

# “No, I won’t eat that!” Parental self-transformation in clashes of role enactment and children’s will

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**“No, I won’t eat that!’ Parental self-transformation in clashes of role enactment and children’s will”**

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**Abstract**

This paper addresses one aspect of self-transformation, namely, the way consumers develop understandings of themselves through enacting parental roles in the context of everyday family consumption. In-depth interviews are used to examine informants’ evolving understanding of themselves as parents in relation to their daily meal practices. Overall, this study extends the literature on self and parenthood by detailing the dynamics of mothers’ and fathers’ self-transformation processes as they grapple with contemporary changes in the parental roles they internalize to socialize, accommodate and please their children. This study shows how the parents’ self-transformation process is strongly gendered, inadequately guided by roles, and inflected by the market. It introduces an emerging model of a more pleasure-based form of parenting in consumption, shaped by the market.

Key words: Self-transformation, parenthood, motherhood, fatherhood, roles, family consumption, meals.

## **“No, I won’t eat that!’ Parental self-transformation in clashes of role enactment and children’s will”**

“*One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.*” This famous line by Simone de Beauvoir (1949) highlights the self-transformation process that occurs through practice. However, while de Beauvoir’s feminist viewpoint focuses on women’s gendered self-transformation in opposition to men, we are primarily concerned with parents’ self-transformation in their dealings with children. Parenting has changed in recent decades, as more mothers work full time and as more fathers play an increasingly prominent role in caring for their offspring. Consumer researchers have developed insights into self-transformation during transitions in life, and the way individuals use consumption to deal with new roles, suggesting that experiencing parenthood will often differ from the roles imagined in the liminal stages. In particular, children are now able to challenge their parents’ projects (Lawlor & Prothero, 2011; Marshall, O’Donohoe & Kline, 2007). This paper extends the literature on motherhood (Banister, Hogg, & Dixon, 2010; Banister & Hogg, 2006; Voice Group, 2010a and 2010b; Thomsen & Sørensen, 2006; Cappellini & Parsons, 2013) and fatherhood (Bettany, Kerrane, & Hogg, 2014; Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013) by looking at the process of parents’ self-transformation in the context of everyday family consumption practices. In-depth interviews with mothers and fathers responsible for the daily meals help them to develop reflexive understandings of themselves based on their practices and the tensions they experience. The findings illustrate the micro-dynamics of the parents’ self-transformation process in relation to roles in practice, and the tensions and reconciliation of meal practices linked to understandings of the self. The paper investigates how parents grapple with contemporary changes in the parental roles they internalize to accommodate and please their children, the gender issues and the role of the market in this process.

### **Theoretical background**

### *Self-transformation for mothers*

The literature has shown evidence that role transitions in liminal stages affect the self. During pregnancy, women negotiate with possible selves in their consumption choices (Banister & Hogg, 2006). These potential selves are framed by discourses on good mothering (Banister, Hogg, & Dixon, 2010) and by pervasive cultural discourses (Fischer, Otnes, & Tuncay, 2007). Discourses on good mothering reflect the social construction of motherhood, and are advanced by different actors such as medical and political authorities, media and market. The market, in particular, adopts and amplifies these motherhood ideologies (Voice Group, 2010b). As these discourses create norms and stipulate appropriate roles, their internalization puts pressure on mothers (Voice Group, 2010b). In opposition to these norms, the pervasive cultural discourse of self-management encourages individuals to develop their own understanding and knowledge in response to the experts' discourse, such as medical discourse (Fischer *et al.*, 2007). With this in mind, Banister *et al.* (2010) show that mothers in transition to motherhood can reconcile themselves to such discourse on good mothering, resist it or disengage from it. The strategies they develop in reaction to discourse on good mothering help them to define their own version of the "ideal mothering self". This raises the question of how the "ideal mothering self" transforms in everyday consumption practices. Some researchers suggest that the self continues to evolve in everyday life as women develop their "own ways of knowing" (Banister *et al.*, 2010) because "the birth of a mother does not take place in one dramatic defining moment, but gradually emerges from the cumulative work of the many months that precede and follow the actual birth of a baby" (Stern, Bruschiweilder-Stern, & Freeland, 1998, p.3). So how do mothers who engage in a role in everyday practices come to understand and transform themselves as a parent?

In a social practice theory of self and identity, the self is formed and apprehended through practice (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 2001). In everyday family consumption practices,

selves are negotiated among the different members of the family (Epp & Price, 2008). What is specific about family consumption is that it includes the child's consumption, in other words, the parents' self-development depends on the child's acceptance or refusal to consume. This raises the question of how mothers derive a sense of self when confronted with the child's will?

This study explores the way consumption comes into play in the self-transformation process. In the transition to motherhood, consumption helps mothers to appropriate their new role and to access a desired self (Sevin & Ladwein, 2008; Thomsen & Sørensen, 2006; Banister & Hogg, 2006). However, the idea that consumption enables mothers to be better parents has been somewhat idealized (Voice Group, 2010a). Consumption does not always facilitate the enactment of the self. For example, buying the wrong pram negatively affects their identity (Thomsen & Sørensen, 2006). Mothers-to-be are sometimes unsure of how to consume, which creates feelings of ambivalence (Voice Group, 2010a). So how do mothers derive a sense of self when their consumption practices conflict with their "ideal mothering self"?

#### *Self-transformation for fathers*

Feminists have helped to institutionalize the notion that fathers should be more involved in the day-to-day care of children. However, how do fathers who adopt a nurturing role, commonly associated with femininity, make sense of themselves? Coskuner-Balli & Thompson (2013) study how stay-at-home fathers negotiate a masculine identity with a nurturing role. They show that fathers' consumption practices differ from the way mothers usually consume (Bettany, Kerrane, & Hogg, 2014; Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2013). Does this mean that their self-transformation process is different to that of mothers? Researchers have found that, similar to mothers, the early stages of fatherhood experience can differ from the ideal selves imagined before the birth of the child (Bettany *et al.*, 2014). The study by Bettany *et al.* shows how the fathers' self-transformation emerges as a negotiation between two conflicting roles: the role of

the breadwinner and the role of the nurturer that requires greater availability for domestic tasks and care of the baby. In this conflicting situation, fathers in early fathering experiences use consumption to escape their nurturer role, which is enacted with the adoption of technological childcare products (Bettany, *et al.*, 2014). To extend these findings to the context of everyday experiences, the present study also looks at the father's self-transformation process: is it limited to negotiating between the two roles? Drawing a parallel with the issue for mothers, how do fathers deal with their children's will?

### *Changing gendered roles in the postmodern family*

What are roles? In a theoretical study, Akaka and Chandler (2011, p.251) distinguish role expectations and role enactment. For them, role expectations are "the social norms or cues associated with a particular social role." Role enactment is the "acting out of a set of practices associated with a particular social role." The authors analyze how roles act as resources for change in value networks. Their proposal raises new questions about role expectations and role enactment at the level of the individual: how do roles operate in parents' self-transformation?

Parenting roles have changed over recent decades, with more women remaining in the workforce and men adopting an increasingly egalitarian approach to parenting. Consumer researchers have documented evolutions in the different gendered roles. From disciplinary mothers (Poster, 1978), the dominant mothering model has become that of the devotional mother (Miller, 1998; Cappellini & Parsons, 2013). Self-abnegation or giving up one's desires for the sake of the family and to construct the family seems to dominate the debate (DeVault 1991; Miller, 1998; Cappellini & Parsons, 2013). The experience of working mothers involves the emotional work of negotiating compromises between two ideal models of motherhood: the stay-at-home mother and the supermom (Thompson, 1996), with the inherent feelings of guilt and frustration linked to such compromises. These working mothers use the market to serve family ideals and

offer benefits to their children that they could not have afforded otherwise (Thompson, 1996). Consumer researchers have highlighted how the role of the mother is inextricably linked to her feminine identity, and have shown how mothers use consumption, and choose and transform products to create domesticity (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991; Moisio, Arnould, & Price, 2004), relate to the child, and express love and care (Miller, 1998; Thompson, 1996). Consumption and family meals are embedded in these evolutions. DeVault (1991)'s focus on mothers' gendered activity in feeding the family highlights how women are judged according to the quality of their dinner, and how serving the male contributes to their subordination to men. Miller (1998) expounds on the way mothers sacrifice their interests and tastes when provisioning for their families, which he explains by the children replacing the partner as recipients of motherly devotion. Cappellini and Parsons (2013) point to mothers' self-sacrifice in family meals as part of their identity as devotional mothers. In daily meals, mothers accommodate to children by squaring what they think is right for the child with what the child wants (Cappellini & Parsons, 2012).

With the rise of dual income families, broad trends suggest that men increasingly participate in their children's life (O'Brien & Shelmit, 2003). Being a dad is no longer simply linked to being a good breadwinner (Brannen & Nilsen, 2006). Changes in fathering are liable to challenge hegemonic forms of masculinity (Connell, 1995), and to offer a multiplicity of possible selves (Marshall, Davis, Hogg, Schneider & Petersen, 2014). However, while discourse about the involved father is commonplace in Northern Europe (Brannen & Nielsen, 2006), it is a subject of debate in Latin Europe, where women generally remain responsible for childcare issues (de Singly, 2007). In their analysis of stay-at-home fathers in a North American context, Coskuner-Balli and Thompson (2013) explain how fathers delegate meal preparation to



the market as they consider this mundane activity- which is labor intensive with a high emotional load- as feminine.

Some studies have noted the steady blurring of gendered distinctions between the feminine as the field of the home and consumption, and the masculine as that of the workplace and production (Firat, 1994). There are two paradoxical trends parents may draw from. First, with productive consumption trends (Cova&Dalli, 2007), male celebrity and a foodie subculture, masculine meal production (Biraghi, Dalli, &Gambetti, 2015)has often become more inspiring than the traditional grandmothers' and mothers' homemade meals. Second, present-day services (e.g. McDonald's) are less feminine than they were in retail department stores at the turn of the century.Pleasure in consumption now seems less feminine than it used to be.

Not to be overlooked among the dramatic changes in the postmodern family is the child itself. In his seminal study on the retail clothing industry in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Cook (2004) analyzes how this sector contributed to the evolution of the child's status. Parents' expectations regarding their offspring have evolved from obedient and loyal children to independent thinkers who voice their minds and make consumer choices. In the context of family consumption, children have become legitimate individualized consumers who express their own tastes and preferences (Cook, 2004). These tastes and preferences are embedded in commercial life, which consequently roots contemporary parenthood in consumerism (Cook, 2009). Cook's work on the rise of the child consumer raises new questions: to what extent does the transformation of the child as a legitimate consumer change what it is to be a parent? And how is the market involved in parental self-transformation?

## Method

In this paper we analyze how parents negotiate their understanding of themselves in the practice of everyday meals, with attention to how gendered roles, the child's role and the market form part of this process. Meals remain the main activity that brings families together (Gutierrez, Price, & Arnould, 2007) on an everyday basis, especially in Latin European cultures (Kaufmann 2005; Fischler & Masson, 2008) where daily meals are a strategic factor in building the family. The focus of this study is on the way parents describe their practices, the micro-dynamics that prompt them to evolve, and how they derive a sense of self from the process.

One way to understand the sense-making process behind role expectations and practices is to conduct in-depth interviews (McCracken, 1988; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Individuals frequently adopt repetitive routine patterns without questioning them in their everyday practices (Schütz, 1970). The interview gives informants a chance to take a reflexive look at what they do and how they interact with their social environment, becoming an observer of their own practices and interactions. Language relies on the capacity of humans to analyze an action in accordance with what is meaningful to them (Schütz, 1970). As Moisander and Valtonen (2006) suggest, interview participants are understood to be actively involved in using the cultural resources and discursive practices available to construct meaningful accounts of their social reality.

The present paper is based on twenty-one in-depth interviews with parents in charge of preparing daily dinners, in other words, 13 interviews with mothers and 8 with fathers (Table 1 and 2). Given the gender differences between mothers and fathers, as well as the context of change in these gendered roles, the focus is on understanding their self-transformation in everyday meal practices, highlighting similarities and differences in the transformation process. The fieldwork took place in the city of Geneva in French-speaking Switzerland, where local and state authorities have developed programs to fight against child obesity. Many of the informants

referred to the food-related education that their children receive at school. This context reinforces the role expectations laid on parents as far as food is concerned. The authors were granted permission to recruit informants by a public daycare center (children from 3 to 6) in a middle-class area of Geneva. Six volunteers (women) came forward to be interviewed about family meals. The snowball sampling technique was then used to enlarge our sample and to also include fathers in charge of daily dinners. We selected informants with a middle-class, professional background, at least one child aged between 3 and 11 years old in their care, from dual income households or single-parent households, with an average income and a Latin food culture (Askegaard & Madsen, 1998; Fischler & Masson, 2008), and were of French, Italian, or French-speaking Swiss origin. We conducted the majority of interviews (15 of 21) in the informants' kitchens. During the interview, the interviewees showed us their cupboards, opened their fridge, and in some cases showed us cooked meals they had prepared. This facilitated the narratives of diverse and more detailed experiences. The prepared meal functioned as a mnemonic device, allowing for more exhaustive accounts of the activities and their understandings (Chang Coupland, 2005). Photos were taken of the kitchen and food shown for analytical purposes.

After introducing themselves and their family, the informants were asked to talk about their experience of producing a recent ordinary dinner. The first 'grand tour' question (McCracken, 1988) "What are the meals like at home?" gave rise to a narrative that covered present family meal experiences, as well as early experiences, including parental roles and relationships with the children and other family members. At the beginning of the interviews, the informants began describing some of their meal preparation practices. The narratives were often normed, and sometimes referred to an ideal sense of the interviewees' selves. The use of probes and the way the interview was conducted as a dialogue allowed them to express their feelings and tensions, and to describe other experiences and incidents that occurred in the course of their

family meal experience. The reflexivity of the interview (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003) gave them an opportunity to step back from their own practices, and helped them to express how they feel, how they react and how they make compromises. It also helped them to elaborate a sense of how they reconcile tensions in terms of working through understandings of themselves and negotiating idealized selves. Rather than simply elicit an objective account of an activity, the interviews (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006) provided the basis for a cultural conversation of activities and discourse on parenthood and provisioning, acting as social constructions between the interviewee and the interviewers (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). The multiple examples of meals developed by the informants helped to triangulate the analyses within each vignette, and to yield a deeper understanding of their perspectives.

The interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 2 hours, and were fully transcribed for analysis. Data analysis centered on the parent's reflexive thoughts on their practices and interactions that were reconstituted in narrative accounts of shopping, preparing, serving and eating meals, and adapting their meal practices. As the informants related their experiences, their narratives wove back and forth between explanations of what they did when preparing and serving meals, what happened subsequently, the sense they made of the occurrences, how they adapted to what happened, and the sense they made of these adapted meal practices. In this analytical process, sequences of self-transformation were identified, as well as a 'before' and 'after' to account for this transformation. The tensions related by the informants regarding interactions with their child/ren, and how they felt about and understood such tensions were of particular interest.

The findings are organized as follows: first, practices (before), especially early practices of producing family meals; second, tensions and revised practices, with a focus on understanding why tensions arise, and how the self is embedded in the practices; third, self-transformation

(after): how individuals reconcile practices with a sense of self, and how they compromise, reinforce or abandon early understandings of themselves as parents. The findings are illustrated with short cases that situate the informant and the action in their context (Thomsen & Sørensen, 2006), illustrating the dynamics of self-transformation. The vignettes selected are those that best illustrate a specific phenomenon arising from the different interviews. The analysis of each vignette is completed by cross case analysis.

## **Findings**

### *Everyday family meal preparation practices*

The study began by identifying the series of practices informants develop when preparing everyday family meals. For example, Veronica is married, has 2 children aged 7 and 3, and works as an art historian. She is Italian, with an Italian culture derived from her parents, but she has always lived in French-speaking Switzerland. As far as she is concerned, food means improvisation, eating what she feels like with whom she likes, and where she likes. However, when Veronica had to prepare meals for her first daughter, she began reading books and asked her doctor what was suitable for her child. She then began serving vegetables at every meal. She explains how she came up against obstacles as her daughter refused to eat them, and how she developed new cooking practices, such as mixing different vegetables together, and repetition practices such as proposing them again and again until the child accepted, as the books recommend. However, her daughter continued to refuse to eat them. She expresses her feeling of failure: *“I tried everything, in all forms, mixed with things she likes, but nothing worked...”*

Like Veronica, many mothers and fathers explain how they started cooking vegetables for their children. Internalizing the health discourse into their practices makes them feel like “good parents”. For example, Sabine (3 children, 3, 3, 7, administrative secretary) explains that she does

not like cooking, but that she spends time in her kitchen every day, washing, cutting and cooking vegetables. She says she feels better if she cooks: *“I wouldn’t feel happy if I gave them a pizza every day. I’d feel like a bad mom... I’d feel worse doing that than if I cook, so I prefer to cook (laughs)”* (Sabine, 3 children, 3, 3, 7). Clément explains that he cooks more vegetables with the children, makes sure the meals are balanced, and also takes them to the market on Saturday mornings so they can understand that *“strawberries don’t grow in winter, nor tomatoes either. They know a little bit about seasons. Because today, kids have no idea about seasons. It’s important to teach them about this”* (Clément, 3 children, 3, 7, 12, sales manager). He highlights his investment in his children’s education with a comment on what he sees in his neighbors’ trash bins: *“Because when you look at what people eat, it’s incredible! Frozen pizza and this kind of instant meal or processed dishes. I never do that!”* Some gender issues arise in the analysis of parents’ practices. Similarities include taking the child’s specific needs into account, cooking more vegetables, and proposing balanced meals, while differences cover mothers talking about their difficulties in getting the child to eat vegetables while fathers accentuate their efforts.

Some fathers describe how they have adopted the role of cook to participate in the family’s domestic tasks to help their wife, and the pleasure they derive from this activity. *“When I come back home, I’d love to sit in an armchair, but when you have young kids, neither of us (he and his wife) can sit. So, finally, I prefer to cook, rather than something else... (rather than ironing)”* (Thomas, 2 children, 3, 5, multimedia producer). Like Thomas, André (3 children, 8, 10, 15, state employee) has started cooking to help his wife, and describes the pleasure of discovering cooking, having his own relationship with his children, and cooking what he likes: *“People think cooking is for others, but it’s for me too, huh! If I feel like eating steak, I’ll go and buy some and we’ll have steak. It’s for my own pleasure, I agree. And I show my boys that guys cook too. It’s important.”*

Finally, some parents explain their meal practices by referring to activities they share with their children. For example, Chloé (3 children, 10, 7, 3, schoolteacher, single parent) is divorced and shares custody of the children with the father. She describes her practices as sitting at the table together, talking, not watching TV, going to the fast food restaurant... *“Dinner is really the time when we’re together, we never look at TV, and we talk about what we didn’t have time to say to each other over the past few days (...). As I seldom see them, it’s an important time. When they come back on Tuesdays, it’s party time, and we celebrate it round the table; sometimes we go to the restaurant or a fast food!”* (Chloé, 3 children, 10, 7, 3). Like Chloé, José (1 child, 3, assistant shop manager, divorced) favors leisure when he has his son once every two weekends. They go to McDonald’s as it is easy, with no constraints, and they have more time for leisure. Later, he comments: *“I don’t want to fight over vegetables!”*

### *Tensions*

As parents describe their practices, they comment on the tensions they experience. For example, Bérangère has two sons, 2.5 and 4 years old. She is French, married, and works as a social assistant. At the beginning of the interview, Bérangère explains that it is her educative role to provide balanced meals for her children. She has developed her own ‘strict’ dietetic routine in structuring the meals: vegetables and protein only at lunch time, fruit and biscuits for afternoon snack, and carbohydrates and dairy products at dinner. Every week, she prepares a homemade vegetable soup, as well as homemade fruit compote. The babysitter and even her own mother are not allowed to cook, but only warm up the meals. She explains that she could not delegate the cooking to someone else and comments with an insistent tone of voice: *“I need to know what my kids are eating!”* However, Bérangère feels she is challenged by her children in enacting her strict routine. When they come back from their grandmother’s, they ask for sugar in their yogurt. She raises her eyes to heaven as she disapproves of adding sugar, but she adds a little bit. She

says that she cannot bring them up in a cocoon and so she has to deal with it. What hurts her most is when her children reject her food. Bérangère found it hard to accept when her son told her he preferred *Pom'pote* - a market-made compote in a gourd that children can eat by themselves - to her homemade compote, and *Savane* cake to her homemade marbled cake (*Savane* is an iconic brand of a well-known marbled chocolate cake for children). “...*And you have expectations when you've cooked the meal yourself, you have more expectations. (...) when they reject my food, personally I find it hard, it's tough!! It's like when I bake a cake and they prefer the Savane cake... It drives me crazy (...). It's difficult because I spend time preparing the compote... and it's healthier than these Pom'pote... But they prefer Pom'pote, that's it! (...) Perhaps I'll give them the Pom'Pote at teatime because it's more fun as a snack. But sometimes, if they've eaten very well, and if they ask for a Pom'Pote, I'll give it to them, it's like a reward*” Bérangère (2 children, 2.5 and 4, social assistant).

*Rejection of the self.* The vignette of Bérangère illustrates how mothers feel bad when their food is rejected. They expect their children to prefer their homemade meal. When confronted with the child's will, they are forced to revise some of their practices, as Bérangère does in adding sugar to her children's yogurt, even though she does not feel comfortable about it, as if she is compromising her ideals. Like Bérangère, Veronica expresses negative feelings when her daughter refuses to eat vegetables. She ends up cooking only what her daughter accepts, but still feels bad about it. “*We went back to very basic stuff with her, it was a little bit...I didn't enjoy it anymore, I used to cook a lot of carbohydrates, the only thing she'd eat. Vegetables, no way, so I let it go, I didn't enjoy it, I had the feeling that whatever I gave her, she wouldn't eat much*” (Veronica, 2 children, 7 and 3, art historian). For Veronica, providing food is not enough to be a mother; she needs to do more. Limiting her cooking to just what the child likes, she has forgotten and abandoned her personal self, in other words, what she likes, who she is, what it is to



be a mum, and this results in a feeling of failure. For Bérangère and Veronica, the rejection of their food is experienced as a rejection of their self. They adapt their practices to the child's will, but still have the impression they are compromising themselves. This feeling of rejection of the self is suggested by Juliette, who tries to convince herself of the contrary and looks for a rational explanation of her daughter's repeated refusals to eat. *“Some people feel hurt when kids don't eat because they think, they reject me because food is love, and so on and so forth... Well, I don't think they refuse their parents!!!! Perhaps they're not hungry, or they're tired. At home, dinner is late at 7pm. So I can understand perfectly well after a day at the daycare center, she's exhausted, that's it. The pediatrician told me she's growing well, she's the right weight, so it's fine”* (Juliette, 2 children, 3.5 and 8, administrative assistant).

To a lesser extent, some fathers also express negative feelings when the child refuses to eat. For example, Thomas (2 children, 3, 5) explains he feels stressed when he has cooked something and is unsure how his children will react. André (3 children, 8, 10, 15) explicitly asks for recognition: when his children refuse to eat, he explains to them that he has spent time cooking and that they cannot reject the food like that. He has made an effort and he asks them to make an effort too: they have to at least try. Mothers and fathers want their children to eat because the child's acceptance to eat is inextricably linked to what it is to be a parent, and this is how they feel recognized as good parents. The difference between mothers and fathers lies in the historical gendered responsibility of women in the family's well-being (DeVault, 1991).

*Clash of taste with children.* Tensions arise for parents because they want their children to eat healthy food, and to enjoy variety and cooked food. Elena (2 children, 3, 5, school teacher) comments that when the children choose by themselves, they choose “easy food” with sugar, fat, and things that are easy to eat like burgers or ravioli. But this is not how she wants to educate them. She wants them to be open to food, which to her means to be open to others and to novelty.

Many mothers struggle between this ideal of having their children open to food diversity and pleasing them. This creates tension because they feel uneasy when they have to force their offspring, or when they only give them what they like. For example, Madeleine (1 child, 9, librarian, single mother) would like to share some of her favorite recipes with her daughter, such as ham with chicory, or simply cooked vegetables and meat in a sauce. However, her daughter dislikes all sauces. So she makes very simple dishes with no sauce. This gives her the impression that she is not cooking well for her daughter. She adds that she has lost pleasure in eating. Like Madeleine, Anabelle (2 children, 5, 7, architect) would like to please her children and cook foodstuffs they like, which is not an easy task. She explains: *“What am I going to do this evening?” It’s so hard because first I have to find something that’s in the fridge. So let’s see, what is there and then, what can I do with that? And then, is everyone going to like it? And what’s more, we have to have something different every day. So it’s really difficult...* Then she expresses her ambivalent feelings when she is exhausted and ends up cooking what her children like: *“They ask me for nuggets, things like that, that I can put in the fridge, take out and put in the oven, and I know they’ll eat it, but I also know that it’s not very good, do you see? (...) It’s true, sometimes I feel guilty, I give them nuggets, and I say it’s really rubbish, what am I doing?”* (Anabelle, 2 children, 5, 7).

This clash of taste is not gender specific, it is the story of a self (a taste) who meets another self (another taste). Fathers face the same clash of taste. They want their children to enjoy the good food they cook, and have to make compromises. Thomas, for example, gets exasperated when his children reject what he has cooked, but the problem is not himself, the problem is the children and he regrets their lack of curiosity. Riccardo (2 children, 9, 10, locksmith) usually cooks what he likes. His wife and daughter do not like peppers, so he cooks them less often but it does not stop him from cooking and eating them altogether. Fathers adapt their cooking to their

children's taste, but unlike mothers, do not express the feeling that they have compromised their values or make things that go against their values.

*Clash of values with the market.* The clash of taste is echoed by a clash of values with market offers. In the food sector, the market not only builds on discourse on good parenting (Voice Group, 2010b) but also seduces children with foods they like, and offers choice and fun. The market brings competing values to the household that challenge the parents. When Bérangère introduces choice in the household with the *Pom'pote* (they can choose the flavor), she also allows her children to make choices and to express their likes and dislikes, which turns against her when they refuse her homemade food. Like Bérangère, André (3 children, 8, 10, 15) comments that the market has an easy role and offers the children easy pleasure. His children love Kellogg's cereals that are full of sugar. As he does not want to educate them with childish, sweet food, he sometimes boycotts Kellogg's and goes to the bakery, a tradition he has inherited from his father, showing the children that there is not only the supermarket and Kellogg's, there is something else. These competing values challenge the parents' self.

*Ambivalent practices, ambivalent self.* Some practices result in an ambivalent self and create tension for the parent. For example, Cristel (2 children, 7, 10, childcare assistant) feels tired when she comes back after a day at work and has to prepare the dinner and check the homework. She says, "*But some evenings, I don't feel like it, I throw something on the plate and I say, tonight, it's pasta and pasta is very good!!*" Then she explains that she has worked on herself to no longer feel guilty: "*Ok, tonight it's pasta, and that doesn't make me a bad mum.*" Some mothers have a hard time exonerating themselves from the norms of good mothering they have internalized. The case of Cristel, however, shows how she has worked on herself to separate her practices from her sense of self. Fathers also feel tension related to their practices. When José (1 child, 3, divorced) says he does not want to fight over vegetables and gives convenience food to

his son, he feels the need to explain his choice and to add that his son is healthy according to the doctor, as if he feared he could be a bad dad. Like Cristel, his practices may have created another self, distinct from the father he wants to be. He feels the need to explain the education he has received and the one he wants to give his son. In so doing, he develops specific meanings regarding his practices, and reconciles a sense of self.

### *Reconciliation*

With the tension they experience, parents develop reflexive accounts of themselves, some of which reconcile their practices with a sense of self. Thomas is married and has two children, 4 and 7. He studied fine arts and works as a multimedia producer. Food is very important in his family. His grandfather was a cook and his mother has a vineyard. Thomas started cooking on an everyday basis when his first child joined the family table. He cooks more vegetables now, not only for his children, but also for himself, as he has turned 40 and feels the needs for a healthier diet. He explains how he has developed new practices, and how he uses his creative skills to get his children to eat vegetables: *“What I really like is, well I have an artistic background, I studied the fine arts and so I spend quite a lot of time on the presentation. So for me, what’s important is that you want to eat what you see, it can be quite fun. And what I notice with vegetables, ever since broccoli has become trees, and then they’re (the children) giants and they eat the trees, well now they eat the broccoli while before they wouldn’t touch it, for instance (...). So you see, it’s a sort of game. I’ve noticed that in the end it works well, because fights at the table are exhausting!”* Thomassays that he invites the children to help him in the kitchen and that they pay more attention to salad when they wash it themselves and play with it. He comments: *“It’s important that they discover new flavors, that they see the food before and after, and that we talk about it.”* With the children growing up, Thomas now faces another source of tension: candies that his children receive at birthday parties have entered the home, something he was not prepared

for. It is not how he was brought up, and it is not how he wants to bring up his children. He wonders how he should react to the phenomenon. He understands that being a dad is not only about himself, and that he cannot isolate his children from society and deprive them of candies. He says that his role is about the meaning of what he personally gives and does compared to what they receive from outside. They can trust what he gives them as it is good for them, while they have to evaluate and learn how to consume what they get from outside. The example of ketchup, which is a product that his children enjoy, illustrates how he manages the different meanings between the home and the market.

- Thomas: *“Personally, I don’t like ketchup, we don’t have ketchup, we don’t have mayonnaise, I don’t like it and as it’s me who does the shopping... (laughs). But on the other hand, if they’re in the restaurant, they can and do take it. Julia (his wife) has it too as she likes ketchup, yes! But we don’t have it at home. It’s a value that’s passed on, something like that.”*

- Interviewer: *And what is the value exactly?*

- Thomas: *Well maybe that there are some foods that you eat less often...”*

*Fun and pleasure for the self in being a parent.* The vignette of Thomas shows two self-transformation sequences. The first sequence illustrates the transformation into a more fun and pleasurable self. He becomes a creative father and uses his professional skills to solve tensions related to his child’s refusal to eat. His improvisation with vegetables helps him to develop understandings of himself: being a dad not only involves providing food he likes, but also developing his children’s interest in food and linking taste with fun. The child’s involvement in the food production process changes the role of the child. The latter is no longer a passive consumer, but becomes a producer who understands and likes what she/he has produced.

Like Thomas, Veronica (2 children, 7 and 3) has found herself through improvisations with her children, but also through changing her understanding of what it is to be a good mum.

Veronica's children's repeated refusal to eat has driven her to abandon her "perfect healthy-cooking mum" self. When she "*let it go with vegetables,*" a new dynamic arose at the family table. Her daughter gradually began to enjoy food, and meals became a social occasion. Veronica gradually became the facilitator of this social time co-created by the family. The focus of meals shifted from health to pleasure. She now finds pleasure in cooking again, with dinners that she knows they will like and that will provide an enjoyable family moment together. She now tries to reconcile her new practices with her "healthy mom" self. "*Now, I try not to put too much pressure on myself about giving them a proper dinner every single evening because... I think that when they (the children) have had a proper lunch, a good snack, a good breakfast- you know that when you talk to dieticians or doctors- if they only have a plate of pasta, or some ham or an egg for dinner, it's enough*" (Veronica, 2 children, 7 and 3). Veronica has found her own way of doing things in interaction with her children and by revising the norm for vegetables: from twice a day to once a day. This new norm provides her with more room for pleasure and improvisation. For example, on Wednesdays, lunches are improvised according to their activities: picnic in the park if the weather is fine, lunch at home or in a restaurant downtown. Last Wednesday, she asked her children: "*What do you feel like eating? and they replied: "Ah! We'd like pasta."* They love pasta with beans and ham. So I tell them, 'OK, let's have pasta with beans and ham'" (Veronica, 2 children, 7 and 3). Veronica is now able to combine healthy eating with pleasure and fun thanks to improvisation and co-creating mealtimes with her children.

Bérangère has also re-interpreted her understanding of what it is to be a mum by developing new understandings of her children as consumers (and not only incompetent consumers). As her children prefer the market-made *Pom'pote*, she comments: "*And you know they can choose vanilla-apple or strawberry-apple, they can choose different flavors, so it's like they're big because they can decide... They love it, it's fun.*" Later in the interview, she explains

how she has introduced ‘options’ within her strict routine: for dinner, she asks the children to choose the kind of pasta and sauce they like. She gets out nice plates, sets a nice table and rolls up the ham to make it more attractive. She says, “*It’s important that they have a notion of pleasure.*” Bérangère competes with the fun of the market by making her home-made meals more appealing as she wants her meals (herself) to be healthy but also fun.

The case of André shows how he has re-interpreted his understanding of being a dad by appropriating the fun of the market. André has evolved from being a dad who shares the domestic chores with his partner to one who educates his children to taste: he says that he cooks what he likes and never proposes any child-specific meals. However, he makes one exception with McDonald’s. He does not like McDonald’s but his children love it. From time to time, when he does not feel like cooking, he goes to the drive-in and buys a big box of chicken nuggets with fries. He observes: “*Then I’m the king: thanks dad, thanks dad!*” André expresses his pleasure at such interactions. He gives a few other examples of practices when he is “the king” and mentions practices he has abandoned because he “*doesn’t have a lot of success with that.*” The McDonald’s experience is a rewarding experience for him as a father that involves a new kind of interaction with his children, whereby they express recognition and even hero-worship. Here the fun of the market he appropriates supports his transformation as a father, which not only involves educating the children and helping his wife, but also getting recognition and being celebrated by the children for bringing fun into the household.

These four vignettes illustrate how fun and pleasure become part of being a parent for both mothers and fathers. They show the parents changing understanding of their children. In this process, parents involve the children in making decisions, expressing their tastes, discovering by themselves, taking part in the meal production, and so on. At the start of their interviews, parents often describe their children as incompetent (not curious, don’t know what’s good for them...)

and expect obedience. By expressing their will, children remind their parents that they have their own tastes, and parents gradually encourage their children to take part in the meal production. As the children are no longer passive consumers, the parents have to seduce and persuade them. These vignettes illustrate different processes of the parents' self-transformation through co-creating meals in the kitchen, storytelling, encouraging the child to make choices, competing with the market, and appropriating the market. The two vignettes of the mothers show that the ideal self they have developed thanks to their interpretation of good mothering (Banister, Hogg & Dixon, 2010) is the beginning of their self-transformation story. The children and the market challenged their ideal self. By improvising with their children, they re-interpreted the norms of good mothering and developed their own sense of what it is to be a mum.

*Differentiating the meaning of market and domestic practices.* The vignette of Thomas illustrates a second self-transformation sequence through the tension related to candies and ketchup. He understands he cannot control his children's consumption. With these tensions (clash of taste with the children and clash of values with the market), Thomas develops reflexive understandings of what it means to be a father. The morality he assigns to what comes from himself creates two distinct areas of meaning: the home and the market. He gives his children spaces of freedom thanks to the market, where the food is no longer provided by him. With this distinction, he educates them to make consumer-savvy decisions, and reaffirms a sense of himself with the culture of food and the values he wants to transmit to his children. The example of Chloé also illustrates how she has reconciled a sense of self in managing meanings. After her divorce, she became a provider of social time, where fun and pleasure play a key role. She appropriated the fun of the market (party time at the fast food restaurant) to celebrate this social time. She has delegated the dietetic education of her children to the school canteen: *"My sons like salad. I think it's thanks to the canteen. Many of the canteens have the "green fork" label, the kids have to try*



*everything, they have to eat vegetables. My kids eat everything, they're very conscientious about it. (...) But... I don't know, but I don't think it's my teaching... I tend to take it easy as far as food's concerned...I haven't really taught them, things just happened by themselves... and it's nice...*” However, with time, she felt that these practices were not exactly her and understood she had neglected something important about herself: openness to food diversity. As she observes: *“Personally, it's very hard for me to deal with people who're very restrictive or who don't like eating at all, I find it very difficult.”* So when she goes shopping and sees some unusual vegetables like swede, Chloé understands that she wants to educate her children to flavor, and that they shouldn't just have commonplace food items. She explains: *“I think taste is very important, it's one of the pleasures in life and it would be sad for instance not to have passed that on to my children. In other words, I think it's a sense that's as important as the others and then, well...there you go! Er...I try to give them, er...a kind of musical culture, erm...I try to teach them...visually, we go to the museum, and I tell myself they also need a culture of taste! That they've been able to taste things, they have a certain curiosity, and they've had ... these opportunities...for me it's pretty important. (silence).”* Chloé reconciles a sense of self in developing what it means to her to educate her children and in delegating the dietetic education, which is less related to her personal self, to the school canteen.

*Uncompleted reconciliation.* Some mothers had still not found a fully satisfactory way to reconcile their tensions with a sense of themselves at the time of the interview. Madeleine (1 child, 9, librarian, divorced) ends up always cooking the same things to manage a balanced diet and her daughter's tastes. In the interview she says she has lost enjoyment in cooking and speaks sadly about her daughter who is a “small eater.” In his analysis of shopping, Miller (1998) comments that if mothers only bought what the children asked for, things would be relatively easy. But mothers want to influence and change their children as this is their educative role which

they consider as morally superior. For these mothers, providing food is not enough to be a mum, they need to do more. Their self comes into play: Madeleine would like to cook dishes she likes but her child's refusal to eat what is served does not allow her to express this self, which results in a feeling of failure. In negotiating health issues with children's desires, some mothers have forgotten about their own self. They disinvest the emotional aspect of cooking to protect themselves from the child's refusal. Some (like Veronica) had found their way to be a mother at the time of the interview, while others were still searching (Madeleine).

### **Discussion**

The analysis of parents' narratives of their family meal experiences was designed to gain insights into the dynamics of self-transformation in the context of everyday family consumption. It shows that parental self-transformation processes are palpable in the course of daily meal practices. Specifically, informants initially develop food practices in line with their understanding of parental roles in the context of their family, yet they soon and steadily exceed and depart from such role expectations as they adapt their food practices, resolve tensions with the children and themselves, and compete with food service providers in the marketplace, notably McDonald's. The analysis shows how parents compromise, reinforce or abandon early understandings of themselves as parents. This process occurs in interaction with children, is strongly gendered, inadequately guided by roles, and inflected by the market.

The self-transformation process is impelled by the child's refusal to eat and by the reflexivity parents develop concerning their practices in the context of everyday family consumption. The study shows that the child's refusal creates a clash with the self. The reason parents express feelings of pain, stress and ambivalence is partly because they experience rejection of their practices as a rejection of themselves. Parents want their children to enjoy the

food they cook and the recipes they like. This food is integrally part of themselves, in the same way as the belief “we are what we eat” is still valid today (Nemeroff&Rozin,1989). They would like to ‘change’ their children by getting them to eat the food they like and the food that is good for them. However, they have to dealwith a clash of taste with their children. This clash of taste is fuelled by the market which creates offers to seduce the child, competing with the values parents try to develop through their homemade meals. Their attempts to resolve tension by adapting practices do not necessarily suffice, as these adaptations may also compromise the self and parents have to reconcile such new practices with a sense of self. Self-transformation occurs when parents incorporate their understanding of changes in meal practices into their understanding of themselves as parents. In their self-transformation, parents negotiate between ideal models of parenthood and pleasing the child, and between the moral value of what they do, and experiences of fun. The analysis suggests that these compromises implicate the self. If meals were only about pleasing the child, they would be relatively easy. This is not what parents want to do, however. Instead, parents want to do what they think is right (roles) and need to feel good about it (self). For these parents, providing food is not enough to be a mum or a dad, and they need to incorporate their self in what they do. The parents come to know themselves in terms of practices, yet the child’s refusal to eat what is served does not always allow them to share their sense of who they are in their meal practices. This forces them to reinvent themselves,indicating that they can no longer keep to their ideal roles.

How is the market implicated in parental self-transformation? Food service providers represented by McDonald’s (Ritzer, 1993) and child-specific food brands seduce children with values of fun. Parents know they will please their children with McDonalds or ‘childish’ food products. For parents, they represent a respite from cooking. So why do parents have ambivalent feelings? The present paper shows that the market seduces children by providing experiences that

compete with part of what the parents would like to accomplish by themselves: the happy family. It indicates that McDonalds' has become a "reference point" as its fun aspect competes with the not so fun, 'good' parenting meal practices in ways that challenge the parents' selves. How do parents deal with this? Some parents compete with the market and try to please the child by making meals more attractive and more fun, accommodating to the child's tastes. They try to be as attractive as the market, and use the same seduction strategies. Others appropriate the fun of the market. They become the providers of fun and pleasure within the family and are subsequently rewarded by their children. The values of fun and pleasure conveyed by the market change the nature of the parent-child interaction, which involves parents developing new understandings of themselves.

What is specific about mothers' self-transformation is the capacity of their children to challenge their selves through their refusal to eat and their preference for store-bought food and McDonald's. This competition with the market is more common for mothers than for fathers, and illustrates the differently gendered ways that such self-transformation occurs, as mothers' selves invest more in health-related food practices than fathers. The analysis points to the intimate relationship between mothers' selves and meal practices. The historical notion of women's identity as nurturing mothers (De Vault, 1991, Cappellini & Parsons, 2013) is still present here. Their self as serving healthy food is not validated by their children. Instead of obedient children, mothers are confronted with demanding and competent child consumers. Making compromises in their practices very often means compromising themselves, which involves a need to redefine the self in order to appeal to and satisfy their children.

As far as fathers are concerned, the study shows their gradual involvement in this domestic activity, and the gradual rooting of this activity into their self. Unlike the mothers, their early experiences of cooking for the family are more pragmatic than idealized. With time, by

developing practices and dealing with tensions, they reconcile their practices with a sense of self. Being a father includes not only pleasure and fun (Coskuner-Balli&Thompson, 2013), but also the education and socialization of their children as consumers. Our findings do not reveal any competition or ambivalence between their nurturer role and their breadwinning role, unlike Betanny *et al.* (2014)'s findings on early fatherhood. The fathers we interviewed embrace both roles. We explain this difference by the pleasure and the self-worth that fathers derive from their cooking practices. They go beyond their role of providing meals by developing an understanding of themselves through their practices and interactions with the children. Cooking what they like reaffirms their self-esteem. Fathers also have to deal with conflict and are forced to adapt and negotiate their practices, but to a lesser extent than mothers. They are definitely less vulnerable to discourse on good parenting than mothers (Voice Group 2010b), which gives them more freedom to invent themselves in the context of their family.

Delving deeper into gender divergences, mothers grapple with the subordinating tendencies to defer to their partners (DeVault, 1991) and their children (Cappellini& Parsons, 2013), but in an age that promotes personal authenticity and pleasure (Taylor, 1991). Fathers progressively engage in a nurturer role (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson, 2013), but do so in the current era of celebrity chefs and foodie subculture, so cooking at home is arguably less feminized/izing than ever before. Both want successful children, trained to make informed choices and to be persons in their own right.

While roles can serve as resources for change in value networks (Akaka & Chandler, 2011), our analysis of the narratives indicates how they operate through parental self-transformation. We show how the roles serve as limited guides for informants in family meals. Some of the meal practices informants understand to be appropriate to their roles are not appreciated by their children and result in a series of tensions. Parents go beyond and depart from

their understanding of parental roles as they deal with the tensions, and adapt and improvise meal practices. In particular, informants transform themselves as parents as they integrate these adapted and improvised practices into their sense of self.

This study contributes to an emerging model of parenthood in consumption. The parental self-transformation we identify needs to be situated within the larger market-related social phenomena of childhood changes (Watson 1997; Cook 2004), where the market has contributed to the changed nature of what it is to be a child. Our study emphasizes the diffusion of the service model (Vargo&Lusch, 2008) into the home. Parents draw from the ethics of this model of service and satisfaction that emphasizes happiness, harmony, self-expression and choice by integrating their espousing meal practice improvisation. They gradually move away from role expectations towards a more pleasure-based model of parenthood, as conveyed by the market. This should be understood in the light of the postmodern notion that selfhood should be meaningful and pleasurable, and above all, that everyone should be happy in the family (Stacey, 1998). This discourse conveyed by the market correlates with parents' search for peace within the home and enjoying good interaction with their children. In this emerging model, parents incorporate pleasure into meals, and involve their children in the meal preparation. Children are coopted as active producers, and are no longer merely consumers of the meal. Parents guide their children to be good consumers, accommodating their own practices both to the market and to their children. We identified the gendered nature of such self-transformation, as well as similarities between genders. In our data, the values of pleasure and fun no longer seem to distinguish masculine from feminine models of parenthood, but rather mark the changing nature of parenting. This has to be understood in the context of the blurring of gendered distinctions between the feminine model associated with the home and consumption, and the masculine model associated with the workplace and production (Firat, 1994). The present study contributes to the debate by showing

that earlier categories of feminized home versus masculinized workplace are less operable nowadays, as what we are seeing is a masculinizing (i.e. productive) feminized home.

This research explores self-transformation with self-reflexive data. The data highlight the subjective sense of self, which constitutes one aspect of the self and one aspect of self-transformation. Self-transformation is not limited to resolving tensions related to the child's consumption. Despite this being a focal point of the data, it is in fact part of a broader phenomenon (Giddens, 1992). A longitudinal study could broaden this understanding of self-transformation, exploring parents' self-transformation within the networks of socializers who interact with children. The parents interviewed are middle-class and educated, and the cultural context is also important: the informants had a European Latin food culture (Fischler & Masson, 2008) where the ritual of the daily family meal is central to family life. The tradition of somewhat unequal gender roles in this cultural context also has to be taken into account. The cultural situation in Northern Europe, with more egalitarian gender roles, could help to extend the discussion on gender issues in self-transformation. The findings in the present study are therefore specific to the context of the sample.

The findings raise important issues for marketers. Some mothers and fathers successfully transform their understanding of themselves by balancing health and fun at the family table. Opportunities exist for firms to enable parents to find this balance, rather than out-competing with them by focusing predominantly on children and fun. Parents aim to be the providers of family values through the meal. Industrials and service providers can reflect on how they could help to facilitate appropriation of such values: parents want to be the ones to provide fun, to educate their children about the seasons and how food is produced, and about environmentally-friendly issues. In addition, children can be part of this value co-creation in the context of the family, and should be given supportive roles in making healthy choices, and helping to shop,

prepare and serve meals. Consistent with general trends, the findings show that fathers cook for themselves and for the family, suggesting a ready market for father consumers that would emphasize the co-creation of rewarding cooking and enjoyable experiences.

The findings also raise important issues for health authorities involved in the fight against child obesity. The pleasure-emerging model of parenthood does not compete with healthy eating models. On the contrary, French sociologists have warned against the risk that health discourse and campaigns could reinforce the link between healthy eating and constraints (Poulain, 2009, Fischler 2001), which would make them inefficient. They point to the social dimension of meals and the role of pleasure as a regulator of food intake, which Rozinet *al.* (2003) calls the “French paradox”. We encourage food policy decision-makers to take this emerging parental model into account, extending the focus of communication campaigns from food and diet to family time and interactions.

The study showed how parents’ self-transformation operates in the practice of everyday family meals, and emphasized the children’s role in this process. Further research could extend insights into this process by exploring how the child’s different socializers (school, grandparents, friends, siblings...) are involved in the parents’ self-transformation process. This would be particularly interesting in the context of school programs designed to combat obesity, and in a context where grandparents are more involved in the family gift economy (Marcoux, 2009). A better understanding of parents’ self-transformation could also be explored through the interactions of couples, and the different roles the two parents negotiate for the education of their children. Finally, the study focused on a mundane context of consumption, where the self is embedded in routines. Further research could explore more exceptional family consumption contexts, such as family holidays (Epp & Price, 2011), where everyday norms and roles no



longer apply, but where other kinds of pressure may exist. For example, how do parents deal with the pressure to be happy and their sense of self in exceptional family contexts?

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**Table 1**  
**Informants characteristics - Mothers**

| <b>First name</b> | <b>Family type</b> | <b>Children in the household</b> | <b>Age of children</b> | <b>Professional activity</b> | <b>Nationality</b>             |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Sabine            | Married            | 3                                | 3-3-7                  | Administrative secretary     | French                         |
| Madeleine         | Single-parent      | 1                                | 9                      | Librarian                    | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |
| Veronica          | Married            | 2                                | 3-7                    | Art historian                | Italian, born in Switzerland   |
| Sandrine          | Couple together    | 2                                | 5-10                   | Make-up artist               | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |
| Sofia             | Married            | 2                                | 8-11                   | Educator assistant           | Italian                        |
| Tatiana           | Married            | 1                                | 8                      | Actor                        | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |
| Bérangère         | Married            | 2                                | 2-4                    | Social assistant             | French                         |
| Chloé             | Singleparent       | 3                                | 3-7-10                 | Secondary school teacher     | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |
| Juliette          | Married            | 2                                | 4-8                    | Administrative assistant     | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |
| Cristel           | Singleparent       | 2                                | 7-10                   | Early childcare assistant    | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |
| Elena             | Married            | 2                                | 3-5                    | Secondary school teacher     | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |
| Annabelle         | Married            | 2                                | 5-7                    | Architect                    | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |
| Sophie            | Married            | 2                                | 9-13                   | Primary school teacher       | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |



**Table 2**  
**Informants characteristics - Fathers**

| <b>First name</b> | <b>Family type</b> | <b>Children in the household</b> | <b>Age of children</b> | <b>Professional activity</b>   | <b>Nationality</b>             |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Patrice           | Married            | 2                                | 5-19                   | Retail store manager           | French                         |
| José              | Divorced           | 1                                | 3                      | Retail store assistant manager | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |
| André             | Couple together    | 3                                | 8-10-15                | State employee                 | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |
| Régis             | Married            | 2                                | 7-9                    | Social educator                | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |
| Riccardo          | Couple together    | 2                                | 9-10                   | Locksmith                      | Italian                        |
| Clément           | Blended family     | 3                                | 3-7-12                 | Commercial manager             | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |
| Thomas            | Married            | 2                                | 4-7                    | Multimedia producer            | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |
| Eric              | Blended family     | 3                                | 11-18-22               | Architect                      | Swiss (French-speaking origin) |