

## Abstracts for Panel 8: Caring masculinities: emergent ways of understanding and performing manhood

### Conveners

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### **Panel abstract**

The concept “Caring masculinities” (Kimmel 1996, Elliot 2015) captures theorizations and practices of masculinity that reject physical and psychological domination, uphold affective and emotional male engagement as well as involvement through practices of care. The concept opens up for analysis of performances of male care in relation to women, children, other men, and non-humans and how this can be understood as positive and desirable.

Through ethnographic insights and theoretical reflections, the panel explores if and how notions of masculinities are changing in specific sociocultural contexts (see e.g., Bridges 2014). In doing so, it explores how male care is practised in the everyday, and how it affects men’s lives at the individual level, in the family and social structures in which they are embedded, as well as in society at large. We welcome papers that explore masculinities in a variety of geographical locations sharing a focus on male care, for example by looking into paid and unpaid care work, family structures and practices, friendship, erotic engagements, self-care, the relationship between the individual and the state/institution, and beyond.

We are also interested in longitudinal explorations of changes in masculinities, and how the latter are affected, for example by structural changes, individual or societal crisis, and the experience of migration.

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[Abstract: Anna Baral](#)

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**Paper title:** Between “blood” and “sharing”: trajectories of fatherhood and masculinities in Uganda

**Abstract:**

The role of Ugandan men as fathers and providers is being challenged by precarious economic conditions, made worse by the long Covid-lockdown: fatherhood has been changing in multiple and apparently contradictory directions. On one side, DNA paternity testing is gaining popularity in Uganda, with fathers increasingly unwilling to take care of children who are not biologically theirs. The test as “scientific fact” contrasts with older ways of establishing children affiliation to the patrilineal clan, and with ideas of kinship based on relationality and responsibility. A “negative” DNA test relieves fathers of the burden of care and breaks relationships in the name of economic sustainability. On the other side, the extraordinarily long national lockdown under the Covid pandemic, which has exacerbated the breadwinners’ frustrations, has also offered new trajectories of care to fathers. Men explored different ways of validating themselves in the crisis, renouncing to the centrality of economic provision and performing fatherhood through forms of sharing and reciprocity. The paper explores aspects of changing fatherhood and masculinity in Uganda through ethnographic examples from two research projects that show the complexity of men’s orientation to “care”.

[Abstract: Emy Lindberg](#)

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**Paper title:** *“The football dads”*: entanglements of economy and care in the football migration industry

**Abstract:**

This paper explores how kinship is performed through the particular transnational family affiliation that is established between male, Ghanaian footballers and the people they call fathers, referred to here as “the football dads”. These are people that the footballer migrants singled out as some of the most important persons in their lives and careers. By unpacking who the football dads are, and what they do, the paper discusses what the naming of a father entails in practice. With the backdrop in a comparison of what fatherhood is and how it is practiced in Ghana and Sweden, the paper shows how this relationship is performed through transnational, reciprocal transactions of both emotional and financial character. Whilst acknowledging the power asymmetry inherent in one of the most archetypal power relationships there is; that between father and son, the paper focuses on the caring and loving aspects of the affiliation, as this was emphasized by both the footballers and the football dads themselves. As such, it employs the notion of *caring masculinities* (Elliot 2016). Finally, the paper demonstrates how intimate and personal relationships are intrinsically linked to global processes of commodification and capitalism, as manifested in the football industry. The football dad – footballer relationship is a key relationship within the football migration trajectory and the economic and relational migration infrastructure, a cross-cultural phenomenon of performative and creative, yet historically grounded kinship.

[Abstract: Alexander Sallstedt](#)

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**Paper Title:** Ice baths and psychedelics: care and self-care amongst young artist men in Iceland

**Abstract:**

Based on my ethnographic fieldwork amongst young artist men in Iceland, this paper explore aspects of care involved in their practice of cold sea swimming (ice baths) and in their consumption of psychedelic substances. Both of these functioned as a means for the men to near themselves nature, and to cultivate a meaningful, affective—caring—relationship with nature, and, by implication, with themselves. I draw from Karla Elliott’s (2015) writing on “caring masculinities” when considering this interchange between nature, care, and self-care as a positive one; as do I contrast this with the critical sentiment “more style than substance” popularized by Michael Messner (1993) in his work on progressive male norms in America in the 1990s.

[Abstract: Shen Qing](#)

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**Paper title:** “Off bed, we are father and son”: practices of caring masculinity among younger rural gay migrants in Shanghai

**Abstract:**

The majority of the younger gay men who desire older gay men or engage in intergenerational relationships with gay elders in Shanghai are rural migrant workers from underdeveloped regions in China. Their desire is largely conceived in pragmatic terms and met with suspicion. In mainstream imaginations they are depicted as receivers of Shanghainese gay elders’ material and financial support and are structurally feminized. My paper examines the ways in which these rural gay migrants unsettle their preconceived inferior subject positions by feminizing the gay elders. Two types of practices are discussed in this paper. The first is outwitting and thus devaluing the seniority of gay elders. The younger migrants argue that they have more experience in dealing with the underworld and people from all walks of life in post-socialist period as opposed to the elders whose adult life was largely confined by one’s work unit in socialist China. By doing so they infantilize and feminize their elderly partners whose expertise and thoughts are considered out of tune with current times. Second, the gay migrants actively perform the role of a filial son who provides emotional and material care to their “old daddy”. This caring practice aligns with Confucius notions of filial piety, which is best captured in one of their favorite sayings which goes “in bed we are husband and wife, off bed we are father and son”. The practice of “caring masculinity” enables them to counter the stigma and gain an upper hand in age-discrepancy relationships.