

The ethics of care and the radical potential of fathers 'home alone on leave': Care as practice, relational ontology, and social justice ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Abstract

It was several decades ago that feminist, fatherhood, and family scholars began to argue that father involvement has significant generative benefits for families, for children's development (e.g., Lamb 1981), for men (e.g., Chodorow 1978; Parke 1996), for women (Pleck 1985; Okin 1989), and for the attainment of gender equality and wider social change. In relation to the latter, gender and feminist scholars speculated that father's enhanced participation in childrearing could reverse the metaphoric relation between "rocking the cradle and ruling the world" (Dinnerstein 1977) and could potentially inhibit "a psychology of male dominance" (Chodorow 1978, p. 214). As Sara Ruddick put it, "the most revolutionary change we can make in the institution of motherhood is to include men in every aspect of childcare" (1983, p. 89). My focus in this chapter is on father involvement as part of a larger field of gender divisions of labour, with specific attention to changes and continuities in gendered parental responsibilities and how fathers taking home alone leave, as advanced in this collection, constitutes an innovative approach to the intransigence of shifting gendered parental responsibilities. This chapter focuses on the benefits of fathers taking parental leave time alone, while also pointing to some of the challenges, inside and outside the home, for fathers who engage in primary caregiving. I also attend to several conceptual issues that underpin this field of research.

Region: International ^[3]

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