.

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las creencias que encasillan y sitúan a los hombres en el lugar de lo público. Se encontró que la situación de pandemia, no fue el pretexto para que los hombres-padres asumieran el cuidado, dado que desde antes se tenían establecidos unos acuerdos y arreglos familiares. No obstante, la pandemia sirvió para reajustar rutinas, tiempos, espacios y unió a la familia en torno al cuidado.

Palabra clave: Cuidado familiar, pandemia COVID 19, lugar parental, cambios, continuidades y tensiones, hombres/padres.

Introduction

The research from which this article emerges was marked by the articulation of two perspectives: comprehensive care and gender. From the perspective of the first point of view, the concept of care is understood by Noddings (1992) as *"an ethic responsive to context, related to attention, concern and responsibility, which recognizes the voice of the caregiver and the cared for"* (p. 107). This conception defines care in three interrelated horizons: care of oneself, care of the other, and the other (Foucault, 1984), which are constantly present in family realities, processes, and dynamics. This is based on the reciprocal and bidirectional view of care, as a human capacity of all human beings, in their condition of caring and being cared for, that is, the ethics of care, which for Gilligan (2013) *"is a human ethic. Caring is what human beings do. Caring for oneself and others is a natural human capacity"* (p. 50).

In line with the above, there is a growing interest in recognizing the parental place of men in times of pandemic and social isolation because, due to these circumstances, some households had to redefine the spaces and times of family practices, and new dynamics have emerged in the processes of interaction, communication, and bonding. However, these redistributions were not always negotiated equitably and, in many cases, the tasks continued to fall on the woman-mother.

The other perspective discussed was that of gender, which resists and challenges patriarchal and hegemonic discourses that seek to maintain and perpetuate the subordination of women to men. Similarly, it also questions the biological theories where unequal and power-based discourses according to which underlie that women are "inherently" qualified to belong to private spaces, such as the home.

Thus, there is a need to question the role of men-parents in caregiving, and whether they are capable of performing it equally or even better than women. The existence of men who, throughout their lives, have demonstrated and cultivated an attitude and willingness toward caregiving cannot be ignored. At the same time, women have been found to be distancing from the social and cultural imaginaries and expectations around parenting and caregiving, considering that the attributes that distinguish men are sustained and reinforced by historically

internalized social mandates that are part of their identities, pointing out—to both men and women—what is expected of them. These attributes and mandates express this dominant masculinity which is their reference and the pattern with which they compare and are compared with, but they cannot necessarily exhibit or exercise them in the different areas of their lives. (Olavarría, 2002, p. 69)

The research showed how increasingly, men-parents are taking on paternal responsibilities such as taking their children to kindergarten, feeding them, giving them their medications, helping them with homework, attending parent-teacher conferences, accompanying them to extracurricular activities, among other practices, which are shaping a new image regarding masculine attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, a scenario is emerging in which men will be the protagonists. Change in males is slow and difficult, but perhaps the situation is now closer than ever to the consolidation of the new masculinities that will transform societies today into more just societies where everyone can be more comfortable regardless of gender. (Sanfélix, 2011, p. 245)

Theoretical and conceptual framework

Historically, care has been associated with activities and practices that seek to ensure the basic survival of individuals along their live course. This is how debates have arisen around the meanings and significance attributed to care, which have revealed bets from the traditional/hegemonic to the modern/alternative (Sánchez and Palacio, 2013). However, feminist studies have played a key role in this process. Their voices have been oriented towards making visible the inequalities, oppression and subordination of women, as well as denaturalizing female and maternal obligations, which basically shows how, for decades, imaginary and asymmetrical relationships between the masculine and the feminine have been established and reproduced, making care essential in feminine identities as a result of perpetuating a patriarchal hegemonic order, which has privileged a hierarchical and binary gender model (Scott, 1986).

In the same vein, Simone de Beauvoir (2005) states that "*a woman is not born, but made*," challenging the idea of maternal instinct and the belief that women are more suitable for caregiving because of biological reasons, a subject that responds to social learning since, through socialization, particular characteristics that constitute identity are appropriated. It is then a social construction of gender which has permeated female personalities and, from its leading and transcendent role in the training and socialization of the individual, the family has been responsible for preparing children to play certain social roles. That is, they have to learn the behaviors expected when they become a man, a woman, a mother, a father, that is, those roles that are specific to each gender and which differ from one stage of development to another. (Musitu and Cava, 2001, p. 118)

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In this sense, the perspective of new masculinities is assumed, based on the approaches of Connell (2003) and Bourdieu (2000), who argue that the active participation of men in care is fundamental to reconfigure gender relations and overcome hegemonic models of masculinity. Connell (2003) introduces the concept of "*hegemonic masculinity*" to refer to the set of norms and practices that privilege a traditional model of masculinity based on power and domination. Active and committed parenthood not only favors family well-being, but also contributes to a more equitable and inclusive society, by challenging the idea that the role of provider is the only one that corresponds to men (Bourdieu, 2000).

Related to the above, the experience of caregiving is shaped by the life course, understood as everything experienced throughout the life of a person, and how these accumulated personal events influence and shape their understanding and practice of caregiving. Amid these experiences and the lessons learned throughout the life course, feelings and emotions emerge and circulate, present not only in the process of socialization and upbringing but also at the time of parenthood and motherhood, impacting family dynamics and relationships.

The experience of emotions is conditioned to the relationship that the person has built with that culturally situated other, with the role that he represents in the life of that other and the significance that he has on that other. The connotation or dimension that the emotion takes in a given situation or situational reality will depend on this. These emotional responses can, therefore, be modulated and it is here where the close connection between emotions, feelings and socializing processes is shown (MartÍnez, 2018, p. 142)

In short, the recognition of care as a social co-responsibility and the inclusion of men in these dynamics are essential elements for the construction of a more just and egalitarian society. Equity in sharing care responsibilities not only challenges patriarchal structures but also redefines family ties and the organization of time and social relationships.

Methodology

The research approach was qualitative, which made possible to make everyday a space for understanding reality from the conversation with the subjects themselves, recognizing the subjective, interactive, and experiential aspects between the participants of the research. "*Qualitative research focuses on understanding phenomena from the perspective of participants in a natural environment and in relation to their context. It looks for meaning, not frequency; depth, not quantity.*" (Hernández Sampieri, Fernández Collado & Baptista Lucio, 2022, p. 384). The research process was based on the methodological moments (exploration, focusing, and deepening) proposed by Galeano (2004), taking into account that they were flexible, constructed, and validated through interaction with the actors. From dialogue, each participant was recognized as an essential element for interlocution, understanding, and analysis.

In the exploratory phase, the participating population was approached in the perspective to understand their context and identify resources, potential, and life situations in family dynamics, after obtaining informed consent. This was carried out through conversational spaces that allowed the knowledge of the actors involved. The recreational spaces (in-person and virtual) and the interactive techniques used (participant observation, review of secondary sources, field notes, social mapping, and exploratory interviews) enabled the participation and co-responsibility of families, especially men-parents, and aroused interest in becoming involved in the research process. It was a time to recognize the thoughts and feelings of men-parents in times of pandemic care. In this phase, the problem focused in establishing relationships with the context.

In the targeting phase, interaction with men-parents was conducted through in-depth interviews (field diaries, focus groups, reflective group discussions, photographs, and video recordings) to recognize their perceptions and feelings regarding family care under the following categories: men-parent role, caregiving, upbringing, and pandemic. Subsequently, transcriptions of the interviews were made, and open and axial coding was used. Finally, in the deepening phase, the category matrix was refined, and the main trends and findings theses were identified. At the same time, the voice accounts from the actors that gave a resounding narrative of the results were selected. A triangulation of data sources, which consists in considering the different perspectives of the actors who shape the reality under study was made. In addition, a comprehensive and interpretative reading of what was lived, the experiences and narratives was also made from the analysis of the thoughts and feelings of men-parents regarding family care, and the final report is prepared to answer the central question of the study. To close the process, a meeting was held with the actors involved in the research, taking into account the results obtained in order to provide feedback on their experiences.

Results and Discussion

Conversations with the actors involved in the research process made it possible to identify, analyze, and understand the feelings and thoughts constructed by men-parents regarding family care in times of pandemic. A substantial thesis of findings was constructed, which was present and interrelated throughout the discussion and constituted the articulating axis of the findings. Consequently, the following proposition was developed: **paternal care: a convergence of changes, tensions, and continuities in families**, as there is a constant movement between these aspects. Therefore, the findings will be presented by interweaving care with family processes.

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Care, Socialization, and Upbringing.

Socialization begins with a series of expectations and dreams on the part of parents, which are transformed throughout this process due to constant contextual demands and the satisfaction of needs. Furthermore, because they experience a series of confrontations when realizing that these aspirations have not been met or that they should be changed as their children develop their own personalities and ways of acting, they may differ from or conflict with what their parents expected of them. Similarly, children begin to directly influence tastes, habits, customs, values, and even the way they are and behave in life, also influenced by other socializing agents and environments with which they interact daily.

Socialization is understood as the process by which people acquire the values, beliefs, norms, and forms of conduct appropriate to the society to which they belong. Logically, the period of early childhood, childhood, and adolescence are important in this process and, consequently, the family is a particularly privileged place for the teaching of these cultural elements. (Musitu and Cava 2001, p. 115). In this context, the results of the research indicate that there is interest and motivation on the part of men-parents to fulfill their paternal responsibilities "well", which shows progress in relation to male inclusion in the world and the practice of care, as well as co-responsibility in the upbringing and socialization of their children, as evidenced by the following account: *"It is a matter of responsibility, because I believe that you have to feel it. It is not just about thinking I have to respond because I am the father. Nooo, it is about conviction and I believe that as a father, let's say subjectively speaking, there is a modification when one is a dad, in terms of this, for example, a certain willingness, a certain conviction to take care of someone"* (Account by Parent JQ. In-depth interview, October 2021).

This account contributes to the disregarding of stereotypes that historically pigeonhole men and place them in the role of the public, the rational, the economic provider and the breadwinner of the family, besides being closely related socially and culturally with power, authority, violence and emotional inexistence (Hernández, 2014). It is also necessary to break with the belief that women are the ones who take "best" care of children, that they are equipped to care for others and that care should be feminized and conferred mother properties. A view of caregiving is recognized as shared responsibility, which entails the accompaniment of parental figures, in this case the man-parent, who assumes the obligation inherent in the guidance, care, accompaniment and upbringing of children and adolescents during their development. This includes the shared and solidary responsibility of both parents to ensure that children and adolescents can achieve the highest level of satisfaction with their rights. (Childhood and Adolescence Code, 2006. p 12.)

Childcare involves responsibility, organization, and structuring of time and space, which are negotiated through agreements or family arrangements, understood as "*daily practices*

accompanied by stability and economic resources that create meaning around emotional bonds and caring habits" (Guerrero, 2021, p. 76). Within family dynamics, it was detected that agreements and negotiations respond to family practices related to interaction and communication processes, domestic chores, time to share in the family, educational accompaniment, family economy, among other aspects, which drive or motivate the distribution of tasks and duties according to parental position, preferences, interests, and skills. This is demonstrated in the testimonies below:

"There was a difficult time when I lost my job, so while she was working, I was the one who did the housework. She would come back home and help me, let's say, with laundry and spreading clothes but then she would leave the food cooked. Later, she lost her job too, and I started taking over that responsibility as well". (Account by parent MP. Family mapping, September 2021).

"The same thing about cooking. My wife is the one who has always being making food. It is a long-standing agreement, since before we got married, we agreed that I do not like cooking, I do not know how to cook". (Account by Parent JC. Family cartography. September 2021)

On the other hand, in the process of upbringing and socialization parents face moral and ethical dilemmas in exercising their parental role. In addition, there are confrontations and tensions between authority figures due to their different parenting styles, linked to care practices, by excess or defect, which lead them to question their duty as educators of their children, as reflected in the following account: *"She sometimes ignores me, and I get blocked, then I stay there, if I squeeze it is bad and if I loosen it is wrong too. Then, what am I doing here?"* (Parent DG's account. In-depth interview, October 2021).

In the face of this account, ambivalences are evident in the families regarding the management of authority and care and parenting practices, due to the transitions they are experiencing in their parental educational styles (Gutiérrez and Isidro de Pedro, 2023) fruit of one's own or others' experiences and their consequences, as well as the significance given to the events experienced. Similarly, a very thin line was recognized between permissiveness, authoritarianism and democratization. Some parents expressed that they did not find a middle ground between permissiveness and authoritarianism, meanwhile, other parents reported being democratic and not authoritarian but, dualities were identified between discourse and practice (Rivera, 2015). In this situation, parents need to be aware of the characteristics and effects of each type of authority, being democracy the most plausible way to resolve these dilemmas.

An essential characteristic of democratic families is the time devoted to communication at home. These are families that expand the quantity and qualify the quality of communication with children. They are families in which ideas and feelings are shared and expressed. Dialogue

and ethics are used, not imposition and rules. These are families in which children speak to their parents, the siblings speak to each other, and parents communicate frequently and with quality [...] children feel heard, consulted, and valued, but they also know that parents are the ones who have authority at home and that decisions will not be made by them (De Zubiria, n.d., p. 11).

On the other hand, men-parents are urged to ask themselves whether their socialization styles and educational practices correspond to the changing times and the demands of the current context. The paternal role is assumed according to the changes and transformations experienced by the family, that is, it is a contextual, dynamic role aligned with the life course of their children, demanding from their parents the skills, attitudes, and practices to provide care in relation to the needs and requirements of each individual. Today, the way parents and children relate is different. The concept and understanding of what it means to be a child, adolescent, and young adult has changed. Parents are called to align their demands, interests, and needs with those of their children. Today, one talks about a two-way and dialectical socialization, where a mutual transformation takes negotiated toward oneself, the others, and the other (Aguirre, 2013). That is, parents must be challenged whether the way they socialize their children is responding to current times, to the stage of life they are going through, and to the demands of today's historical and cultural moment: *"Everyone says that we have to take advantage of the fact that little children play with their parents because when they grow up, they do not even look at you, so what I do is taking advantage of the fact that they are little and like to play with me."* (IA parent account. In-depth interview, November 2021)

Considering the findings, knowing how caregiving implies a tension between renunciations and possibilities for men-parents in the socialization of their children, as proposed by Máiquez, Rodrigo, Capote and Vermaes (2000; as cited in Capano and Ubach, 2013) *"Every parent, or anyone in their position, undoubtedly pretends to be correct to their children, adequately fulfill their role, and successfully perform their parental duties. It is clear that being a parent sometimes leads to high levels of satisfaction and contentment. However, there are other important situations in which there are levels of tension and suffering, experiences that generate frustration, renunciation, and dissatisfaction".* (p. 83)

This parenting experience represents opportunities for parents to consolidate a family, prepare their children to fulfill certain social roles, and face the challenges and adversities of life. In the same way, it was possible to evidence that some men-parents are taking on a leading role in the socialization of their children, in the construction of their identity, and are taking an active part in the upbringing and care of their children and adolescents.

It is recognized that the parental experience also means renunciations for men-parents, as well as for women-parents (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001), not only towards their role and functions, but also in relation to their personal and family life projects, postponing their needs, interests, dreams and aspirations at the academic, social, cultural and recreational level,

among others, giving priority to the requirements of their children, limiting the possibilities of guaranteeing self-care, which is assumed as *"A look at oneself, so that I can only care of the other while achieving self-care. (…) Taking care of oneself is go and meet oneself, but not a meeting devoid conditions of life and the traditions of the time, it is an encounter in context".* (Hernández, 2017, p. 4)

Similarly, men-parents questioned themselves about their practice in relation to care, leading them to reflect and recognize their limited care practices, in terms of their emotions, feelings, ideas, preferences, as exemplified in the following account: *"You go out and the mentality is that your children who are left in the house, who need that we go to work for them, that we go to work to give them what they need for their studies, that they need clothes, that they need shoes, well, for everything they need, to buy them goodies, then that for you is a motivation, that is something that completely changes your life, everything, everything, everything. Already one changes all friends, all outings, everything for your children."* (Account by parent FN. In-depth interview, October 2021).

Care and Life Course.

Care is built on the experiences lived in the life course, some through proximity and others through distance, to the extent that life situations are recognized as vital events that can cause major changes or modifications in the life course of the individual and their family. As stated by Palacio (2004), *"The life course of any person is intertwined with the experience of family life, which creates and produces a wide variety of discourses that contain its reference as a subjective and objective reality. These issues make evident the evaluative burden of personal implications, subjective visions, and the commitment, both theoretical and political, to unravel the complex imbrications of personal and biographical experiences with the trajectories of social dynamics".* (p. 94)

This is how the experience of an event or experience can generate new attitudes toward life, roles and ways of relating that change the course of their life course, as the following account demonstrates: *"He's so sick, sometimes I feel nostalgic because the more days, the more energy he will have, and he wants to play with me, but I want to play less. I have less energy".* (Account by Parent HP. In-depth interview, November 2021). This finding allows inferring that the life course through which men-parents are going through determines the way in which care practices are experienced and given meaning, since it is not only a question of responding to the social and cultural imaginary, but also to other factors of a physical, emotional, social, economic, educational and contextual nature, which influence the experience and the parental care relationship should be taken into account.

The foregoing corroborates that historicity and experiences lived in the family (Martínez, 2017), in a positive or negative way, mark the logic regarding family care, while the study showed that men-parents, from the impact of these events in their life course, have made the decision to break or reproduce certain discourses and practices in relation to care, as

expressed in the following account: *"My parents looked after estates, condominiums in La Rochela. They did that all their lives, let's say that on weekends when my mom was busy taking care of the owners of the houses, I got used to cooking, to keeping the house tidy while my mom was busy. My dad would come home and I would cook for him and when I was doing homework or something, he would help me, so we all kind of helped each other. My mom would take the time and arrive and do it too, she would check on us and run back, so I think that helped a lot, that helped training as well as to feel that interest in the chores of the house".* (Account by Parent JA. Family cartography. September 2021).

This testimony details the confluence of continuities and discontinuities (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001) in family practices, routines, and arrangements versus care. In these life courses, it is observed that the upbringing of these male-parents was mainstreamed by modeling (Aguirre, 2013) in a context that has facilitated their recognition and reproduction. Thus, the family emerges as an educational and learning scenario that promotes family processes and relationships (Rodríguez, 2003). Likewise, it shows the rupture of the cultural and traditional imaginary that delegates the care of the family to the woman-mother (Puyana, 2007), added to a rural context where the role of the father as provider and head of the household has been legitimized over the years and the woman has been legitimized as the responsible for affection.

On the other hand, it is clear that in the face of authoritarian, linear, conservative and unidirectional parenting patterns and practices, men-parents have distanced themselves and are beginning to reassess and re-signify their parental educational role, taking into account that *"what was previously done without asking, today must be discussed, reasoned, negotiated and agreed upon…. Everything becomes discursive"* (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2001, p. 23).

The research reaffirms that the family world becomes an environment where there are permanent confrontations between the conventional and the alternative as a result of changes in gender relations, power relations, family structures and strategies of coexistence and survival. Cicerchia (2014) reaffirms the constant movement that occurs in families, *"given that they intrinsically contain change and tradition, novelty and habit, strategy and norm. And such tension, as it has been demonstrated in this study, has not only altered the texture of intra-family roles, but also the functionality of the relationships between domestic reason and the structural needs of social change".* (p. 14). Thus, in modern families, there is a situation of tension between tradition/certainty and the hew/uncertainty (Bauman, 2001). In other words, there is an unfolding of practices, routines, habits, and customs that are desired to be preserved, and the new dynamics that challenge these patterns, generating a constant negotiation between both poles.

Democratization of Care.

In increasingly diverse and equitable societies, the democratization of care emerges as an important bet to reconsider the tasks of care between genders and generations. Addressing

this issue leads to transforming social constructs and socially established conceptions on the way responsibilities are distributed between men and women, thereby ensuring more just, egalitarian, and recognized family environments. "*Care, seen from a perspective of equity and justice, refers to one of the multiple ways of creating a family today, referring to the proposed approach of democratization of family relations, which seeks not only the promotion of a more flexible and inclusive family coexistence of each and every one of its members, but also the establishment of a social and legal policy regulating gender and generational relations with special emphasis on equal opportunities for men and women as well as promotion, recognition and guarantee of the rights of women and early childhood*". (Marín and Uribe, 2017, p. 32)

Thus, the study showed that some men-parents exercise democratic care by providing affection, tenderness, listening, attention, companionship, and an example to their children, setting up a series of parental competences that enable parents to assume their role in an adaptive way, in accordance with the development and growth of their children, with the guidelines established by society and the opportunities offered by family advocacy environments. (Rodrigo, Máiquez, Martín, and Cabrera, 2009). This is evidenced by the following account: "*Expressing things to him, whether through contact or through words, and there is another one which is with what I do on a daily basis, working, preparing a meal, let's say taking on a task in the house; well I think that these are different and implicit ways of showing affection, and well, also sometimes making the time to go to the garden, I do not know, taking the time to listen when he has something to say, even sometimes in the middle of the adults, then recognizing that they are not listening to him, and then well, asking him, what do you want to say, what is it that you want to manifest? So, it is like trying a little to be watching him to also give him the place in the middle of adults, I think all of those are ways of showing*". (Account by parent SA, in-depth interview, November 2021)

In this same sense, the finding reveals a significant transition in the exercise of the parental role, due to the fact that traditional gender roles are beginning to be overturned and the premise of the democratization of care is confirmed, a premise that talks about social ethics, stating that we are all capable of giving and receiving care (Sánchez & Palacio, 2013). The perspective of co-responsibility is an invitation to give value and recognition to all human beings without discrimination as subjects of rights and responsibilities. Additionally, this finding ratifies the transition toward other forms of parenting, as stated by (Tobío, Agulló, Gómez & Palomo, 2010): "*Paternity is a sociocultural construct undergoing rapid transformation, although subject to a dynamic in the coexistence of progress and resistance to change. However, today it is difficult to defend or justify the old authoritarian structures that have gradually lost legitimacy with the emergence of more democratic forms of relationships between different family members. The traditional model of providing and protecting parents struggles with a more affective, close, and egalitarian conception of parenthood. But at the same time, the new way of being a parent, regaining emotion, the pleasure of caring, receptivity, tenderness, empathy, and compassion, faces the challenge of inventing another type of masculinity*". (p. 104)

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From the foregoing considerations, it is recognized that the democratization of care converges with the perspective of politicization given that both approaches consider that regardless of gender, generation, social class, age, and economic status, all human beings are subjects of care and, in turn, caregivers. Care has to do with that care of him, as a child who requires and demands special protection from us, but who also has to take care of us with things according to their age. (Account by Parent SA. Family Cartography. September 2021).

Care and Emotions.

Men-parents, in the exercise of their parental role and in the child upbringing process, are constantly exposed to contrasts, dilemmas, and tensions, mainstreamed by positive and negative emotions, that determine their level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in caring for their children: "*The truth of all this is that emotions show the essential vulnerability of humankind. We are not Gods, omnipotent and omniscient beings, which is why many of the things that affect us are beyond our control and, therefore, tend to affect us negatively because we fear losing what we wanted and have achieved, we miss what has disappeared, because we are frightened by what we do not know*". (Camps, 2011, p. 38).

In relation to the statement of the author, men-parents in the research acknowledged feeling pleased with the place and role they have in paternal-filial relationships and for being a support of the growth of their children. The recognition and legitimacy of the caregiver role generates satisfaction in men-parents, as well as care practices that produce pleasure, tranquility, security, and comfort. The following account reflects this: "*The emotion is one of wanting to care, of wanting to protect, of feeling that I can care, that I can guide, that I can accompany, the emotion above all of joy. For me, feeling that I can be there for them is meaningful, that for them it is relevant and it is important that the father is there, so I like it and it gives me great joy to feel that I can care and that there is a great sense of responsibility*". (Account by RC parent, in-depth interview, November 2021)[2]

Satisfaction in fulfilling the parental role was expressed as a feeling of well-being and self-fulfillment, realizing that they were effectively holding their place in raising their children, which suggests an integration of emotional, psychological, and social dimensions, allowing men-parents to experience pleasure in feeling that their expectations and responsibilities are being met. "*The assessment of life satisfaction is a judgment that, while including affective elements, is based on cognitive elements that refer to the positive evaluation of one's own life conditions, when contrasted with one's own expectations or standards*". (Oyanedel and Mella, 2014, p. 10)

At the same time, they expressed discomfort with enforcing authority, setting limits, and imposing sanctions, just as they do when their children are sick and they have to care for them.

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[2] It is noted that throughout the study, men-parents used the term indiscriminately when referring to feelings and emotions.

These situations cause them stress, probably due to their parenting styles. It should be clarified that the implementation of the system of rules within families implies discomfort, regardless of the upbringing style assumed. *"Feelings of anger, sadness, everything at that very moment, but then one with her, well, to hit her or something, no way. I am not able because I'm not able to do that to María José. But I do scold her and tell her: how sad you are, look at you lying there, this house is a mess and you have not bathed, look, look. Then there are many things that one finds in these moments".* (Account by YP parent, in-depth interview, November 2021)

As the previous account demonstrates, different emotions converge at the time of caring: joy, for the conviction to provide effective care as a transformative experience; anxiety, because of the responsibility that comes with being a parent or when parents have to take distance from their comfort zone, added to impatience and anger due to the lack of synchrony between parents in exercising authority and care. In this sense, the analysis leads to visualize contradictions in the parental experience, added to the fact of feeling more observed and singled out than before, because they do not respond to the cultural imagery that has been imposed and reproduced from generation to generation versus what it means to be a "good parent."

This result also makes evident the inescapable relationship between the affection and the age of children. Depending on this, these socio-affective manifestations are increased or decreased, and the connection is closer or becomes distant (Pérez and Támara, 2013). The expressions of affection at verbal, physical, and emotional levels are anchored to the life course (childhood, adolescence, adulthood). *"Being a parent is a task that is in permanent transformation, the product of temporal, historical-social, and evolutionary changes as the age of parents and children change".* (Aguilar Ramos, 2002, as cited in Capano and Ubach, 2013, p. 84).

From the above considerations, it is recognized that, in most of the family dynamics analyzed, the essentialisms that limit men-parents to being economic providers were deconstructed, excluding them from the affective and care sphere. On the contrary, new forms of parenthood are emerging that promote co-responsible care, legitimized through practices and experiences in recreational, cultural, educational, and emotional listening spaces. These dynamics allow men-parents to express affection and care differently, granting them recognition and value, and thus contributing to the construction of a broader and more inclusive knowledge of care. *"That is why it is affirmed that care implies both a practice and a disposition or an attitude of occupation, concern, responsibility, and commitment to the other, which makes it possible to recognize precisely the needs of the other"* (Lugo, 2024, p. 212): *"For, I say that caring is not only about being aware of what is needed at home, nor what they need, but also about being aware of what they think, what they feel, what they need emotionally, not financially, at all times."* (RT parent account, family cartography, September 2021)

The account above reflects a new configuration of the conception and practice of care as a means of sharing quality family time, expressing affection, supporting children with homework, and other activities that demonstrate the way in which men-parents position themselves in their paternal role and are legitimized in the family setting. This transcends the barriers of the home and is transferred to public settings, where they are not fear being singled out by gender constructs and, instead, embrace them with satisfaction: *"Care involves protecting my family, being aware of how they have gone day by day, how they have been at their chores, their studies, their jobs, asking questions, since besides checking in on their health, finding out why they are sad—there are several important things in that regard. Also, how they feel at home, taking care of the house, helping, supporting, so they do not suddenly feel exhausted"*. (Account by parent DA, family mapping, September 2021).

Finally, the research shows that there is a progressive transition towards a paternal exercise mediated by affection, where the man assumes demonstrations of affection, accompanies, cares for, worries and cares for his children, which means that there is progress in the re-signification of binary gender or dissymmetric relations between the masculine and the feminine, as well as the imaginaries that men are the rational ones and women the emotional ones.

Conclusions

- Some of the gender roles and functions that have been reproduced throughout history (differentiating between men and women) are still present in the practices and discourses of certain families. However, the dynamics at the relational and organizational level have led to the incorporation of flexibility in the exercise of such roles, either through family agreements and arrangements or through imposed situations. The study revealed that the pandemic situation was not a pretext for men-parents to assume care, in view of the fact that the roles and functions of family members were established beforehand. However, the pandemic served to readjust routines, time, and space, and united the family together around caregiving.

- The study confirms that there are changes in stereotypical perceptions of gender roles, which are closely related to the level of education, type of work, and personal or professional experience of men-parents. These factors influence their understanding, practices, and discourses about care. However, there are also perspectives that, from their parental role, take root in conservative models that have marked a differentiation between the feminine and the masculine, supporting their family and couple relationships from this perspective.

- The study confirms that there is a progressive transition to a paternal exercise mediated by affection, in which the man is the one who assumes the demonstrations of affection, accompanies, attends to, cares for, and looks after his children, which means that progress is being made in the resignification of binary gender relations.

- From the research process, it was found that the concept of care has not been fully appropriate, since it maintains a vision in which individuals are perceived only as caregivers for others, without recognizing that they also need to be caregivers for themselves. This gap between discourse and action suggests that some families do not yet integrate the idea of comprehensive care, which includes personal well-being along with that of others. As a result, a lack of self-care can lead to burnout, overload, and an uneven distribution of responsibilities within the home.

- In tracing the research background and with the emphasis given to the voice of men-parents, the need to continue investigating care from their parental place in relation to adolescent children is reiterated, also involving the voices of children, women, grandparents and other caregivers, to understand from their discourses and daily practices, the way in which they assume care, according to the stage of the life cycle and their relational dynamics.

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