 **Nathusius Institut**
Institut für Psychologie, Bildung und Beratung

Birth experiences in the family - by fathers and siblings

„I never pictured that in this way!“


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Preface

- The experience of giving birth to a child is one of the most emotional events in life for most families. But there are only few studies about the special feelings of fathers during birth and little knowledge about emotions of siblings during or near the delivery.
- The aim of the presented qualitative case study was to create hypothesis about the participants' expectations and to explore the emotional forming of this mutual event.
- One of the major results is that the experience of birth is an emotionally strong event, that is well remembered. Strong differences have also been observed.

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Open Research Access

Qualitative case study - basic of my presentation

- N = 11 interviews of fathers (between age of 36 to 48)
 - 1 - 5 children of their own
 - different places of birth (home, clinic - physiological and caesarean section)
- N = 8 siblings (between 6 - 12 years old)
- all experimentees took part more or less the process of birth
 - retrospective point of view
 - semi-structured interviews with narrative episodes
- Grounded Theory as research perspective
 - Analysis by MAXQDA - as a PC-Program
- psychological knowledge as background for the analysis

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Introduction

- Main focus - general questions
 - What focus do they offer?
 - What feelings and narratives do the fathers present?
 - What perspective do the fathers gain?
 - What impacts do the siblings show?
 - Which kind of episodes are important for the experimentees?
- The methodology of bringing up new research question during the progress of analyzing the material has been applied, as ideas and results spring up out of the observation.

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Main Topics of Theory

- midwifery and psychological research were focused on as the subjective experiences of mothers
- experiences of fathers - previously no focus on emotions, memories and retrospection
- perspective of siblings is previously not taken into consideration - The emotional birth experiences - is discussed out of common knowledge and assumptions (siblings interviewed by themselves)
- family unity during birth is not a normal event in our culture

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- „While home birth eliminates the problem of separation, the effects of actually being present at the birth have not yet been sufficiently researched.“ (Raphael-Leff, 2011, S. 390)
- 91% take part on delivery - positive experience (p. 93)
- function of fathers is to secure the mother-child-symbiosis from outside and enable the interdependence and bonding in the primal dyad (Schon, 2000, p. 35)
- depressions of fathers occur double often as in comparative male group (Schäfer, Abou-Dakn, & Wökel, 2008, p. 36)
- “Age alone may not be an adequate indicator of your child’s readiness to witness labour and birth. A very young child may be able to participate in the event with surprising maturity; by contrast, an older sibling may be overcome an unexpected emotion or overtaken by boredom.” (Hazard, 2008, S. 62)

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Results - Siblings

- healthy regulated processes could be observed
- balance between closeness and distance
- curiosity and nosiness dominate the siblings memories
- free movement allowed and trust in the ability of the child to go away if needed
- fathers consider the attendance of siblings as positive
- first step for a good relationship and intimacy between siblings
- less jealousy in the following weeks
- strengthening of the family unity - especially between siblings
- emotional involvement not as strong as of adults

no psychic trauma was founded - no bad dreams reported

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Results - Fathers

- regulation of feelings gained from watching, observation and repression
- few amount of words describing emotions
 - reasons can emerged out of insensible staff
 - lack of current information
 - being alone with sorrow of woman and infant
- Memories play an important role
 - not remembered so deeply as mothers do - distance
 - memories eliminated - blurred reflection - concentration of handling - effectiveness

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Coping strategy

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Experience of powerlessness

enthusiasm and proudness occur independent of manner of birth

- homebirth
- physiological birth in clinical setting
- caesarean section

rising perception of effectiveness

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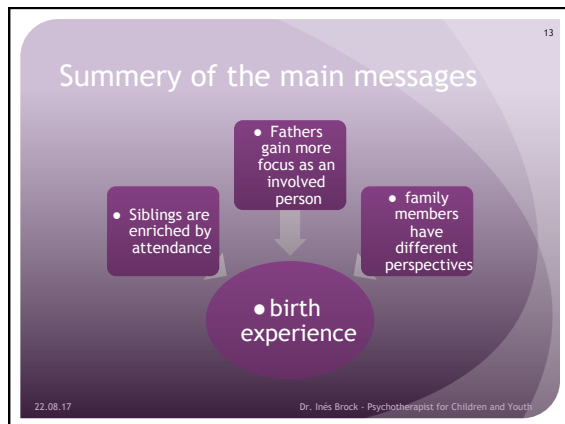
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Memories

- disappeared much faster than mothers
- emotional involvement hides behind actions
- fathers prefer instrumental strategies of solving problems
- psychological task of constructing a new constellation of mind
- shifting importance of experience - unclear role
- powerlessness connected with bad emotions
- concentration of time after birth
- Fathers function as a triangulation third for the child

Inner process of generating self-confidence

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Subjective Importance of the Outcomes

- firstly - there is a need for more research focus on this topic as my study is not representative
- consciousness in society for involving family members in the birth process beyond the mother is necessary
- emotionally involved fathers are quite forgotten in professional keeping - clinical setting
- attendance of siblings during birth should be discussed

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Further reading if you are interested - in following German Readers

- new edition in spring 2018 with one contribution about fathers in: Brock, Inés (Hrsg.)... Psychosozialverlag
- Results of Siblings published in:
 - Brock, Inés (2015) „Ich hab mich so auf den kleinen Bruder gefreut!“ - Geburt von Geschwistern. In: Brock, Inés (2015) Bruderheld und Schwesterherz - Geschwister als Ressource. Psychosozialverlag. (Hrsg.) Wiesbaden, S. 163-186

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Hazard, L. (2008). *The Father's Home Birth Handbook*. London.

Raphael-Leff, J. (2011). *Psychological Processes of Childbearing* (Bd. 4. Edition). Essex: Anna Freud Centre.

Choice of German Literature

- Dorsch, V.M. (2013) *Geburtserfahrung und postnatale Befindlichkeit von Vätern*. Dissertation, Schweinfurt
- Schon, L. (2000) *Sehnsucht nach dem Vater*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta
- Garstick, E. (2013). *Junge Väter in seelischen Krisen*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Camus, L., & Jean. (2003). *Väter. Die Bedeutung des Vaters für die psychische Entwicklung des Kindes*. Weinheim und Basel: Beltz.
- Schäfer, E., Abou-Dakn, M., & Wöckel, A. (2008). *Vater werden ist nicht schwer? Zur neuen Rolle des Vaters rund um die Geburt*. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag.

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