UNIVERSITÄT LUZERN

Call for papers for a workshop on

Critical Perspectives on Parenting in Switzerland

Friday, November 18, 2022, University of Lucerne

By comparison with other European states, Swiss family policies appear limited in the support they offer: they do not provide for extended parental leave, and offer only 14 weeks of maternity leave and no maternity protection which makes pregnant women work until close to their estimated delivery date. Furthermore, Switzerland was one of the last nations in Europe to introduce paternity leave, and then of only two weeks in 2021, in the face of heavy opposition.

Switzerland also has comparatively restrictive policies on assisted reproduction. Sperm donation is reserved for married couples, meaning that single women, lesbian couples, and heterosexual unmarried couples cannot legally access sperm banks. Furthermore, egg cell donation and surrogacy are disallowed, so that single and homosexual men, as well as women unable to carry a pregnancy to term, are not able to use assisted reproductive technologies to conceive children within Swiss borders. This all indicates that Swiss law normatively endorses reproduction within the confines of (heterosexual) marriages.

Reconciling work and family is another challenging issue in Switzerland, where day-care fees are high and the school system envisages that children eat lunch at home. More generally, the model of the household dependent on a male breadwinner still seems to be very much alive in Switzerland with most of fathers working full-time. According to the latest data of the Swiss Federal Statistic Office, four out of five mothers pursue gainful employment, but the great majority of them works part-time with a mean workload of 53% while their children are younger than 9 years.[1] The data further shows that mothers bear the main load of care and domestic work, which puts a double burden on women.

While having a child in Switzerland – at least in terms of care logistics and costs – remains a private risk for families, the state invests in the 'risk management' of families with young children. With the *Mütter-and Väterberatung*, (MVB, mothers' and fathers' advisors), for example, Switzerland offers parents an extensive and free expert accompaniment in early childhood. Early childhood became a focal point of the Swiss family policy in 2019 and is the subject of several recent parliamentary initiatives and postulates aimed at expanding early childhood programmes. The contemporary governing of families explicitly seeks to prevent health and social 'problems' before they arise, through close surveillance of children's bodies and parenting practices.

In terms of parenting, then, Switzerland seems to embrace conflicting strategies: on the one hand, restrictive family policies render parenting a 'private' risk, while, on the other hand, state-affiliated experts subject parents to disciplinary interventions. In the light of these tensions, Switzerland provides an especially interesting context for the exploration of people's experiences of becoming parents and rearing children, the (gendered) organisation of care-work, and the relationship between parents, state institutions, and state-affiliated experts.

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[1] https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/kataloge-datenbanken/publikationen.assetdetail.1061095.html (accessed April 28, 2022).

In this workshop, we aim to connect researchers from different disciplines who conduct research relevant to parenting in Switzerland. We look forward to papers touching upon one (or more) of the following topics:

- Parenting norms and moralities: Who is encouraged to be a parent in Switzerland and in which ways? What is considered 'good' parenting and who establishes its standards? How are parenting norms and values influenced by time and place (e.g. across generations, urban and rural; language region)?

- Parenting beyond the heterosexual, nuclear family: What are the legal, political, economic, and social implications of conceiving, gestating, and caring for children beyond the heterosexual nuclear family (e.g. single parenting, patchwork families, co-parenting, queer parenting)? How might the introduction of 'marriage for all' in 2022 affect queer parenting in Switzerland?

- Gendered imaginations and practices of parenting: How are the notions of motherhood, fatherhood, and parenthood imagined and lived in Switzerland? How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact the gendered division of care? How will the introduction of paternity leave transform fathers' involvement in care-work and women's postpartum experiences? How do other identities (of age, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, etc.) impact parenting?

- Interactions and relationships between state institutions, state-affiliated experts, and parents: How is parenting 'governed' in Switzerland? How is 'good' parenting negotiated between parents, (state) institutions (such as daycare centres or schools), and state-affiliated child-care experts? How do incarcerated parents mother and father?

- Parenting and migration: How is parenting done within the context of mobility and migration? How do parents experience and engage in transnational care? In which ways does citizenship impact parenting in Switzerland?

We invite contributions that explore these themes from different disciplinary perspectives with a special preference for qualitative research, for example in the fields of anthropology, sociology, gender studies, social work, history, law, or psychology. Abstracts (300 words) stating the main research questions, methods, and findings of the paper as well as a short biography should be submitted to the workshop's organizers Dr. Carole Ammann (carole.ammann@unilu.ch) and Laura Preissler (laura.preissler@unilu.ch) **by May 31st**.