24 / 7 Negotiation
in couples´ transition to parenthood

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Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction and research question

The transition to parenthood is a crucial time for the establishment of gendered divisions of work for contemporary couples. Despite contemporary couples' ideas about sharing paid work and childcare equally, research consistently shows that the division of paid and unpaid work becomes much more traditional and specialized after the birth of the first child (Aliaga, 2005; Baxter *et al.*, 2008; Kluwer *et al.*, 2002; Pittman *et al.*, 2001; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; Van der Lippe, 2000). New mothers often reduce their work hours or stop working altogether to focus on childcare and housework, whereas new fathers often remain working full time. The change in couples' division of work during the transition to parenthood also has long-term consequences for gender inequalities in the labour market (Mandel & Semyonov, 2005; Ruhm, 1998).

At the same time, the issue of who does what, when and how has become less rigid in recent decades, stimulated by processes of emancipation, increasing individualism (Beck, 1986) and economic and labour market needs. These developments have affected the way couples construct their relationships, and gender roles for men and women have been broadened. Previously clear boundaries between female and male domains have become blurred: both men and women are now expected to contribute to the family income, as well as contributing to housework and childcare (Pfau-Effinger, 2000). These expanded role prescriptions for women and men have created more room for negotiations about who should do what in the household (Scanzoni, 1978; Jansen & Liefbroer, 2006). Couples are involved in daily negotiation processes in which they, for example, decide who cooks today, who brings the child to bed and who can read the newspaper.

Somehow, however, negotiations often do not lead to more equal divisions of work within couples. Despite women's gains in the occupational sphere - namely their increased labour market participation and educational achievements (in some countries they are higher than men's) - women still spend more time than men caring for children and doing the housework (Blossfeld & Drobnic, 2001b; Gerhard *et al.*, 2003).

Until now, couples' division of work has mainly been studied as a static outcome by applying quantitative approaches (see for reviews Blossfeld & Drobnic, 2001a; Coltrane, 2000; Kroska, 1997; Shelton & John, 1996; van der Lippe, 1993). Little attention has been paid to underlying negotiation processes that generate, maintain or change a couples' division of work.

Nevertheless, couples' division of work is not a static agreement, but part of a dynamic process of daily negotiation, as recognized by many scholars (Greenstein, 1996; Kluwer *et al.*, 1997; Scanzoni, 1976; 1989; Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980; Schulz &

Blossfeld, 2006; Jansen & Liefbroer, 2006; Van Lenning & Willemsen, 2001). The present thesis builds on work of a growing number of scholars who argue that explanations for couples' persistent gendered divisions should be sought within their negotiation processes (Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007; Lindenberg, 2007; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; Jansen & Liefbroer, 2006). In spite of their (long) acknowledged importance, there is still not much known about these underlying dynamic processes which give rise to couples' division of work.

The definition of couples' negotiation processes used in the present thesis is an ongoing and dynamic interaction process in which spouses arrive at a certain division of work, either implicitly or explicitly (cf Scanzoni, 1976, 1989; Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980; Sillars & Kalbflesch, 1989, see below for a more extensive definition).

Before and after the birth of a first child, couples' negotiation processes about the division of paid work, childcare and housework are assumed to be salient because of the necessity to change and adapt their division of work towards the new situation. This thesis aims to increase understanding of couples' daily negotiation processes on their division of work (paid work, housework and childcare) during the transition to parenthood, and to provide insight in how these processes contribute to couples' division of work.

The transition to parenthood is a period which includes many significant changes in couples' division of work that also set the trend for their future division of work. Once a couple has developed a certain division of work, it is more difficult to reverse it afterwards (Kluwer, 1998a), and many studies show the path dependency of the division of work (Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007).

This study is one of very few qualitative longitudinal studies on couples' negotiation processes which takes the perspectives of both partners into account. The longitudinal research design applied in this study incorporated interviews with both spouses, both individually and together. Including the views of both spouses on their negotiation processes and their division of work before and after the birth of their first child is a unique undertaking. This innovative approach enabled this study to explain couples' division of work by the nature of their negotiation processes.

In the following section, existing research lines on the division of work of couples are presented. Subsequently, the central theme and approach of this thesis, i.e. negotiation processes of couples on their division of work, is introduced. The relevance and added value of the chosen research method and approach is also described. This is followed by the description of the research questions answered in the empirical chapters two, three, four and five. The Dutch case is then presented and, at the end of this chapter, the data and methods are described.

1.2. State of the art: Theoretical approaches explaining the gendered division of labour

Various theories shed light on why couples divide paid and unpaid work in a certain way: socio-economic approaches, socialization or sex role theories, the doing gender approach and the life course approach. Below these theoretical approaches and the corresponding results are discussed, as well as their contributions to couples' negotiation processes on their division of work in the transition to parenthood.

1.2.1. Socio-economic theories, resources and power

1.2.1.1. New home economics

An influential approach is the economic theory of the family (Becker, 1965; 1981), also called 'new home economics'. It predicts specialization in behaviour of spouses according to their capacities, with one spouse concentrating on full-time homemaking and childrearing, and the other working full-time in a paid job. The assumption is made that specialization is the most efficient strategy for the family as a unit. Taking this argument further, becoming parents provides an extra incentive to adopt a pattern of specialization, since the amount of unpaid work at home then increases.

From the perspective of new home economics, task specialization can be seen as an accumulative process. Once started, investments in career opportunities mean that the redistribution of tasks between partners at a later stage becomes increasingly difficult (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Coverman, 1985). For men who have been accumulating experience in paid labour, a decrease in paid labour time and an increase in unpaid labour, such as childcare and household tasks, becomes more and more costly. Women's tendency to reduce paid work hours after the birth of their first child makes it difficult to change responsibilities at a later point in time.

In this approach, the family is perceived as one production unit with joint interests, and task specialization is perceived as a means to increase the efficiency of this production unit.

1.2.1.2. Resource bargaining

The resource theory assumes that household members are primarily concerned with their own utility (and not the joint family interests), and that household work is a source of disutility. As such it is an unattractive duty which one wants to buy out of. Opportunity costs are also considered: spending time on domestic work prevents individuals from more rewarding activities. Each spouse's power stems from one's own resources (e.g. income, earning capacity, status). These propositions are gender neutral. Men as well as women are assumed to use power to avoid spending time on domestic work, and will 'buy themselves out', either through purchasing services or by demanding greater spousal participation. The basic premise of the resource approach is that the division of domestic work is an outcome of *'negotiations'*

between partners and will be adjusted to changes in resources of both spouses. The resource theory does not further specify how this negotiation will take place, and negotiations may also not be explicit. It is predicted that if wives earn a higher income, they will do less domestic work, while men whose wives earn higher incomes will do more. There is indeed evidence that only few persons enjoy domestic work. Average ratings in a Dutch study range from 29 (cleaning the toilet) to 64 (preparing meals) on a scale of 0 (very unpleasant) to 100 (very pleasant). However without exception, males in this study responded more negatively than females (Van Berkel, 1997).

Empirical studies do not show conclusive evidence for the impact of socio-economic resources. Sometimes men were found to do less domestic work when they were unemployed, or even no household work at all (Bittman *et al*., 2003). When husbands are dependent on their wives, or when they have fewer educational resources than their wives, they do less domestic work (Brines, 1994; Haas, 1981; Presser, 1994; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006). A smaller difference between spouses' educational levels is related to more equality in the division of domestic work (Bergen, 1991; Kamo, 1988). However, some studies suggest that the relationship between educational level and contribution to unpaid work is actually a spurious relationship, and that higher education of men is related to more liberal attitudes towards gender roles, which is the real reason why men share more housework (Antill & Cotton, 1988; Elder jr, 1994). Also, higher educated women are found to realize a more equal division of domestic tasks, although it remains unclear whether this is due to their power and economic resources in negotiations, or due to ideological factors (McDonald, 1980; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970; Scanzoni, 1976). Only a few longitudinal studies on these causal relationships have been carried out (cf Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007). They found that couples generally become more traditional during the course of their lives, with not only traditional couples specializing further, but also couples with a more equal division developing towards more gendered specialization over time (Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007). Couples earning equal salaries are less at risk of traditionalization of their division than couples in which the husband earns much more than the wife. When the wife earns more than the husband, couples' risk of traditionalization is not smaller than when they earn equal salaries (Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007).

How events such as the birth of a child or changes in a spouse's paid work influence the division of housework and childcare is still largely unknown (cf Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006). Schulz & Blossfeld found that the probability of men increasing their share of unpaid work decreases with the length of the marriage - independent of economic resources. This is a process which is accelerated immensely by the birth of the first child. The hypothesis that changes in couples' relative resources explain changes in couples' divisions of work over time was not supported (Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; 2009).

In conclusion, unlike new home economics, resource bargaining assumes that the family is not one joint unit, but a number of people with partly opposing interests that are the subject of continuous negotiations. Family members use their resources to realize their individual goals, which may be a dynamic process, influenced by the changing relative resources of both spouses. According to this resource bargaining theory, women's increasing resources as well as equalization of resources between male and female spouses will result in more equal divisions of paid work, housework and childcare. In the case of equal resources, there may be a tendency of both partners to assure their negotiation positions through their resources, which may lead to more double-earner households.

Economic approaches alone are insufficient in explaining couples' division of work. Recently scholars have argued that the power of economic approaches to explain a couple's division of labour has been overestimated in recent decades (Bittman *et al*., 2003; Blossfeld & Drobnic, 2001a; Gershuny *et al.*, 2005; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006, 2009). Alternative theories need to be explored in order to understand the mechanisms behind couples' division of work. Therefore next, sociological contributions, i.e the social exchange theory and power mechanisms are reviewed.

1.2.1.3. Social exchange theory & mechanisms of power

Power is the ability of actors to produce or cause intended outcomes or effects, particularly regarding either the behaviour of others or others' outcomes (Sexton & Perlman, 1989). As argued by economic theories, power can be gained outside of the family or the couple relationship by resources such as education, income and occupational status. If power is gained by earning resources outside the home, men will typically have more power than women. This supposition is supported by a number of studies (Bulanda, 2004; Johnson & Huston, 1998). The social exchange theory (cf. Blau, 1964) expands the exchange of economic resources by including the exchange of non-economic goods (see also Foa & Foa, 1980). Komter (1989), for example, argues that resources such as affection, communication skills or a sense of humour are goods which can be exchanged in relationships. If these factors for gaining power are taken into account, women may have alternative resources for gaining power, and can consequently earn a larger say in who is doing what, when and how. In another line of argument, women may have a larger say in stereotypically female domains like childcare and housework, whereas men may have a larger say in typically male domains (sphere of interest rule, Jansen & Liefbroer, 2006). In the 1970s and 1980s, studies investigating gender relations and the division of work focused on power relations between the sexes. Now, at least two decades later, focusing on power may not be less important, but seems to have broadened to include various other perspectives.

Power can be exercised in a way that is not visible; it can be latent or hidden (Komter, 1989; McDonald, 1980), and does not necessarily lead to conflicts at the

surface (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). Also, those who exert power and those who are affected by power do not need to be conscious of it (Bittman, 1997; Komter, 1989), which makes studying power relationships a difficult endeavour.

Komter (1985, 1989) investigated Dutch couples' underlying power mechanisms and processes that were not visible in behavioural outcomes. She uncovered power mechanisms within couples' division of domestic work, child care and sexuality. Komter concluded that it was mainly latent power which ruled within couples, referred to as 'power of taken for grantedness' or 'hidden power'. Examples were negative responses of husbands to changes proposed by their wives, wives anticipating husbands' perceived needs and preferences, and wives avoiding causing conflicts. For these forms of power, the status quo of traditional gender roles and practices was confirmed. Further affirming the status quo, hidden power mechanisms were found which prevent people from having grievances that could lead to a desire or request for change by ideologically shaping their beliefs and preferences beforehand.

For example, couples used *legitimizations* of their everyday arrangements, or regarded differences between men and women as normal and inevitable. In their legitimizations, contradictory and ambiguous experiences were either left out or represented as a logical unit. In Komter's study, for example, couples talked about the freedom of married women to choose motherhood and domestic responsibilities, or paid work, or a combination of both. Hence "subtly and largely at an unconscious level, invisible power reflected an already existing power inequality between husbands and wives, which at the same time justified and confirmed it".

Furthermore, keeping an issue off the agenda is a way of exercising power in an invisible way, i.e power of non-decision-making. Bittman (1997) also found various implicit power strategies of couples. For instance, sometimes equality was defined as mutual participation and not as equal contribution. Furthermore the issue of an equal division of work may be replaced by discussions on differing standards of hygiene in the household. Finally the allocation of tasks may be trivialized as being an unimportant issue.

Based on the above findings and theory, the assumption can be made that the birth of the first child changes couples' distribution of power. In this thesis a number of ways that a child may change a couple's power and negotiation relationship are proposed. On the one hand, from an economic point of view the new mother may become more dependent on her husband when she is not able to work (as much) as before. On the other hand, from a social point of view, new fathers may become more dependent on their wives for the continuation of their relationship with the child, a tendency which research on divorce in recent decades has revealed (Goldscheider, 2000).

Overall, these ideas on social exchange and psychological power mechanisms expand the economic views of power bargaining in the household, and provide more insight in how couples may negotiate their division of work.

1.2.2. Doing gender and sex role theories

The socio-economic theories with their gender-neutral predictions only partly explain couples' division of work over time, as seen above. When controlling for relative economic resources outcomes remain gender asymmetrical (e.g. Blossfeld et al, 1999; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; van der Lippe, 1993). Therefore normative mechanisms may provide an explanation for the division of work. Sex role theories assume that couples do not necessarily allocate housework efficiently or rationally according to who contributes the most resources or who has the most time. Rather, men and women are socialized towards conforming to their sex roles, while deviation from expected gender roles will lead to sanctions from the environment and is therefore costly. Another more recent theory which assumes that sex roles are important in explaining couples' division of work is the 'doing gender' approach (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Doing gender argues that domestic work not only produces goods and services, but also reproduces gender relations, thereby hinting at the symbolic meaning of tasks. Women and men are assumed to perform tasks which are associated with their biological sex, as performing a male or female task perpetuates one's gender identity. 'Doing parenthood' can also be seen as a form of doing gender; Walzer (1998) suggested that mothers and fathers create and maintain mothers' responsibility for intensive mothering, and that they are supported and channelled into this mechanism by prevalent norms regarding mothering and fathering.

Brines (1994) described the compensation hypothesis, also referred to as gender-deviance neutralization (Greenstein, 2000). As long as a man's position as chief family provider and therefore his male identity are not threatened, an increase in women's economic independence (income) will result in an increase in her bargaining power and a tendency towards a more equal division of domestic work. However, when men become economically dependent on their wives' income, they will try to quash doubts about their gender identity by avoiding domestic work. This compensation of male identity has been supported by several studies (Brines, 1994; Greenstein, 2000; Grunow et al, 2007), whereas other studies found diverging results (Bittman *et al.*, 2003).

According to the doing gender approach, the birth of a child will lead women to confirm their role as mother by disproportionately sharing childcare, even when they remain working. Men will further confirm their identity by providing income, and may avoid doing too much of the housework and childcare. Men's general tendency to decrease their share of housework over time (in a relationship) is even greater during the transition to parenthood (Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007). In the transition to parenthood, couples may experience a change in their relevant normative beliefs, for example the idea of an equal division of work. While women are at home during maternity leave, their definition of equal roles may be replaced by a belief in complementary roles for mothers and fathers, which is more compatible with a specialized division of work. In the period that women do not

work (whilst on maternity leave), they therefore do more housework, which is consistent with their fairness norm (Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007).
Gender theories add an important social dimension to economic theories, namely the notion that spouses include social aspects such as their identity and societal norms when creating the division of work, and that they function as individuals, while at the same time functioning as interacting members within the family unit.

1.2.3. Tyranny of small decisions

Mechanisms explaining the accumulation of undesired outcomes are a promising addition for understanding the gendered division of paid and unpaid work. The division of household and childcare tasks may – to its detriment - consist of many small decisions, which individually may not be worth mentioning or may not be worthy of explicit negotiation. However, together they accumulate to form a suboptimal, unequal or unfair allocation of time to tasks. This *'tyranny of small decisions'* described by Kahn (1966) with regard to consumer market decisions accumulates to create situations to which one would not have agreed if the opportunity to agree on the 'big' accumulation of small decisions had been provided (Doorten, 2008; Lindenberg, 2007).

Lindenberg argues that couples' negotiation differs for large and small decisions. For large decisions, such as where to live, who takes which job, and the purchase of expensive goods such as a house or family car, couples will be governed by a desired mental model which they apply to their relationship. The mental model or self-concept of modern couples may be that 'we need to balance our individual interests' or 'we divide work in a fair way'. On the other hand, smaller decisions such as daily tasks in the house (i.e. who cooks, washes the dishes, etc.) may not be governed by the mental model for their relationship but by other principles, such as gendered and task-specific norms, and expectation states. The expectation states approach assumes that experience and stereotypical notions lead to expectations on who is better at performing certain tasks and thus should do those tasks. These small decisions will together lead to a division according to presumed competences, which will in turn reinforce initial expectations for decisions on future task allocation (Ferree, 1990). The result remains a tyranny of small decisions; an accumulation which was never agreed on, but which is the product of many small decisions reinforcing the process of specialized and gendered divisions. Beliefs in competence of a spouse for family work explained women's perception that their division of family work, although skewed, was fair (Grote, Naylor & Clark, 2002). In the transition to parenthood, when mothers in particular start to specialize in childcare, this mechanism may translate into a higher degree of specialization in childcare than couples agreed on before their child was born. Following on from the tyranny of small decisions which leads to undesired outcomes in the long run, gendered norms would have more impact on a collection of small decisions than on large decisions

such as how many hours one works or which job one accepts. This may also explain the finding that couples' attitudes are more equal than the actual division of work which is realized (Aliaga, 2005; Baxter *et al.*, 2008; Kluwer *et al.*, 2002; Pittman *et al.*, 2001; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; Van der Lippe, 2000).

1.2.4. Cognitive dissonance

As stated above, couples often divide work unintentionally or in a way which does not fit their ideas on how men and women can best divide paid work, housework and childcare. According to cognitive dissonance theory, this will have consequences for couples' psychological well-being. The cognitive dissonance theory - a major theoretical approach within social psychology – has so far not been used very often for explaining couples' division of work. However, it offers alternative explanations for couples' diverging from their preferred divisions of work. Cognitive dissonance (cf Festinger, 1957) is the psychological conflict which results from holding two or more incompatible ideas or beliefs simultaneously. The ideas or beliefs may include attitudes, the awareness of one's behaviour and facts. People strive for balance in their beliefs and if presented with decisions or information which create dissonance, they use dissonance reduction strategies to restore equilibrium, especially if the dissonance affects their self-esteem. Dissonance is psychologically uncomfortable enough to motivate people to achieve consonance, and in a state of dissonance people will avoid information and situations which might increase the dissonance.

People experience a motivational drive to reduce dissonance by changing their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, or by justifying or rationalizing their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. Rationalization is the tendency to create additional reasons or justifications to support one's own choices and behaviour (see also review of Komter's study above). Dissonance can also lead to confirmation bias, the denial of disconfirming evidence and other ego defense mechanisms. *Confirmation bias* is a tendency for people to prefer information that confirms their preconceptions or hypotheses, independently of whether they are true. People can reinforce their existing attitudes by selectively collecting new evidence, by interpreting evidence in a biased way or by selectively recalling information from memory. When couples do not divide work the way they claim to prefer, cognitive dissonance will motivate spouses to change their attitudes or their behaviours, or to justify or rationalize their attitudes or behaviours. Couples have been shown to use various justifications for their dissonance. A strategy to justify men's small share of housework was, for example, their incompetence at this kind of work (Hochschild, 1989; Komter, 1989; Moree, 1992). Conversely it is supposed that women have an inborn talent for housework and childcare (Portegijs *et al.*, 2006). Rationalization and justification may therefore be part of couples' negotiation processes before and after the birth of their first child.

1.2.5. Life course approach

The life course approach supports the idea that life transitions such as the transition to parenthood are processes rather than events. It proposes interdependence between spouses' lives and roles, and the agency of individual actors. The life course perspective focuses on consequences of timing and duration of life events, such as marriage and childbirth, on the allocation of paid and unpaid work. Spouses make decisions in the context of their relationship and in interaction with their partners. These decisions then lead to changes in the division of paid and unpaid work and consequently in their life course(s) as a whole. For example, couples who have children at a later age share family work more equally (Haas, 1981; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006). It was also found repeatedly that sharing domestic duties is more likely in the early stages of marriage (or cohabitation) than later on (Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld), which is referred to as the 'honeymoon hypothesis'. As long as couples are in love ('in the honeymoon period' cf. Künzler, 1999), men will contribute to housework and childcare, whereas later in the relationship this helping behaviour is no longer shown.

To sum up the above review of theoretical approaches, the majority of these approaches explaining the division of work conceptualize the division of work as a static agreement. While the resource bargaining approach assumes that the division of work is in principle re-negotiable at each moment in time, it does not specify the working of these negotiations; they remain within a black box. The doing gender approach departs from the notion that gender roles are negotiated on a daily basis and thus offers a dynamic approach to the study of the division of labour. Couple relationships are one of the primary settings in which gender and gendered divisions of labour are constructed (Ferree, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987) as a result of daily implicit or explicit negotiations (Komter, 1989; Sillars & Kalbflesch, 1989; Wiesmann *et al.*, 2009). The resource and gender approaches address negotiation processes but do not further specify them. The life course approach maintains that life stages and life events are important aspects which change the context of social phenomena, and should be taken into account.

A specification of how couples' negotiation processes are further investigated in this thesis is given below.

1.3. A conceptual framework for investigating couple's negotiation processes

This thesis responds to the call of various scholars who have sought explanations for couples' skewed division of work within the underlying dynamics. An attempt is made to develop a conceptual framework used to investigate couples' daily negotiation processes on their division of paid and unpaid work.

In this thesis couples' division of work is assumed to be dynamic and negotiated by spouses on a daily basis. Furthermore it is assumed that gendered divisions of housework develop and crystallize over time (see also Gershuny *et al.*, 2005; Grunow *et al.*, 2007). The focus is on the underlying and ongoing interaction and negotiation processes within couples with regard to their division of paid work, housework and childcare before and after they become parents.

There now follows a definition of couples' negotiation processes. A couple consists of two individuals with both shared and opposing interests. The notion that the two partners have both opposing and shared interests makes a relationship a place of constant negotiation, as a balance is sought between the interests of both individuals, the shared interests and, later, the interests of the first-born child.

Studies focusing on couples' interaction processes and negotiations show that negotiations between spouses do not only happen in an explicit and verbal way, but often take place in an implicit and silent way (e.g. Knudson-Martin & Rankin Mahoney, 2005). Some studies suggest that certain tasks are explicitly agreed on, while other tasks are not: Van Lenning & Willemsen (2000) found that couples striving for an equal division of work did discuss the division of childcare and paid work, but omitted housework from their explicit discussions.

Couples' negotiations as such may include organized, deliberative, strategic, proactive behaviour of one or both spouses, or indirect, non-reflective, impulsive or more incremental behaviours, such as avoiding conflicts or ad hoc and stepwise negotiations (Sillars & Kalbflesh, 1989). Also couples' negotiations may on the one hand be cooperative, friendly, relationship-oriented or compromising while based on trust, and may on the other hand also be characterized by non-cooperative, individual-goal-oriented, defensive, aggressive or conflict-laden behaviour such as criticizing and attacking each other (cf Kluwer, Heesink & Van de Vliert, 1997). Hence couples' negotiation processes about their division of work may include any of these above-mentioned characteristics. In this thesis, negotiation processes are defined as an ongoing and dynamic interaction process in which couples with similar or dissimilar preferences arrive at certain outcomes or decisions, either implicitly or explicitly (cf. Sillars & Kalbflesch, 1989; Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1981; Scanzoni, 1976, 1989). While these broad conceptual processes are sometimes referred to as negotiation processes and sometimes as decision-making processes or couple interaction processes, the definitions all refer to a similar process (e.g. Scanzoni, 1989: decision-making processes and Scanzoni, 1976: negotiation processes).

A possible situation in couples' negotiation is when one spouse's interest or goal can be achieved only by active cooperation of the other, whereas the other's interest can be achieved single-handedly. Couples negotiation processes will be investigated in-depth in chapter three. However, to give an illustration of a negotiation process, the demand-withdraw pattern, which has been shown to occur frequently in husband-wife interaction (Klinetob & Smith, 1996), is used here. Demand-withdraw behaviour is a pattern in which one spouse attempts to demand or engage in a discussion, while the other spouse attempts to avoid or withdraw

from this discussion. Demanding behaviour may include pressuring, requesting or demanding change, nagging, blaming, accusing, criticizing and engaging in a discussion. Withdrawing behaviour may include distancing, physical withdrawal, silence, defensiveness or avoiding a discussion. Some studies showed that the spouse who demands change tends to assume the demanding role (e.g. see Christensen & Heavey, 1990; 1993). Other studies indicated that women most often assume the demanding role during marital conflict (see Christensen *et al*., 2006). Wife demand-husband withdraw patterns were found to be a typical response to the asymmetrically structured conflict situations in which women were discontent with their husbands' contribution to domestic work, while the husbands wanted to maintain the status quo (Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1997, 2000).

Another mechanism found in couples' negotiations is called 'maternal gatekeeping' (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). In this mechanism women inhibit men's participation in childcare. It comprises various beliefs and behaviours which inhibit a collaborative effort between men and women in family work by limiting men's opportunities for learning and growing through caring for the home and children.

As these studies show, some first steps have been taken to provide insights in the black box of couples' negotiation processes. The above approaches and studies were used for testing hypotheses on causes for couples' division of work in their transition to parenthood (cf chapter two). They were also used as a point of departure, as so-called sensitizing concepts for further qualitative investigation into the nature of couples' negotiation processes (cf chapters three, four and five). By explicitly focusing on couples' negotiation processes, new explanations for the persistent division of work within couples may be found.

1.4. Research questions

The aim of this thesis is to further the understanding of couples' negotiation processes on their division of work (paid work, housework and childcare) in the transition to parenthood, and to provide insight in how these processes contribute to couples' division of work. For this purpose, four sub-questions are investigated in chapters two to five.

To first gain an insight in current Dutch couples' changes in their division of work during their transition to parenthood, Dutch couples' division of paid and unpaid work is studied at various times around the birth of their first child using longitudinal quantitative analyses in chapter 2. Subsequently, qualitative research is used to investigate different aspects of the negotiation processes underlying couples' division of work. In chapter three the different characteristics and mechanisms of negotiation processes associated with different kinds of divisions (traditional/transitional/egalitarian) are investigated. In chapter four processes by which some couples realize their intended divisions of work and others realize unintended divisions after the birth of their child are studied. Since fathers have

often been excluded from studies on couples' division of work, the fathers' perspective and their experience of their role as father throughout the transition to fatherhood are explored in chapter five.

The term *traditional division of work* refers to divisions according to traditional gender norms, namely male breadwinners and female housekeepers. *Transitional divisions* refer to divisions in which both traditional and more modern gender roles are reflected at the same time, for example male breadwinners who also spend time on childcare and housework, and women who combine their main responsibility at home with part-time paid work. *Egalitarian divisions* refer to divisions which reflect egalitarian gender roles, such as spouses' sharing all paid and unpaid work, either by both working full time and outsourcing a large part of the housework and childcare, or by both working part time and sharing housework and childcare.

1.4.1. Chapter 2. Couples' division of paid and unpaid work at various stages of life

Previous studies have shown that, when couples become parents, their division of work changes towards a more traditional pattern. However, longitudinal studies which are able to show changes across the transition to parenthood and which are able to indicate causal relationships are scarce (cf Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006). This is also true for the Netherlands. In chapter two, Dutch couples' division of paid and unpaid work before and after having children was analysed using longitudinal quantitative data from the first two waves of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS). The analyses provided a recent insight in couples' division of paid and unpaid work across their transition to parenthood. The following question is answered in this chapter:

> *To what extent does couples' division of paid and unpaid work change after the birth of their first child?*

Dutch couples' division of paid and unpaid work around the time of the birth of their first child is described and partly explained by these analyses. Findings from these analyses formed the point of departure for the qualitative and in-depth analysis of couples' negotiation processes about their division of work during the transition to parenthood which is central in subsequent chapters.

1.4.2. Chapter 3. Implicit and explicit decision-making processes and related divisions

When gender roles shift in a modern direction and deviate from taken-for-granted notions, negotiation processes presumably become increasingly important and pervasive. Given social changes in women's labour participation and developments towards more egalitarian relationships, couples' division of work may increasingly become a subject of explicit negotiation. Empirical findings on this tendency are

scarce. A few studies indicate that implicit negotiation is common in particular regarding the division of housework, but that conflicts seem to revolve around housework rather than paid work and childcare. Outspoken conflict can be regarded as a form of explicit decision making. In order to gain insight in the decision-making processes of couples with regard to their division of paid work and housework before the birth of their first child, the following questions were investigated in chapter 3:

1. In terms of explicit and implicit strategies, what characterizes the decision making of young couples with respect to the division of paid and domestic work?
2. How do couples deal with challenges in their division of paid and domestic work?
3. What categories of couples are linked with implicit and explicit decision-making characteristics and strategies in relation to the division of paid and domestic work?

Investigating and conceptualizing couples' decision-making processes from both spouses' perspectives individually as well as together, before the birth of their first child, provides a baseline measurement for exploring processes in later stages of couples' lives. This chapter shows how various negotiation processes are related to different kinds of divisions, namely traditional, egalitarian and transitional divisions before couples' transition to parenthood.

1.4.3. Chapter 4. Intended and unintended divisions and the gendered kick-off process

After the birth of the first child, the majority of couples develops an unequal division of tasks, despite the fact that many couples preferred an equal division. So far, existing theories were not able to successfully explain the major changes in the division of work after the birth of the first child. In this chapter, the relationship between the negotiation processes and intended and unintended changes in couples' divisions of work was investigated in the period extending from before to after the birth of their first child. The following research question was answered by analyzing two waves of interviews with spouses both individually and together:

> *How can we understand couples' intended and unintended changes in their division of work from before to after the birth of their first child by examining their negotiation processes?*

Hence, in this chapter couples' negotiation processes were analyzed over time, from before to after the birth of their first child and from three different perspectives: his, hers and theirs.

1.4.4. Chapter 5. Contemporary new fathers´ considerations on paid work and childcare

Fathers have long been excluded from studies on couples' division of work, which have only taken into account the mothers' perspective. Only recently have a number of studies appeared in which the perspective of both spouses is taken into account. Recognition of the importance of the fathers' role within the division of work is increasing and special attention is being given to the fathers' role in children's well-being. In this chapter future and new fathers' perspectives were explored in depth and over time, i.e. across their transition to parenthood. Men's perspectives on childcare before, and their experiences after, the birth of their first child were explored both quantitatively and qualitatively. The following questions were investigated in this chapter:

1. How do fathers-to-be see their role as future fathers regarding childcare and paid work before the birth of their child?
2. How do new fathers experience and perceive their role as fathers regarding childcare and paid work after the birth of their child?
3. How do fathers of newborns deal with the imperatives of childcare and paid work?

Individual interviews with fathers before and after the birth of their first child, as well as joint couple interviews, were studied to gain insight in the fathers' role in couples' negotiation processes about their division of work during the transition to parenthood.

1.5. The Dutch case

The Netherlands is an interesting setting for studying couples' negotiation processes regarding the division of work of couples. In this country there are many different divisions of work and the freedom to choose a division may be greater than in other countries. Hence, there is more room for negotiation. The most important reason for this variety may be that part-time work is widely available - even in professional jobs - and nearly always includes social benefits. One is allowed to extend or reduce work hours when this does not contradict business needs. However, Dutch statutory leave arrangements are short compared to almost all other rich Western countries, except Portugal, USA and Switzerland (cf. Ray, Gornick & Schmitt, 2009). France, Spain, Germany and Scandinavian countries provide the longest leave (318 weeks in France, 150 weeks in Norway). New Dutch mothers are entitled to 16 weeks of maternity leave, and fathers are entitled to two days of paternity leave. In addition both parents can take 13 weeks of unpaid parental leave, either on a part-time or full-time basis. For both parents this is a total of 42 weeks of parental leave (including maternity leave). After this study took place, in January 2009, parental leave was doubled to 26 weeks of unpaid leave per parent and per child, to which the couples in our sample

were not yet entitled. The current total leave time is therefore 68 weeks for both parents. This change in parental leave moves the Netherlands from the lower end of the ranks to the middle.

These regulations offer new Dutch parents the opportunity to reduce their working hours either by changing their contract (permanent change) or by taking parental leave (temporary change). Average living costs also allow a broad range of couples to have only one (full-time) working spouse, while Dutch couples are not supported to stay at home for a longer period of time full-time, such as the first child's year, as for example in Scandinavian countries and shortly in Germany.

The majority of Dutch women and men think that babies are best cared for by their own parents, and that family life suffers if mothers work full time (Portegijs, *et al*., 2006b). As several studies suggest, these attitudes reflect a strong motherhood culture of parental (maternal) care in the Netherlands (van Wel & Knijn, 2006; Doorne-Huiskes & Doorten, forthcoming), which does not stimulate couples to opt for two full-time jobs. However, a quarter of Dutch children under the age of four are cared for in crèches or by childminders, generally for two to three days per week (Portegijs *et al*., 2006a). Full-time care for babies in crèches is also not easy to arrange due to long waiting lists in many cities (Van Beem & Wever, 2008).

An increasing number of Dutch women - especially those who are highly educated - continues working after the birth of their first child. In 2007 only 10% of mothers stopped working, whereas in 1997 one quarter of women stopped working when they became mothers (Cloin & Souren, 2009; Portegijs et al, 2006b).

Generally, most of the childcare in the Netherlands is done by women. Dutch mothers of young children spend twice as much time (21 hours per week) on childcare than fathers (10 hours). Housework is also divided asymmetrically among new Dutch parents: on average fathers spend 12 hours per week on housework, including repairs, and mothers 26 hours (Portegijs *et al*., 2006b).

The most popular working arrangement for parents in the Netherlands is the one-and-a-half-earner model (one job/one career) in which men work full time and women part time (53% of parents in 2007). Twenty-eight percent have a traditional breadwinner arrangement, whereby men work full time and women stay at home with the child(ren). Seven percent of parents are full-time dual earners and for six percent of parents both spouses work part time (Merens & Hermans, 2009).

Many Dutch women and men work part time (< 30 hours): 61% of women and 15% of men. The UK and Germany follow with 39% of women working part time (Portegijs *et al*., 2006b). In other European countries, parents more often prefer or need to combine two full-time jobs (Den Dulk, Peper & Van Doorne-Huiskes, 2005).

This cultural and societal background, including part-time opportunities and larger possibilities for negotiations, makes the Dutch case an interesting context for studying couples' negotiation processes. Dutch couples are able to choose from a variety of options for their division of work, including equal opportunities for men and women to work part time. While Dutch parents may have fewer possibilities and less support for one-breadwinner arrangements, they may also have less need for

dual-earner arrangements. As the low number of women who stop working after childbirth may suggest, the Netherlands may be a country with unique paths to sharing work and care equally. Exploring Dutch couples' negotiation processes in their transition to parenthood and how they negotiate their divisions of work in these circumstances is a revealing case.

1.6. Mixed methods research design and data

1.6.1. Introduction

In order to further the understanding of underlying dynamic processes in couples' division of work, longitudinal quantitative and qualitative approaches are more suitable than cross-sectional studies (cf Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006). To further insights in these processes a longitudinal mixed methods approach was chosen, which combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques (Johnson et al, 2009; Brannen, 2005).

The lack of insight – both theoretically and empirically - in the uncharted area of couples' negotiation processes with regard to the division of work impelled the collection and analyses of longitudinal qualitative in-depth data with which to investigate couples' daily negotiation processes in chapters three to five. Furthermore, for the clarification of, and possible explanation for, the changes in Dutch couples' division of work across their transition to parenthood, Dutch quantitative panel data were analysed in chapter two.

1.6.2. Quantitative panel data: the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS)

In order to investigate the changes in couples' division of work across their transition to parenthood and to explore causal relationships in couples' division of paid and unpaid work, quantitative panel data was analysed. To date (2010), the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS) consists of two prospective waves of data. It is a large-scale database on Dutch families (N = 9500) which includes data from both spouses. It includes a multi-method design of structured interviews as well as longitudinal qualitative studies of specific small groups within the original large sample, called NKPS mini-panels.

Of the 5733 couples in the NKPS sample, 1916 heterosexual couples who were of childbearing age, were expecting their first child or who already had children were selected for analysis. For further information on this data and the analyses see chapter two and the NKPS codebooks (Dijkstra *et al*., 2005; 2007).

1.6.3. Constant comparative method

Negotiation processes remain an uncharted area. In order to study couples' negotiation processes an approach was chosen that provided room for discovering new insights on couples' dynamic processes. The plethora of existing theories and research findings in the field of couples' division of work formed the point of departure for formulating the focus of this study: couples' negotiation processes which underlie their division of work.

First global insights, referred to as sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1954), are the starting point for further in-depth and open-minded collection and analysis of data. Sensitizing concepts can be viewed as interpretive devices and the starting point for a qualitative study (Glaser, 1978; Patton, 2002). They give the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances, and suggest directions along which to look (Wester, 1995). Existing theories and findings on couples' division of work first helped to build a conceptual framework for the data collection tools (the topic list including interview questions), and later helped to place research findings in perspective.

Constant comparison can be regarded as the basis of qualitative analyses in many traditions and applications. Central to the constant comparative method (cf. Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Boeije, 2002; 2005) is the ongoing comparison of incidents and findings with each other, both within a case or interview and across cases. The method of constant comparison means that, after detecting elements which appear important in the developing theory, one seeks new cases which can correct, sharpen or confirm these findings (Boeije, 2002; Boeije & Wiesmann, 2007).

In this book, newly discovered concepts and themes were used to adapt the findings and also to explore new data (cases) to further test these findings within and across the different chapters. Analyzing data and documenting findings are closely interrelated. This process of analysis proceeds until new data or cases no longer lead to adaptations in the theory, but merely support or confirm the findings. For a detailed step-by-step description of the constant comparative method in the current complex data set, see Boeije & Wiesmann (2007).

1.6.4. Qualitative panel study

It is assumed that negotiation processes occur and become overt and explicit when couples are forced to adapt their division of paid and unpaid work in their transition to parenthood. Impending parenthood prompts couples to adapt their current division of work, since new tasks associated with the care of their newborn child need to be divided.

In order to study couples' negotiation processes for their further division of work in this crucial period, longitudinal qualitative data[1] was collected specifically for this purpose. Couples were interviewed once when expecting their first child, and were followed up one year later, when their first child was less than one year old. Data consisted of two waves of interviews which allowed the examination of couples' negotiation processes, changes within processes and outcomes over time. Qualitative data emphasizes meanings and the multiplicity of realities in a family (Ambert et al, 1995). An innovative multi-method design was used, which consisted of couple-interaction-interviews and individual interviews with the husband and wife. This design enabled us to reconstruct negotiation processes from three perspectives, namely 'his, hers and theirs', across their transition to parenthood.

1.6.4.1. Sample selection and respondents.

The majority of the 32 couples interviewed in the qualitative data collection was selected from the NKPS sample (22 couples). Additional couples expecting a first child were approached through two midwife clinics and antenatal classes (10 couples). This interview study included two waves of interviews which studied couples' negotiation processes on their division of work before and after the birth of their first child in the period from November 2004 to January 2006.

1.6.4.2. Multi-method approach: the couple interaction interview.

The multi-method approach of this qualitative panel study consisted of three different methods of data collection. The central part was a couple-interaction interview, a semi-structured interview held jointly with both spouses. Couple interviews are a good method to stimulate recall and clarification in participants (Allan, 1980), which proved to be necessary for spouses to be able to recall processes that they often did not consciously memorize, but needed to reconstruct together from remembered anecdotes and incidents. In this part, couples thought and talked about how their division of paid and unpaid work was achieved, and which processes and types of communication led to their current division. It has, however, been shown that spouses are less able to reveal their own perspectives in a joint interview (Boeije, 2004; Hertz, 1995; Zipp & Toth, 2002). In order to record the less partner-biased accounts of the participants, and to make each spouse aware of his or her individual ideas, roles and processes regarding their negotiation processes on the division of work, couples were also interviewed individually (semi-structured interview), and asked to complete an individual questionnaire. The individual interview and questionnaire were conducted prior to the joint interview. While one partner was being interviewed, the other was completing the questionnaire, and vice versa (cf. also Pool & Lucassen, 2005).

[1] This data collection was enabled by NKPS funding.

1.7. Outline of the book

In chapter two the changes in Dutch couples' division of paid work, housework and childcare in the period from before to after the birth of their first child are described. In chapter three couples' implicit and explicit negotiation processes are investigated and conceptualized over time: from the start of their cohabitation, to when they were expecting their first child. In chapter four, couples' negotiation processes that led to their intended or unintended divisions of work across their transition to parenthood are studied, in the period from when they were expecting their first child to after the birth of their first child. Chapter five investigates men's perspectives on the division of paid work and childcare before the birth of their first child, and their experiences after the birth and how they deal with the imperatives of childcare and paid work. Chapter six summarizes the findings of these chapters and recapitulates main conclusions regarding the main research question formulated above. Implications of the results, as well as strengths and shortcomings of this study, are discussed and suggestions for directions of future research are made. The book ends with a summary in German and Dutch.

Chapter 2

Dutch couples' division of paid work, housework and childcare before and after the birth of their first child

A quantitative longitudinal study.

2. Dutch couples' division of paid work, housework and childcare before and after the birth of their first child. A quantitative longitudinal study.

2.1. Introduction

The aims of this chapter are to provide an overview of contemporary Dutch couples' division of paid and unpaid work and to describe changes in the division of labour that occur during their transition to parenthood, before and after the birth of their first child. This quantitative analysis offers a representative setting within which the qualitative outcomes presented in the subsequent chapters can be interpreted. A descriptive overview of Dutch couples' division of paid and unpaid work is presented, sketching the characteristics of the division of labour before and after the birth of their first child using longitudinal quantitative NKPS-data. Data from two waves of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS) are used to representatively and quantitatively describe couples' current division of paid and unpaid work. The analyses in this chapter include depictions of heterosexual couples living together that are of childrearing age (18-45 years). The couples are categorised based on what stage of the childrearing process they are in: whether they have no children, one child, or more children. The following question will be answered in this chapter:

> To what extent does the division of paid and unpaid work change after the birth of a couple's first child?

First we use descriptive, bivariate analyses to describe the various types of divisions of labour among couples. Subsequently, regression analyses are used to describe change in couples' division of paid and unpaid work over time. The models are constructed with the aim to study the impact of having a first child on the change in paid and unpaid work.

In the previous chapter, the various theories on the division of work were presented. On the one hand, socio-economic theories predict that the spouses with the most economic resources will specialise in paid work and continue working full-time to maximise their income. The spouse with fewer economic resources (e.g., a lower salary) is predicted to take on more unpaid work after the first child is born and to reduce his or her work hours, specialising in childcare and housework. On the other hand, sex role and doing gender theories predict that women conform to gender norms and specialise in childcare and unpaid work after the birth of their first child, reducing their paid work, while men are predicted to conform to gender norms by providing a family income and remain working full-time.

2.2. Methods

2.2.1. Sample

The data in this chapter are drawn from the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (Dykstra et al., 2005), a large-scale study of family relations using a sample of 8,161 adults ages eighteen to seventy-nine that has included two waves so far. The data from the first wave of this panel study were collected between 2002 and 2004. The data from the second wave were collected between September 2006 and June 2007 leading to 6670 interviews. Information was obtained through computer-assisted personal interviews and self-completion questionnaires. The overall response rate in wave 1 was 45%, which is typical for family studies in The Netherlands (see Dykstra et al., 2005). This sample of respondents is referred to as the *anchor* sample. In 68% of the cases, the anchor respondents gave permission for a questionnaire to be sent to their family members, and 72% of these family members (among them the partners of the anchors) completed and returned the questionnaires. The latter group of respondents is referred to as the *alter* respondents. In wave two, 95% of the wave-one anchors (the main respondents) participated.

From the 5733 couples in the NKPS sample, heterosexual couples were selected that were cohabiting and/or married in both wave one and wave 2 if the women's age was between 18 and 45 years in wave 1. These couples are in the stage in which they might possibly form families. This group of 1927 couples is further divided into subgroups: (1) couples without children who had never had children, (2) couples transitioning into parenthood between the two waves, called 'first-time parents'[2] here, (3) couples who already had children in the household in wave 1 and had more children between the two waves, (4) couples that maintained a stable number of children in their household, and (5) couples who had fewer children in their household in wave 2 than in wave 1 (mainly because their children were old enough to leave the home).

The sub-group of 205 couples that transitioned into parenthood between the two waves is selected and described in more detail. Again, these are couples that did not yet have a child in wave 1 and had one or more children (with the same spouse) in wave 2. Of these 205 first-time parents, 128 had one child between the two waves,

[2] The term 'first–time parents' has a different meaning in this quantitative chapter than in the remaining qualitative chapters. For some of the couples in this chapter, the time period between wave one and two of the NKPS data collection process was almost five years. Focussing on first–time parents in our analyses means that the first child can already be up to five years old. Also, 77 first-time parents had a second (or third) child within this period. The group that we call first-time parents here is not fully comparable to the qualitative sample of parents whose first child is up to 18 months.

74 couples had their first and second children between the two waves, and 3 couples had three children during that time.

2.2.2. Description of measurements

The central variables in our analyses are the division of paid work, daily household work, and childcare tasks between the spouses. The *division of daily household tasks* is measured using three items: cooking, shopping for groceries and cleaning the house. Both the female and the male partner estimate their division of labour by indicating their own share in these household tasks (1- always by you, 2- usually by you, 3- equal share, 4-usually by spouse, 5- always by spouse). This means that the division of housework and childcare is measured as two relative shares; we cannot distinguish the absolute amount of men's and women's housework or childcare. The relative share measurement has the disadvantage of possibly occluding a transition into a more skewed way of dividing the labour. In a hypothetical situation, a man might contribute 2 hours of housework before the birth of his child, whereas the woman might contribute 10 hours to housework, meaning that her share is larger than his. In wave two, he might contribute 8 hours, whereas she might contribute 40 hours. No change has occurred in their relative shares, but clearly, these two situations are not comparable (cf Bianchi et al, 2000). However, this form of measurement has been generally proven to be reliable and valid, and it is a good alternative to intensive diary measurements.

The scales for men's and women's reports on the division of housework are correlated .83 ($p<.000$), implying that spouses mainly agree on who contributes the larger or smaller share or whether they are equal. In previous studies, husbands appeared to overestimate their own contribution (Press & Townsley, 1998), and husbands and wives made accurate assessments of their wives' contributions (Kamo, 2000). Lee & Waite (2005), however, suggest that wives make accurate estimates of husbands' time spent on housework, whereas husbands overestimate their own time spent, and that at the same time, both husbands and wives overestimate the amount of time that wives spend on housework.

One way of dealing with spouses' different reports of their shares is to take the average of their reports, given that we cannot know which spouse is actually right and that their reports correlate highly (see also Kamo, 2000). Using this method, we avoid a one-sided bias based on the estimates by either wives or husbands. If the spouses disagree about who does more, their shares will change so that they become more equal (inhabiting the middle of the scale), and the consequence will be less variance. However, combining the two spouses' reports into one by taking the mean in this way enables us to include both spouses' views and prevents our over-estimating one spouse's contribution.

To create the combined measure of couples' *overall division of unpaid work*, 3 items indicating the division of childcare and 4 items indicating the division of

housework are used. These 7 items are caring for a sick child, comforting the child, accompanying or bringing the child to daycare or school, preparing meals, shopping for groceries, cleaning the house and doing repairs in and around the house. Reliability analysis was used to test the associations among these items (Alpha, men =0.67 and women = 0.74). These two scales are strongly correlated ($r=0.84$, $p<0.01$). Men's and women's reports are combined using averaging. For couples who did not have children in wave one and those couples who were childless in wave 2, this scale represents their division of housework (including repairs) but not childcare because they do not have any children.

Both spouses' *working hours* were measured according to their contract hours per week, and for spouses who did not indicate their contract hours, actual work hours were used. This explains why men's average work hours were above 40 hours per week (M= 40.39).

To measure *couples' paid work arrangements*, men's and women's working hours were combined into one variable. There were 5 types of arrangements: (1) male breadwinner couples, in which the husband works (close to) full-time and the wife does not work or works less than 12 hours; (2) small one-and-a-half earner couples, in which the husband works (close to) full-time and the woman works limited part-time hours (13-23 hours); (3) large one-and-a-half earner-couples, in which the man works (close to) full-time and women works significant part-time hours (24-34); (5) double earner couples, in which both spouses work (close to) full-time hours or both spouses work part-time hours; and (6) female breadwinner couples, in which the wife works (close to) full-time hours and the man does not work or works limited part-time hours.

The mean *age* of the women in this sample prior to the birth of their first child is 30.1 years, and the men's mean age is 32.8 years, which is slightly above the Dutch average age at first childbirth.

Progressive attitudes towards sex roles are measured by asking to what degree the respondents agree or disagree with four items (1: fully agree, 2: agree, 3: agree/disagree, 4: disagree, 5: fully disagree). A scale is constructed using four items: (1) a woman should stop working when she has a child; (2) it is more important for boys than girls to be able to earn their own salary later in life, (3) a working mother chooses herself instead of her family, and (4) tasks and responsibilities in the household can best be divided based on tradition and rules that have always existed. Reliability analysis was used to test the association between the items (Alpha =0.73). Subsequently, this scale was divided into four categories indicating traditional and modern attitudes. Respondents who scored at or lower than 2.5 were labelled traditional, two middle categories were identified ($2.5 \leq 3.75$= medium traditional; $3.75 \leq 4.75$ = medium modern), and scores between 4.75 and 5 were labelled modern.

Table 1 provides the means, standard deviations and correlations of all variables used in the analyses in this chapter. The first eight rows and columns in the table show the various variables for (differences in) paid and unpaid work by male and female spouses. The largest correlation between the independent and dependent

variables is that between the dummy for couples who have their first child between waves one and two and the difference in paid work hours for women between waves one and two ($r = -.39$; $p < 0.0$). This result indicates that after the birth of their first child, women work fewer paid hours than before.

Table 1. Correlations, means & standard deviations

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1 Paid work hrs women w2	20.57	12.82																
2 Difference in paid work hours women (w2-w1)	-0.22	9.72	.48**															
3 Paid work hrs, men, w2	40.39	8.37	-.09**	-.01														
4 Difference in paid work hrs men (w2-w1)	1.48	7.65	0.04	.02	.49**													
5 Men's share of housework w2, mean reports man/woman[a]	2.19	0.72	.36**	-.03	-.20**	.04												
6 Difference in share of housework (w2-w1; mean reports man/woman[a])	-0.06	0.49	.11**	.16**	-.04+	.03	.38**											
7 Share of unpaid work, w2, (mean report)	2.56	0.53	.37**	-.03	-.19**	.03	.91**	-.38**										
8 Difference in share of unpaid work (w2-w1, mean report)	-0.02	0.40	.12**	.16**	-.08**	-.05+	.37**	-.78**	.45**									
9 Length of relationship, w1	13.70	7.07	-.12**	.23**	-.01	.01	-.13**	-.11**	-.11**	.10**								
10 Hourly wage woman, w1	8.77	8.40	.27**	.11**	-.04+	.02	.09**	-.01	.12**	.01	.02							
11 Hourly wage man, w1	11.33	8.22	.01	.04	-.05*	.12**	.02	.06*	.03	.04	.10**	.27**						
12 Dummy for first child between w1 & w2	0.11	0.31	.06*	-.39**	-.03	-.05*	.09**	-.08**	.10**	-.09**	-.33**	.00	-.06*					
13 Dummy for same number of children in w1 & w2	0.55	0.50	-.20**	.26**	.03	.05*	-.18**	-.05+	-.17**	.06*	.50**	-.01	.09**	-.38**				
14 Dummy for more children in w2 than in w1	0.13	0.34	-.09**	-.06*	.02	-.04	-.04	.04	-.04+	-.03	-.18**	.04+	-.01	-.14**	-.41**			
15 Dummy for fewer children in household in w2	0.06	0.24	-.04+	.03	-.02	-.04+	-.02	-.01	-.05*	-.01	.05*	-.07**	-.04+	-.09**	-.28**	-.08**		
16 Women's progressive attitude towards sex roles	4.05	0.73	.32**	.09*	-.07**	-.02	.22**	-.02	.20**	.00	-.05*	.19**	.07**	.01	-.05*	.01	-.01	
17 Men's progressive attitude towards sex roles	3.90	0.73	.25**	.04	-.04	.02	.24**	-.01	.22**	-.02	-.01	.14**	.13**	.02	-.03	.02	-.03	.69**

**= p< 0.01; *=p<0.05; +=p<0.1

2.2.3. *Longitudinal multivariate analyses: Covariance approach versus change score approach.*

To gain insight into the division of work between men and women at one moment in time and to understand the change in the contribution between waves one and two, two types of models are used: a covariance model and a change score model. Whereas in the covariance approach, the focus is on the status at one moment (here, the division of labour between men and women in wave two), the change score approach focuses on the change between two moments in time (here, the change in contribution between wave one and two) (also see Veenstra, 1999)

The combination of these two models provides the most accurate insights into the longitudinal data for the couples as they relate to the current research questions. First, the co-variance approach helps us to investigate the determinants of the division of paid and unpaid work in wave two (controlling for the situation in wave one). Secondly, the change score approach helps us to investigate the determinants of the change in the division of paid and unpaid work between waves 1 and 2. Using only one of the two approaches may provide an incomplete picture. When combined, however, the two methods provide an accurate basis for conclusions regarding the determinants of the couples' division of work and the changes in their contributions over time after different life-course events.

2.3. Results

2.3.1. *Comparing five groups of couples*

First, descriptive analyses are presented in which first-time parents are compared to childless couples and to parents with more and/or older children.

In Table 2, information is shown regarding the average situation of the five groups of heterosexual couples between 20 and 45 years of age as identified in this chapter. There are 1927 couples in this category, of which the largest group is the group of parents who maintain a stable number of children between wave 1 and wave 2 (N=1049). The other groups are more similar in size (N=120 for 'fewer children' to N=296 for childless couples). The average number of children that first-time parents have between wave 1 and wave 2 is 1.4 children, while those parents with a stable number of children have 2.14 children; couples who have more children after wave 1 extend their number of children from 1.43 to 2.58 children, and those with children leaving the house decrease their number of children from 2.58 children to 1.16 child.

Childless women's average age (32.07) is slightly higher than that of first-time mothers' average age (28.77) and that of women who had more children between wave

one and two (31.42). The two oldest groups, as can be expected, are the group of parents who maintain a stable number of children between the waves (mother's age 37.51) and the group of parents who have fewer children in the home in wave 2 than in wave 1 (39.34) because their children have already left their home.

The average educational level is similar for all groups of parents. The oldest group of parents has the lowest number of years of education (12.2 years), and the youngest group (i.e., the first-time parents) has the highest number of years of education (14.23 years).

The largest difference of women's average working hours is between childless couples (and first–time parents who do not have children in wave 1) and couples who do have children: childless women work around 32-33 hours per week, whereas women with children work between 20.2 and 24.6 hours per week. Men's average working hours do not differ between the five groups of couples: all men work more or less full-time.

Table 2. Means for different groups of couples ages 18 to 45 years with and without children, wave 1

	Childless couples across the 2 waves	First-time parents in wave 2	Stable number of children across the 2 waves	More children in wave 2	Fewer children in wave 2	Total
Number of couples, N (%)	296 (15.4%)	205 (10.7%)	1049 (54.7%)	257 (13.4%)	120 (6.3%)	1927 (100%)
Number of children, w1 (SD)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	2.26 (0.88)	1.43 (.68)	2.58 (1.16)	1.52 (1.16)
Number of children, w2 (SD)	0.00 (0.00)	1.40 (0.57)	2.26 (0.88)	2.58 (0.82)	1.16 (1.12)	1.73 (1.09)
Women's age w1 (SD)	32.07 (6.80)	28.77 (3.46)	37.51 (4.46)	31.42 (3.83)	39.34 (3.88)	35.05 (5.82)
Men's age w1 (SD)	35.97 (9.00)	31.13 (4.49)	40.16 (5.28)	34.58 (4.79)	42.75 (5.81)	37.97 (6.79)
Years of education: women (SD)	14.05 (2.18)	14.23 (1.95)	13.35 (2.25)	14.05 (1.96)	12. 2 (2.3)	13.5 (2.2)
Years of education: men (SD)	13.16 (2.41)	14.27 (1.73)	13.49 (2.60)	14.17 (2.43)	11.8 (3.3)	13.5 (2.5)
Working hours women w1 (SD)	32.24 (9.37)	33.12 (7.37)	20.21 (8.58)	21.73 (8.36)	24.31 (10.54)	24.33 (10.25)
Working hours women w2 (SD)	33.90 (9.68)	24.67 (7.48)	22.25 (9.56)	20.52 (8.50)	24.56 (9.79)	24.40 (10.25)
Working hours men w1 (SD)	38.23 (7.36)	39.42 (7.57)	38.87 (8.36)	40.27 (8.66)	39.62 (7.35)	39.04 (8.08)
Working hours men w2 (SD)	39.96 (9.39)	39.69 (7.00)	40.40 (8.37)	40.86 (8.58)	39.67 (7.60)	40.39 (8.37)

To illustrate the broader tendencies at work in the division of housework between men and women, the division of housework is split into three categories[3] in Table 3 as follows: (1) the woman does a larger share of the housework than the man or even does all of the housework; (2) both spouses contribute an equal share, and (3) the man does a larger share than the woman or even does all the housework. As we can see in Table 3, overall, the majority of couples divide daily housework along gendered lines, with women taking on the larger share or doing all daily housework. The number of couples with such a traditional division of housework grows when couples have children (49% in childless couples, 64% in first-time parents, and 76% in couples with more children or a stable number of children).

[3] These three broad categories are distinguished for childcare as well; see Table 4.

Table 3. Division of housework of heterosexual couples ages 18-45 years (men's and women's average report)

	Childless couples across the two waves	First-time parents in wave 2	Stable number of children across the 2 waves	More children in wave 2	Fewer children in wave 2	Total
Division of housework, wave 1						
% woman does larger share/ all	49.5	51.8	76.4	70.3	69.9	68.3
% roughly equal division	39.4	40.2	20.7	26.4	24.8	26.8
% man does larger share/ all	11.1	8.0	2.9	3.3	5.3	4.9
Division of housework, wave 2						
% woman does larger share/ all	49.1	64.5	76.0	75.7	70.3	70.3
% roughly equal division	39.8	29.9	20.5	21.3	25.2	24.8
% man does larger share/ all	11.1	5.6	3.5	2.9	4.5	4.9

Couples who do not have children (yet) more often share housework equally than do couples with children: 40% of childless couples share their housework equally, whereas 30% of first-time parents and 20% of parents with more children report that they share the housework equally. Over time, the division of housework seems to become more skewed for all parents, although it does seem to become more equal again for those couples whose children leave the house (then, 25% share the housework equally). We cannot fully exclude cohort effects; younger cohorts of first-time parents and childless couples may employ less traditional divisions. We expect these effects to be rather small, however, because age only varies between 18 and 45 years in this sample. In a small group of couples, the man does the larger share of the housework; this group becomes smaller when the couples have children (11% in childless couples, 5.6% in first-time parents, around 3% in couples with more children), but it becomes bigger again when children leave the household (4.5%).

Table 4. Couples' division of childcare (18-45 years; men's and women's average report in %)

	Childless couples	First-time parents	Stable number of children	More children	Fewer children	Total
Division of childcare wave 1						
% woman larger share/all	n a	n a	63.1	57.0	57.0	61.2
% roughly equal division	n a	n a	35.9	43.0	38.0	37.7
% man larger share/all	n a	n a	1.0	0.00	5.0	1.1
Division of childcare wave 2						
% woman larger share/all	n a.	34.5	55.0	53.8	56.7	52.1
% roughly equal division	n a	60.8	42.5	45.0	41.1	45.3
% man larger share/all	n a	4.6	2.5	1.3	2.2	2.5
N	296	205	1049	257	120	1927

Overall, a little more than half of all couples indicate a division of childcare in which the woman does the larger share of the childcare or all of the childcare, as shown in Table 3. 37 percent of couples indicate that they divide childcare equally in wave 1; in wave 2, as many as 45 percent say so, which may be the result of the inclusion of the first-time parents, a majority of whom say that they divide childcare equally. Additionally, it may be due to the decrease in necessary physical childcare once children get older. If the physical care for small children is mainly the responsibility of women, women will do less childcare when children become older, and therefore, the relative share of men in childcare may also become larger over time. However, first-time parents indicate a more equal division of childcare: a higher percentage indicates that they share childcare equally (i.e., 60.8% versus about 43%). Also, 6% of first-time fathers report that they do the larger share of the childcare, compared to about 1% of other parents. This effect might be comparable to the honeymoon effect observed in the division of housework among couples over time.

Overall, we see in Tables 3 and 4 that couples more often indicate that they share childcare equally (45%) than they indicate that they share housework equally (24%).

2.3.1.1. Men's and women's attitudes

When we look at the attitudes of young couples regarding the division of labour as shown in Table 5, it emerges that almost all couples (95%) agree with more or less modern ideas about the roles that men and women should play at work and in the family. The majority of couples disagree with the idea that education is more important for boys than for girls, with the idea that working mothers are egoistic, and with the stipulation that mothers must quit their jobs. Only 3.8% of all couples agree with the above statements. However, 35.3 % of men and 26% of women have so-called 'medium' attitudes; they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements presented.

Nevertheless, despite couple's attitudes in this regard, a large majority of these couples still employ a rather specialised and traditional way of sharing childcare and housework, as we saw above in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 showed that in 68.3% of couples, the woman does the larger share of the housework; Table 4 indicated that in 61.2 % of couples with children, the wife does the larger share of childcare. Couples' attitudes indicate they are in favour of a modern way of dividing work, whereas their actual divisions indicate a tendency toward more traditional divisions of housework and childcare.

Table 5. Men's and women's attitudes (18-45 years in %, average report, wave 1; N=1927)

		Childless couples	First time parents	Stable number of children	More children	Fewer children	Total
Women	Traditional	3.2	4.5	6.5	3.8	5.5	5.5
	Medium-traditional	19.8	19.7	27.1	30.1	30.0	26.0
	Medium-modern	54.7	50.5	47.3	50.2	51.8	49.1
	Modern	22.3	25.3	19.1	15.9	12.7	19.5
Men	Traditional	2.4	6.8	6.0	4.3	0.0	5.0
	Medium-traditional	28.5	26.1	37.3	38.6	48.0	35.3
	Medium-modern	53.7	48.9	41.5	45.7	48.0	44.8
	Modern	15.4	18.2	15.3	11.4	4.0	14.8

In Table 5, we see that 49.1% of women and 44.8% of men indicate that they prefer a modern division of labour, with another 19.5% of women and 14.8% of men strongly agreeing with modern ideas about the division of work. Couples in different stages of family formation do not differ to a large extent with regard to their attitudes about gender roles. Only among (somewhat older) couples whose children have left the home is a larger group with so-called medium attitudes. Furthermore, we see that women across all groups of couples have more modern attitudes about work and childcare than men do, a finding that has been indicated and explained repeatedly (see for example Jansen & Liefbroer, 2006).

2.3.2. *Description of first-time parents' changes in work arrangements*

When we more closely examine the group of first-time parents and the changes in their paid work arrangements, we see that of those couples in which both spouses were working (almost) full-time before they had their first child (53.8%), only 16% remain double earners after the birth of the child. The work arrangements indicate in Table 6 demonstrate further evidence of the trend that we noticed before: women reduce their hours after the birth of their first child, while men remain working full-time. Thus, first-time parents are more often small or large one-and-a-half earners, with women working either curtailed (24.9%) or extended (39.28%) part-time hours and men working full-time. The group of couples in which women work more hours than their male spouses is very small (3.5% before and after having a child).

Table 6. Changes of paid work arrangements for couples with first child

Couples' work arrangements (own coding)	Couples before having child (Wave 1)	First time parents (Wave 2)
Male breadwinners	8.5%	16.6%
One-and-a-half earners (small)	4.5%	24.9%
One-and-a-half earners (large)	29.6%	39.3%
Double earners (including part-time)	53.8%	16.0%
Female breadwinners (women more hours)	3.5%	3.3%

2.3.3. *The division of paid work: multivariate analyses*

In Table 7, two types of regression models are presented. The dependent variables in the models are women's and men's number of work hours (contract hours when available; otherwise, actual work hours). Two models predict the number of work hours at one moment in wave two: for women, model 1A', and for men, model 2A. The second set of models predicts the change in work hours between wave one and wave two: for women, model 1B, and for men, model 2B. Both models compare parents in various stages to childless couples (the reference group).

Compared to couples without children, couples with children changed their paid work hours drastically. As seen in other studies, first-time mothers work 9.67 hours ($p<0.01$) less than childless women (Model 1A). In couples that already were parents in wave 1 and have the same number of children, more children, or fewer children in the household in wave 2, mothers work between 3.24 ($p<0.01$) and 5.93 ($p<0.01$) hours less than women without children (Model 1A). That first-time mothers work fewer hours than mothers with more children might be explained by the fact that Dutch parental leave is rather short (13 weeks). Having one's first child leads first-time mothers to reduce their

work hours; in wave two, after having their first child, mothers work 10.20 ($p< 0.01$) hours less than in wave one when they did not have a child yet (Model 1B).

The differences in coefficients between model 1A and model 1B can be understood as follows: women that have at least one child in wave two, for example work less than women who have no child in wave two (model 1A). Women who did not get additional children between wave one and two did not reduce their number of working hours between the two waves (model 1B).

For fathers, the different stages of family formation barely change their number of paid work hours. First–time fathers work 1.53 hours ($p<0.05$) less than men without children (Model 2A). There is also no significant difference between fathers and childless men's work hours; only first-born children have a small effect on fathers' work hours, with first–time fathers reducing their hours by 1.92 ($p<0.05$) (Model 2B). Having more than one child or children leaving the household has no significant influence on how many hours fathers work.

The work hours in wave 1 partly predict women's and men's work hours in wave two; those who worked more before continue working 0.6 hours more in wave two. The hourly wages for men and women do not contribute to the explanation for the number of work hours for women in wave two (Model 1A). Women's hourly wages explain part of the reduction in women's work hours (Model 1B): namely, women who have a higher hourly income reduce their hours to a somewhat lesser extent (0.08 hours), and likewise, men with a higher salary work slightly more hours (0.13) in wave two (Model 2B). Hourly income does not significantly influence the work hours of the other spouse, whether in the case of the man or the woman (Model 1B, Model 2A).

Women's progressive attitudes towards the division of work affect their number of work hours: women with more progressive attitudes spend 2.51 hours more on paid work (Model 1A). Additionally, women with more progressive attitudes reduce their work hours by 1.71 hours less on average from wave one to wave two (Model 1B).

Table 7. OLS regression analyses explaining women's and men's number of paid work hours and the change in work hours between waves one and two, unstandardised coefficients, (N=1448).

	Women's paid work hours		Men's paid work hours	
	Model 1 A	Model 1 B	Model 2 A	Model 2B
	Women's number of paid work hours, wave 2	**Change** in women's number of paid work hours (w2-w1)	Men's number of paid work hours, wave 2	**Change** in men's number of paid work hours (w2-w1)
	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)
Number of paid work hours (wave 1)	0.60** (0.03)		0.58** (0.02)	
Length of relationship	0.03 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.04)
Hourly wage woman	0.04 (0.03)	0.08* (0.03)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.02)
Hourly wage man	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.05* (0.02)	0.13** (0.03)
Women's progressive attitudes towards sex roles	2.51** (0.45)	1.71** (0.48)	-0.67 (0.35)	-0.40 (0.38)
Men's progressive attitudes towards sex roles	-0.30 (0.42)	-0.42 (0.46)	0.36 (0.34)	0.46 (0.38)
Childless couples (ref)				
Dummy for first child between waves 1 and 2	-9.67** (0.82)	-10.20** (0.89)	-1.53* (0.69)	-1.92* (0.78)
Dummy for same number of children in waves 1 and 2	-3.24** (0.76)	1.23 (0.75)	-0.23 (0.57)	-0.62 (0.63)
Dummy for more children in wave 2 than in wave 1	-5.93** (0.85)	-1.91* (0.87)	-0.43 (0.66)	-1.32 (0.73)
Dummy for fewer children in household in wave 2	-3.71** (1.22)	-1.00 (1.31)	-1.34 (0.94)	-1.68 (1.03)
Constant	2.18* (3.64)	-5.70** (1.78)	19.78** (1.62)	1.60 (1.36)
adjusted R^2	0.42	0.19	0.30	0.02

**= p< 0.01; *=p<0.05

2.3.4. Differences and changes in couples' division of unpaid work: multivariate analyses.

Table 8 also presents two types of regression models. The first model, called the covariance model, aims to explain the division at one moment in time. Model 3A explains the division of housework in wave 2, whereas Model 4A explains the division of unpaid work in wave 2. The measure of unpaid work includes housework and childcare for couples who have children and includes only housework for couples without children. The second model, called the change score model, aims to explain the changes in couples' division of labour between waves 1 and 2. Model 3B explains the changes in the division of housework between waves one and wave two, and model 4B explains the changes in the division of unpaid work between waves one and two. In all analyses reported here, the division is measured using the average scores that women and men reports regarding their division of housework and childcare.

The birth of the first child and of further children has a significant and essential effect on the division of housework and of unpaid work (housework and childcare). Compared to couples without children, couples with children divide unpaid work (i.e., housework and childcare) in a more skewed manner. First-time fathers' share of the housework is smaller than childless men's share (Model 3A). First-time fathers' share of unpaid work is smaller than childless men's share of unpaid work (Model 4A).

Among couples that were already parents in wave 1 and have either the same number of children, more children, or fewer children in the household in wave 2, fathers' share of the housework and unpaid work is smaller than that of childless men (b=.18, .21, or .21), (Model 3A). These fathers' share of the overall unpaid work is also smaller than that of childless men (b= .11, .13, or .13) (Model 4A). All men with children do a smaller share of the housework than do childless men (Model 3B). Maintaining the same number of children in the house or having less children in the household does not significantly explain the change in men's share of unpaid work (Model 4B).

The findings in Model 4B support the expectation that the birth of children leads couples to skew their division of labour more (b=-0.08, $p<0.05$). However, the birth of a child is not the only factor that influences men's share of the housework in wave 2. Men who take on a larger share of the housework in wave one also take on a larger share of the housework in wave 2 (b=0.79, $p<0.01$; Model 3A) in addition to a larger share of the unpaid work (housework+ childcare, Model 4A). Other significant coefficients are found for relationship length: the longer a couple's relationship endures, the larger is the man's share in the housework in wave 2 (0.01, $p<0.01$; model 3A). Additionally, in couples that have a longer relationship, the men's share increases between wave one and wave two (b=0.01. $p<0.001$; Model 3B).

However, when childcare is included, the length of the relationship does not affect the division of overall unpaid work in wave two (b=0.00, $p>0.5$); Model 4A). A longer

relationship does lead to an increase of the man's share in unpaid work between wave one and two (0.01, $p<0.01$; Model 4B).

The hourly wages that women and men earn have no effect on the division of housework or unpaid work overall, and they also do not affect the changes in the division of housework or unpaid work, including childcare. Men's hourly wages have a very small (almost zero) but significant effect on men's share of the housework and on the difference between waves one and two. Progressive attitudes on the part of women and men do not explain men's and women's relative shares of housework and childcare.

Moreover, women's and men's attitudes do not significantly help to explain men's share of housework or unpaid work overall.

Table 8. OLS regression analyses explaining the differences between the relative shares of housework in waves 1 and 2 (Models 3A and 3B) and the relative share of housework and childcare in wave 2 (Models 4A and 4B); (unstandardised coefficients; N=1448).

	Housework		Unpaid work (housework & childcare)	
	Model 3 A	Model 3 B	Model 4 A	Model 4 B
	Men's share of housework wave 2 (mean report man and woman)	**Change** in share of housework, (w2–w1, mean report man & woman)	Share of unpaid work wave2 (housework & childcare, mean report men & women)	**Change** in share of unpaid work (housework & childcare, w2-w1, mean report men & women)
	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)
Men's relative share of housework w1 (women's or men's reports)	0.79** (0.02)		0.73** (0.02)	
Length of relationship	0.01** (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)
Hourly wage woman	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Hourly wage man	0.00 (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Women's progressive attitude towards sex roles	0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Men's progressive attitude towards sex roles	0.03 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Childless couples (ref)				
Dummy for first child between waves 1 and 2	-0.13** (0.05)	-0.12* (0.05)	-0.08* (0.04)	-0.08* (0.04)
Dummy for same number of children in waves 1 and 2	-0.18** (0.04)	-0.11** (0.04)	-0.11** (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)
Dummy for more children in wave 2 than in wave 1	-0.21** (0.05)	-0.15** (0.05)	-0.13** (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)
Dummy for fewer children in household in wave 2	-0.21** (0.06)	-0.15* (0.06)	-0.13* (0.05)	-0.05 (0.05)
constant	0.32** (0.09)	-0.03 (0.08)	0.58** (0.09)	-0.03 0.07
adjusted R^2	0.60	0.02	0.51	0.01

**= p< 0.01; *=p<0.05

2.4. Conclusions

The analysis of Dutch heterosexual couples of childrearing age (between 18 and 45) that this chapter presents shows that the divisions of paid work, housework and childcare among couples in the Netherlands are still highly gendered, with women working fewer hours and, in a majority of couples, women also doing the larger share of the housework and childcare.

The birth of the first child has a major impact on couples' division of paid work: women reduce their work hours drastically after the birth of their first child. For fathers, however, the different stages of family formation barely change their number of paid work hours. First–time fathers work slightly fewer hours than do men without children. The birth of the first child also had a traditionalising effect on couples' division of housework and childcare. A large impact on couples' division of work in the analyses above was executed by their previous division of work and the birth of their first child. The birth of the first child is an important factor in (changes in) couples' division of work, as has also been demonstrated in earlier studies (e.g., van der Lippe, 1992; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997).

The birth of the first child appears to have more of an impact on couple's change in the division of paid and unpaid work than do the spouses' financial resources or attitudes. Men's and women's wages yielded few significant effects on the change in their division of work; only women's attitudes had an effect on the division of paid work.

These findings are in line with those of recent international studies. For example, Schulz & Blossfeld (2006, 2009) conclude based on stepwise analyses of processes of traditionalisation within couples over time that they are influenced by economic factors in the context of an already gendered structure. However, economic resources lose their importance in explaining the division of labour after the transition to parenthood is included. The authors conclude that the tendency to traditionalise, which is related to the birth of a child, occurs independently of spouses' resources. The authors regard this phenomenon as a consequence of normatively and institutionally pre-structured notions of fatherhood and motherhood as still observed in Western European countries such as Germany.

The role of economic resources is complex, as Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld (2007) have succeeded in showing. Economic resources did not contribute significantly to explaining men's larger contribution to housework (Schulz & Blossfeld), but they did affect couples' tendency to traditionalise their division of housework. Couples with equal incomes have a significantly lower risk of traditionalising than do couples in which the man clearly earns more than the woman. However, if the woman earns more, the risk of traditionalisation is not further reduced. These women do not succeed in using their position of economic advantage in negotiations with their male spouses. Economic resources therefore appear to be pre-sorted in a gendered way; in decisions about the stronger participation of men in unpaid work economic factors appear to be fully ignored (Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006).

The role of gender attitudes as they existed before the birth of a couple's first child was found in earlier research to play a role in the division of paid work but not in the division of housework after the birth of their first child (Sanchez & Thomson, 1997). One explanation for the strong influence of the first child's birth on couples' division of work may be that their normative framework changes: the idea of an equal division of paid and unpaid work shifts during the woman's (extended) parental leave to accommodate ideas regarding the complementary roles of men and women as suggested by various scholars (cf. Jansen & van der Lippe, submitted; Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007). Grunow et al found that couples in which women did not interrupt their paid work or only did so very briefly did not run a larger risk of traditionalisation than did childless couples. Thus, women's longer leaves away from paid work and their opportunity to take on a full-time mother/housewife role during that time seem to activate traditionalisation. In concluding the current longitudinal analysis, we note that future research should further investigate these dynamic changes in couples' division of work, and include measures for changes in the normative framework regarding gender roles.

Here, the division of unpaid work is measured in terms of relative shares based on reports by both spouses. A strong point in favour of this form of measurement is that it is a combined report by both the men and the women, which allows us to avoid overestimating or underestimating the respondent's own share of the unpaid work. A limitation of this form of measurement, however, is that the overall increase in unpaid work after the birth of a child cannot be detected because it is not measured in actual time. To measure the absolute time that men and women spend on these tasks could also show us whether it is men who do less or women who actually do more housework after the birth of the child. This would also indicate how large the gap is between women's and men's shares of unpaid work as measured in hours. However, the task participation index utilised here is a measure that is frequently and successfully used in international studies on couples' division of work (see for example Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; Lee & Waite, 2005).

The measurement of gender attitudes used here is a standard measure widely used in quantitative social scientific studies. It provides information regarding how participants think and what they believe about what is acceptable and desirable behaviour for women and men in general. Its general way of soliciting information, employing statements such as 'a working mother chooses for herself instead of for her family' or 'tasks and responsibilities in the household can best be divided by traditions and rules always ruled', is critical. A matter for concern is whether couples will answer these questions in a way that reflects how they will personally deal with their division of work.

The issue of measuring attitudes in a way that predicts individual behaviour reliably is not a new one. For example, more specifically phrased items that are closer to the individual's actual situation help to measure attitudes in a more valid way (van der Vinne & Brink, 1997; Thornton, 1989; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Some scholars have argued that the intensity of an attitude interacts with the relationship between attitudes and behaviour (Fazio, 1986). People may be very aware of their attitude all the time, or they

may have their attitudes at the back of their minds. In this vein, the importance that people attach to their attitudes is also important. One may have an attitude, but if that attitude is not particularly important to one's self-concept or identity, one may more easily behave in inconsistent ways.

Future research may integrate these findings into the measurement of more personal attitudes towards gender roles. Also, qualitative questions regarding how one thinks about the previous statements, which thereby allow a dialogue with the interviewee and permit deepening questions, can help us to achieve more complete insight in how men and women think about and behave in terms of gender roles in their personal lives.

Because the NKPS data used here were not solicited as part of a specific study intended to follow couples through their transition to parenthood, all couples were measured at different points in time, and the age of the first child varied greatly across couples. Each couple had their first child during a period of three years between the two waves of data collection. Some couples even had a second child within this period between wave one and two. This means that here, we cannot strictly speak about the effects of the birth of each couple's first child.

Also, these data could not be used to test for dynamic changes in the division of childcare and paid work among couples within the first year after the birth of their first child. However, it can be assumed that the first year after childbirth is a very dynamic one with regard to the division of paid and unpaid work for couples. Many changes take place that may be reasonably assumed to be induced by various aspects of the experience, including maternity leave, mothers 'and or fathers' taking parental leave at the same time or consecutively, either or both parents' using full-time leave or part-time leave, and the experience of getting used to caring for a child and attending to the child's further development and changing needs.

Future research may aim to explore the underlying dynamics of changes in couples' division of work by focusing on their negotiation processes, including the more complex field of general and personal attitudes and traditionalising effects. Qualitative in-depth research, including that presented in the subsequent chapters, may constitute a first step toward cultivating an understanding of these underlying processes.

Chapter 3

'Not worth mentioning'

The implicit and explicit nature of couples' decision making about the division of paid and domestic work before the birth of the first child.*

** A version of this chapter was published in Community, Work and Family (Wiesmann, Boeije, Doorne-Huiskes & den Dulk, 2008).*

3. 'Not worth mentioning'. The implicit and explicit nature of decision making about the division of paid and domestic work before the birth of the first child.

3.1. Introduction

People in the Netherlands generally say they think it is fair to divide domestic tasks more or less equally between women and men (Portegijs et al, 2006b). This does not mean that they actually do so, however. Today, the general pattern of young childless Dutch couples is for both spouses to often work full-time and share the housework more or less equally, and, after having their first child, to develop a more traditional division of domestic and paid work. More traditional in this case means that men often continue working full time and that women cut down on their working hours. One prevalent work-family strategy in the Netherlands is part-time employment – of women, to be specific. Two thirds of Dutch working women have part-time jobs. Only 34 percent of all working women work full time, compared to 86 percent of men (Van der Valk & Boelens, 2004).

For Dutch women, part-time work is a fairly stable historical and biographical phenomenon. Historically, the number of women working full time scarcely increased between 1990 and 2003, whereas the number working part time doubled. Biographically, most women with children remain in part-time jobs, even after their children have left home. These employment patterns make the 'one-and-a-half-earner' the most popular model for Dutch couples: the male works full-time and bears primary responsibility for the household income, while the female works part-time and bears primary responsibility for the home and childcare. This division does not mean that domestic work is only done by women; on the contrary, in international comparative studies Dutch men come out fairly well in the division of domestic duties (e.g. Den Dulk & Van Doorne-Huiskes, 2006). Nevertheless, women in the Netherlands, like their counterparts elsewhere, still do most of the housework.

Although the large number of women working part time appears to be a specifically Dutch phenomenon, the pattern of dividing responsibilities between the male and female partners of a couple is widespread in many countries. Despite women's gains in the workplace and their rising educational level, the arrangement whereby they bear primary responsibility for childcare and the home has been slow to change (Biernat & Wortman, 1991; Blossfeld & Drobnic, 2001a; Perry-Jenkins & Folk, 1994). Particularly striking is the general tendency of young couples with egalitarian attitudes – those who share paid and unpaid work more or less equally before having children – to divide the work more traditionally after the birth of their first child (Becker & Moen, 1999; Bittman & Pixley, 1997; Cowan et al., 1985; Kluwer, 1998b; Thompson & Walker, 1989; Van der Lippe, 2000).

Economic theories such as new home economics (Becker, 1981) and the resource-bargaining approach (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Hiller, 1984) explain the gender-based

division of paid and domestic work by assuming it is based on rational and economic considerations. New home economics assumes that specialization in either paid or domestic work is the most efficient way to distribute labour within a family. The resource-bargaining theory assumes that domestic work is unattractive and that partners will bring their resources to the bargaining table in order to 'buy themselves out' of domestic work.

What economic theories generally cannot explain is why the gender-based division of labour is so persistent, even when women have the same educational level and earning capacity as their spouses. Economic theories are primarily interested in how couples have actually divided paid work and domestic tasks, and they therefore focus on the outcomes of possible decision-making processes. Gender theories (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Fenstermaker et al., 1991; Hiller, 1984) help to shed light not only on the outcomes, but also on the decision-making processes and their underlying mechanisms. Gender theories – including those which focus on roles, identities, norms and a tendency to inertia – may therefore offer more promising explanations for the slow pace of change in the division of paid and domestic work. Researchers argue that to truly understand how men and women divide tasks and responsibilities between them, we must examine the processes (Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006) and the dynamics of decision making between the partners (Szinovacz, 2000).

Here, we define decision making as the ongoing dynamic process in which couples with similar or dissimilar preferences arrive at certain outcomes, either implicitly or explicitly. Based on the work of Sillars and Kalbflesch (1989), explicit decision can be characterized as an organized, deliberative strategic and proactive style of decision making. Implicit decision making is an indirect, non-reflective, impulsive and more incremental style of decision making. Explicit decision making includes prospective awareness of making decisions (e.g. sitting down to talk and decide), proactive planning, explicit agreements, conflict engagement and engagement in constructive problem solving and negotiation. Implicit decision making, on the other hand, includes retrospective awareness of having made decisions, incremental behaviour (ad hoc and stepwise decision making), conflict avoidance and silent agreements. The latter concept refers to agreements made without discussion, or simply spontaneously discovering consensus (Spiegel, 1960; Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980).

Scholars suggest that when roles shift in a modern direction and deviate from traditional and taken-for granted notions, decision-making dynamics become increasingly important and pervasive (Knudson-Martin & Rankin Mahoney, 2005; Spiegel, 1960; Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980; Sillars & Kalbflesh, 1989). Consequently, it is expected that the division of tasks increasingly becomes subject to explicit negotiation between partners (Buunk et al., 2000; Hooghiemstra & Pool, 2003; Kaufmann, 1995; van Lennning & Willemsen, 2000; Rubin, 1976). However, a recent survey conducted among Dutch couples indicates that implicit decision making is still fairly common, in particular regarding the division of domestic work (Hooghiemstra & Pool, 2003). In order to gain more insight in decision making processes of contemporary couples, this study applies individual and joint couple interviews to reconstruct decision-making patterns including 'his, her and their' perspective.

Hence, this chapter focuses on decision-making processes between couples and their underlying mechanisms. The aim of this study, which involved 32 Dutch couples and looked at how they divide paid and domestic work, is to help us understand how such patterns arise and change or remain the same under different conditions. One factor closely associated with such important and culturally embedded issues as the division of tasks between women and men is the extent to which decision making is implicit or explicit. This chapter aims at understanding and characterizing couples' decision-making processes about their division of paid and unpaid work. The following research questions are considered:

1. In terms of explicit and implicit strategies, what characterizes the decision making of young couples with respect to the division of paid and domestic work?
2. How do couples deal with challenges in their division of paid and domestic work?
3. What categories of couples are linked with implicit and explicit decision-making characteristics and strategies in relation to the division of paid and domestic work?

This study attempts to develop a dynamic view of the decision-making processes of couples. As stated earlier, the birth of children is an important event, influencing the way couples divide up tasks and the arguments used to legitimize their decisions. Relevant in this respect is the study by Walzer (1998), who identifies processes of gender differentiation between new parents and an increasing inequality in the way they behave with regard to their division of labour after the birth of a child. To articulate this dynamic approach, the present study includes couples expecting their first child. The timeframe covered by the research commences at the moment the partners move in together and concludes when the couple is expecting their first child. In the Netherlands, women postpone having children until they are 29.4 on average. Dutch couples therefore often live together for a relatively lengthy period before having children, giving them time to develop their work routines. By looking back on the formative period of a couple's relationship, we explore the nature of their decision making and its impact on their division of work.

3.2. Methods

3.2.1. Sample

The 32 couples who participated in our qualitative interview study were selected from different sources: participants in the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS) who expressed the wish to start a family, two midwife clinics and two antenatal classes in a city in the Netherlands.
Men and women with a higher vocational or university degree are over-represented in our sample, whereas lower educated men and women are less well represented.

However, the mean number of hours worked by men (40) and women (32) in the sample corresponds to the Dutch mean for childless couples: 33 hours for women and 38 hours for men (Portegijs, Cloïn, Ooms, & Eggink, 2006a). The mean age of the couples (women 31, men 34) was slightly higher than the Dutch mean would predict (women 29.4, men 31.5) at the time of the birth of their first child, a characteristic related to the high educational level of the participants.

The working arrangements of the couples in the sample varied greatly. This was one of the aims of the sampling strategy, as the dynamics of decision making related to domestic and paid work are assumed to vary with the chosen arrangements. Before the birth of their first child, both spouses of 15 of the 32 couples worked full time (>35 hours). Nine couples had a 'one-and-a-half earners' arrangement, with the woman working part time (20-32 hours) and the man full time. This is the most common arrangement in the Netherlands. Four couples were breadwinner couples, two in the traditional sense (woman not working) and two non-traditional (woman as breadwinner, man studying or looking for work). In four of the couples, both spouses worked part time; in one of these, the man worked fewer hours than the woman. The average net household income was €3678 per month.

The couples came from throughout the Netherlands. Many of them lived in or close to cities, whereas others lived in smaller villages in the more rural northern and southern parts of the country. The average length of cohabitation was 5.3 years, with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 10 years. Fourteen couples were either married or had a comparable legal partnership. Of the remainder, several married in the year prior to their child's birth.

Of the 32 couples interviewed, 18 were expecting their first child and 14 had recently had their firstborn (all the babies were less than a year old). Our analysis took the different stages of family formation into account. We explicitly asked the group of couples with a baby to reflect on the period before the birth of their first child. We believed they could give us fairly precise information about their lives before having children, as the transition to parenthood had been very recent. Moreover, during the interviews the couples showed great awareness of their previous situation and what they had then thought about their current division of labour. We believe that they were able to give us a fairly accurate picture, because they for example compared the situation before and after having children, using words like 'Then I thought that …, but now I know that…' However, we cannot be certain that their current, new situation has not influenced the way they remember and look back on the recent, pre-child past. While interpreting the data, we kept the couple's current situation foremost in our minds, whether pre-child or post-child.

Table 1 shows all participating couples with their occupations and working hours before they had their first child, classified according to working arrangement. The 14 couples who had already had their first child when interviewed are marked with an asterisk. The names of the couples have been changed.

Table 1. Participating couples by working arrangements before the birth of their first child

No.	Pseudonyms	His working hours	Her working hours	His occupation	Her occupation
	Full-time dual-earner couples (>35 hrs)				
1	Bart & Babette	40	40	Self-employed website designer	Policy officer
2	George & Gabrielle	40	40	Senior developer	Technical writer
3	* Patrick & Peggy	40	40	ICT manager	Civil servant
4	Warren & Wanda	36	36	Manager	Primary school teacher
5	Xander & Xylona	40	40	Purchasing agent	Marketing communication manager
6	Yanis & Yamin	36	36	Sales manager	Project leader in publishing
7	Zachery & Zilia	40	38	Head of Finance Department	Product manager
8	Alexander & Beate	40	36	ICT consultant	Policy officer
9	Austin & Fiona	38	38	Veterinarian/ researcher	Veterinarian/researcher
10	* Marc & Margaret	40	40	Entrepreneur	Waitress
11	* Robert & Rachel	36	36	Lawyer	Educational manager
12	* Valentin & Valerie	40	36	Business controller	Inside sales representative
13	* Jacob & Janet	40 (0)	38 (0)	Entrepreneur and student. Before the birth: unemployed	Secretary. During pregnancy: unemployed
14	* Edwin & Elise	40	38	ICT consultant	Bookkeeper
	Part-time dual-earner couples (both work ≤ 32 hours)				
15	Arnold & Gabriela	32	32	IT programmer	Project manager
16	Adam & Camilla	32	30	Project leader	Statistical researcher
17	Arlen & Dana	30	32	Construction entrepreneur	Youth welfare researcher
18	Ulric & Ursula	20+freelance	30+ freelance	Art historian, museum curator	Art historian
19	* Irvin & Ina	32	20	Student	Legal assistant
	One-and-a-half earner couples (one partner works full-time, one partner part-time)				
20	Adrian & Anne	38	32	Assistant professor	Researcher
21	Axel & Eileen	40	28	Trainee supermarket manager	Reintegration consultant
22	* Frank & Frances	40	32	Clerk	Social worker
23	* Osbert & Olivia	36	32	Court registrar	Copywriter
24	Quentin & Quiana	32	40	ICT programmer	Trainee solicitor
25	Norman & Nancy	40	32	ICT specialist, & project leader	Primary school teacher
26	Steven & Sebille	40	32	Veterinarian	Policy officer
27	* Herman & Hannah	36	24	Chemist	Librarian
28	* Kevin & Karen	40	32	Electrician	Housewife, unemployed
	Breadwinner couples				
29	* Lance & Larissa	38	0	Sales representative	Educator, unemployed
30	* Ted & Tatyana	36	0	Clerk	Sales representative, long-term sick leave
31	* Calvin & Carla	0	24	Urban and rural planner	Social worker
32	Dennis & Debby	0	40	Student	Secondary school teacher

* = the couple had already had their first child when interviewed in wave 1; the working hours refer to the period before the birth

3.2.2. Data collection

The data was collected between November 2004 and June 2005. The researcher scheduled an appointment with the couples, and the couples were asked to sign an informed consent form. The data collection method was the couple-interaction interview, consisting of individual interviews with the two spouses and a joint interview with both spouses. The joint interview proved to be necessary for recalling processes that spouses often do not consciously memorize but need to reconstruct together from remembered anecdotes and incidents (Allan, 1980). In the joint interview, the couples thought about and discussed how their division of paid and unpaid work came about, and which processes and types of communication had led to their current situation. It has been shown that spouses are less likely to reveal their own viewpoints in a joint interview (Boeije, 2004; Hertz, 1995; Zipp & Toth, 2002). In order to record less partner-biased accounts and to make each spouse aware of his or her individual ideas, roles and processes in the division of paid and unpaid work, the couples were also interviewed individually (see also Pool & Lucassen, 2005). The interviews varied in length from 1.5 to around 4 hours, with a median length of 2.5 hours. All interviews were recorded electronically on minidisks and were fully transcribed verbatim.

The couple-interaction interview investigated the following aspects: 1) the processes and mechanisms that influenced the couples' division of work and domestic tasks when they moved in together; 2) the nature of their communication with each other; 3) the type of agreements the partners had made. Other topics were: 4) how and why their division of paid and unpaid work had evolved and changed in time, including 5) during their (recent) pregnancy; and 6) how the couple planned to divide paid and unpaid work when they became parents. In the individual face-to-face interview, the interviewer asked the participant to think and talk about his or her ideal division of paid work, domestic chores and childcare.

3.2.3. Data analysis

For the purposes of this article, the research team restricted its analysis of the interviews to the period between the couple's moving in together and their expecting their first child; in other words, the study does not concern changes after their first child was born. The analysis focused on decision making and communication about the division of paid and domestic work.

The analyses were carried out with the help of MAX.QDA, a software program for coding and retrieving qualitative data. The research team read and reread the interviews several times and wrote memos throughout the process. Once the couples' stories were broadly known and understood, the team wrote a summary presenting the key themes, such as 'no obvious communication', 'taken for granted', 'role of own parents', 'equal sharing' and 'areas of conflict'. The team then began coding the couple interviews.

Because theoretical concepts were used as sensitizing concepts during data collection and analysis, some of the codes were more theoretical in nature, such as 'implicit and explicit decision making', 'making plans', 'agreements' and 'reflection or thinking (or lack of)'. Other codes arose during the interviews, such as 'taken for granted', 'fairness', 'equality', 'conflicts' and 'standard of cleanliness'. After the first open coding (resulting in a long list of codes), the team organized the coding scheme hierarchically, with overarching themes (codes) and subcodes (Boeije, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Matrices and visual representations were used for an outline of the results, leading to a typology of couples' decision making. Analysis of the couple interviews was supplemented by an analysis of the individual interviews, which was less intensive due to time constraints.

Research team discussions (peer debriefing) during analysis supported the interpretations. Using different methods to collect information also helped the team gain an adequate impression of what was going on in the households. The subjects sometimes revealed delicate information in the individual interview. Some partners did not try to make information more acceptable to their partners' ears, while others hid or changed information when their partners were listening.

3.3. Results

3.3.1. Silent agreements/disagreements

When asked how their division of labour had evolved since they began living together, all couples initially answered that they did not talk much about such issues and that it just happened naturally.

> *Adam: I think it came about more or less by itself. And then you gradually start to specialize. Take the shopping, for example. When we moved in together we both did it, but after a while I started doing the shopping more often. That's something which then becomes self-perpetuating: she assumes I've done all the shopping and then counts on it. I think that's how it came about. It's not something we really discussed. [Adam, works 32 hours, part-time dual-earner couple]*

Couples used certain expressions that emphasized the automatic, taken-for-granted nature of their decision-making process. They said that the division of labour had 'grown', meaning they had not discussed it or made any agreements about it. Couples often divided tasks spontaneously and in an ad hoc way. For example, Saturday turned out to be 'cleaning day', which then became customary.

Parties to such 'silent agreements' (Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980) never think or talk about the issue in question, have vague expectations, and silently accept their spouse's contribution. This is not to say that men and women are similarly involved in these implicit decision-making processes. In this section we look at what silent agreements mean in terms of gendered practices. One feature of implicit decision making identified in the interviews was 'not thinking', not being conscious of the division of paid and domestic work. Moving in together did not tend to change the couples' jobs or career

situations. Almost all the men and women interviewed had continued working or studying after cohabiting. At that point they had considered 'paid work' as each partner's individual choice. Many of the male subjects interviewed said they had never thought about the division of domestic work before cohabitation or marriage, as they had never been confronted with the need to do housework.

> *Quentin: Now, we were both still studying, so as far as that's concerned we didn't have a division of tasks. As for me: back then I'd never really thought about it. Or rather: I don't know if I'd never thought about it, but as I just said we had both just moved out of our parents' house and it evolved since then. We never actually discussed it, did we? [Quentin & Quiana, full-time dual-earner couple]*

Some of the women interviewed were more conscious of such issues than their male partners and had thought about the division of housework before cohabiting. As Quentin's partner Quiana added:

> *Quiana: Now, I've always known that I would study and that I wanted to share everything equally. You're both studying and then both go on to work full time; then you should also share the housework equally. I've never found it logical that I should do more in the home just because I happen to be a woman. Certainly not in the beginning; back then I attached even more importance to dividing everything equally. [Quentin & Quiana, full-time dual-earner couple]*

The interviews showed that couples did not talk about the division of paid and unpaid work. Paid work and household chores were taken for granted and couples did not see any reason to change. The couples did talk in a day-to-day sense about coordinating tasks, reminding each other to do something, or wanting to change jobs, but they did not regard these conversations as talking about their 'division of labour'.

> *Anne: We talk about things now and then, say while we're having dinner, like how is this or that going. They're casual chats though, no big discussions. [Anne, works 32 hours, one-and-a-half earner couple]*

Before moving in together, the partners had rather broad ideas or vague expectations about how they would divide up paid and unpaid work. Such broad ideas function as guiding principles or motives, but they do not include clear-cut or prescriptive notions about how to share or divide paid and unpaid work on a daily basis. Couples claimed that they trusted that their division would work out well because both had already run their own household or because they took for granted that they would share the workload at home.

> *Fiona: No, I had no clear ideas about how I imagined dividing the chores before we moved in together. No definite ideas in any case. But I did imagine wanting some sort of equality. [Fiona, full-time dual-earner couple]*

Others did have expectations about the division of labour but did not verbalize them, or thought they would deal with them later on. For example, before cohabiting Elise already expected that her husband's standard of cleanliness would not match hers, and that she would therefore have to do more than an equal share of the cleaning in an otherwise egalitarian household. She did not talk to her partner, Edwin, about her expectations. Unlike Elise, Edwin expected the division of domestic duties to work out fine, as they had each had their own homes before and now would have only one. During the interview he was surprised to hear that so much of the domestic work had become her responsibility, while before he had done all of it on his own.

Thus although it seems that female partners have a head start on their male partners in having considered the division of tasks, thinking ahead in fact leads to the female doing most of the household chores, and to her having to initiate any discussion of the issue in a non-reflective climate. We refer to this as 'silent disagreements', by which we mean that one partner disagrees but does not verbalize that disagreement (any longer). Silent disagreements suggest stoicism: accepting problems rather than mastering them (Sillars & Kalbflesch, 1989).

The couples' initial accounts suggested that they mainly engaged in implicit decision making about their division of paid and domestic work, as described above. However, further probing revealed more explicit strategies.

3.3.2. Second glance: not so silent after all

What initially seemed to be fairly implicit decision making appeared on closer examination not to be exclusively implicit after all. Whereas decision making remained implicit for some couples, other couples' became more explicit in the course of time. While they emphasized the naturalness of their division, they also revealed incidents or discussions, conflicts and arguments, and they sometimes reflected on their division of labour and weighed up different alternatives or attempted to change that division. The explicit characteristics they revealed are the approximate counterparts of the implicit characteristics already described.

What first stood out was that some couples gained prospective awareness (Sillars & Kalbflesch, 1989), meaning that they started talking about their ideas and expectations, sometimes in order to change an aspect of their division of labour. Some couples believed it was important to share their ideas about their ideal division of labour, and to verbalize their beliefs and reasons. One couple regularly examined their division of housework, which was fairly exceptional behaviour in the present sample. The woman checked from time to time whether her partner was still satisfied, conduct which may have been induced by their non-stereotypical, equal division of labour.

Many couples said that they had shared their opinions on paid work, future childcare and (in some cases) housework early on in their relationship, but usually in a broad, general sense, as seen in the previous section. However, some women had very clear ideas about the division of paid and unpaid work, including childcare, even before they started thinking about having children with a particular partner. They explicitly demanded that their potential partners should be prepared to share paid work, domestic work and childcare equally.

One couple did plan their division of paid work and housework before cohabiting without, however, communicating much about these plans. Before they actually married and moved in together, Nancy decided to reduce her working hours and have one day off a week to do housework. Her partner Norman took this decision for granted and agreed with it. Couples generally rarely made plans, but many talked about their paid work in terms of their ideal job and career plans. Sometimes they made plans for further education

or talked about their desire to find another job. These discussions did not seem to be influenced by practical implications, i.e. who would then run the household, but once the implications became clear, the couple would start talking about their division of labour.

> *Fiona: But it only started when we were actually living together in a house and we both worked at the same place as well, that's when we actually started talking about what we wanted in terms of the division of work and free time. Our ideas about it were pretty much the same. [Austin & Fiona, full-time dual-earner couple].*

Once the couples started thinking of having children, all of them thought about and most also planned childcare arrangements, including the effect on paid work. The couples varied in the degree to which they dealt actively with these issues. Some couples quickly or spontaneously agreed, usually when they already had more traditional (specialized) arrangements, or when they both took the division of labour, including childcare, for granted, as illustrated by the following quote in which both partners express a preference for the woman as a full-time parent.

> *Tatyana: We've been talking about having children for years, and then at some point I said I've always wanted to be a stay-at-home mum, what do you think about it? How did you picture it?*
>
> *Ted: I think that we're the parents so we should do the parenting, not the crèche.*
>
> *[Ted & Tatyana, male-as-breadwinner couple]*

For other couples, the same issue gave rise to frequent communication. What to one couple is a wished-for stay-at-home mum is seen by another as being 'stuck at home'.

> *Austin: I can remember a few times when I started talking about having children and Fiona said she was afraid she'd end up having to do everything, and I would be happy with that, but she'd then be stuck at home with the baby. You've always been worried about that. I don't know if you still are.*
>
> *Fiona: No.*
>
> *Austin: But that was how it seemed at the time, and that's why we talked a bit about it like we've thought about it now, that I work four days and she works four and a half.*
>
> *[Austin & Fiona, full-time dual-earner couple]*

General, less specialized arrangements seemed to require more communication, and couples who wanted to share paid and unpaid work equally discussed future childcare and paid work more frequently. The couples found it hard to imagine their future with a child. Sometimes external pressure, either from employers or nurseries with waiting lists, forced them to make plans in advance. Whereas the partners generally did not discuss or plan their paid work arrangements when they moved in together, they all made plans when they started considering having children. Strikingly, while discussing and planning future paid work and childcare arrangements, most couples scarcely discussed the future division of domestic work (which could increase). They did not acknowledge the need to change their domestic work arrangements after the birth of a child. Some couples, however, did discuss this issue. Some of the women worried about the additional workload after birth, and a few wanted to hire a cleaner, an idea that the men tended to resist. Most of the men did not see the need to spend money on a cleaner. Some women used the birth of their child as an opportunity to convince their partners of the importance of a well-managed, clean household.

Nearly all couples had disagreements about domestic work at some point. However, many of them played down their disagreements and interpreted them for the interviewer as non-serious issues. When asked whether they ever disagreed about the division of paid or domestic work, the couples stated 'No, I can't remember' or 'No, not really'. However, more probing questions revealed that couples in fact did disagree. Regular discussions seemed to be a normal part of the decision-making process of some couples, who appeared to be inspired by a mastery approach, meaning that they tackled challenges and problems instead of accepting them.

3.3.3. Challenges in households: who is responsible?

What exactly are the challenges facing couples when dividing up domestic tasks, and how do they deal with these challenges in their decision making? The challenges break down into three categories. The first is: who is responsible for seeing that domestic tasks are carried out and money is earned? The second is: who actually carries out which task (see also Hochschild, 1989; Mederer, 1993)? The third is: to which standard are tasks performed and how frequently? It turns out that couples deal differently with these issues. Different patterns emerged in how the couples communicated with each other, who was responsible for and who performed tasks, and how satisfied they were with the overall division of labour.

Women generally bore most of the responsibility for the majority of domestic tasks, something which they often found tiring and stressful when combined with paid work. The partners were often more equal in actually performing the tasks than in bearing responsibility for the household. One important difference between couples was whether a) they tried to share responsibility for household tasks, or b) one of the partners was responsible for certain tasks. How couples coped with the main challenges in their division of paid/unpaid work seemed to depend on their sense of entitlement to a certain division (see for example Major, 1987; Thompson, 1991). Entitlement, in turn, was closely related to their internalization of traditional gender roles.

3.3.3.1. According to tradition.

Some couples divided paid work and housework responsibilities according to automatic and often rather traditional gender roles. In doing so, they overcame the three main challenges outlined above in one go. It is unnecessary to talk about who does what and to which standard and who is responsible for what when the partners automatically agree on who is responsible for which task. Traditional gender responsibilities tell men and women what they need to do. Gender responsibilities have changed somewhat in recent decades, with some former female household tasks becoming more gender neutral and paid work being taken for granted for women as well, although men seemingly still bear final responsibility as breadwinners. The couples in the present sample – even those who preferred to share all the responsibilities equally – had generally developed traditional

gender-based routines: laundry was typically a female responsibility, and household repairs typically male.

3.3.3.2. Preferring to do it yourself.

Another pattern was based on women's preferring to do household chores themselves. These women avoided asking their husbands for help, although they may have resented them for not pitching in.

> *Edwin: Yes, you prefer to do it yourself. You find it difficult to ask me.*
>
> *Elise: Yes, yes, then I'd rather do it myself than start on about it or ask you. I usually don't feel like it, then I think, I'll just do it myself... But sometimes reluctantly.*
>
> *Edwin: Yes. And then it takes a while before I realize. And then I do realize and say: should I do it, and then it's: No, it doesn't matter anymore.*
>
> *[Edwin & Elise, full-time dual-earner couple]*

This strategy meant that in most couples, women were responsible for the household work. To explain why they carried out household tasks themselves, without involving the men, many women mentioned differing standards or levels of expertise.

> *Interviewer: You said: in general I know a bit more about it. What do you mean?*
>
> *Karen: Well for instance with the washing, he doesn't look at the label or which setting it's on.*
>
> *Kevin: And I don't know what can go in the tumble dryer and what can't.*
>
> *Karen: So if he had to do it for me, he should do it the way I want it done. Because if he ruins my washing it's no use to me. And the dishwasher can also be a bone of contention, because I want it to be loaded in a certain way because that's the most economical way. And his attitude is: just throw it in, if it's full it's full, and if it's clean it's clean.*
>
> *[Kevin & Karen, one-and-a-half-earner couple]*

Preferring to do housework oneself may also help legitimize the status quo when the division of housework is skewed; couples 'construct a sense of fairness by claiming to prefer doing tasks themselves, citing either their enjoyment of their work or their greater skill' (Johnson & Huston, 1998). Even when frustrated, some women stuck to their preference instead of trying to communicate about it and come to a decision.

One possible consequence of women preferring to do housework themselves was that they compensated the extra time spent on domestic chores by working fewer hours. Scaling back allowed them to retain responsibility for the household and manage the time squeeze of paid work and housework without becoming frustrated (Becker & Moen, 1999). This is a common option in the Netherlands, where it is both economically possible and culturally acceptable. Consequently, these women by and large end up with lower incomes, poorer career prospects and a smaller sense of entitlement to an equal division of housework.

Interestingly, when the woman spent more time on domestic work than the man to begin with and later reduced her paid working hours, sometimes the couple applied reverse causal reasoning. After cutting her hours, she reasoned that she did more housework because she had more time, forgetting that she started off doing more and reduced her working hours because she had too much to do at home. The male partner of one couple forgot that his partner had been working full time for a couple of years, and that she cut her hours because of the unequal division of housework. This is a nice illustration of how inconsistencies crept into common-sense logic and were used by one or both spouses to legitimize the status quo.

3.3.3.3. Involving the spouse.

Other women wanted to involve their spouses in doing the housework or actually delegated tasks to them. Women usually asked their partner for help, delegated tasks to their partners, used nonverbal tactics, or taught their husbands general rules to get them to contribute. Some men reacted ambiguously to these requests. On the one hand, they resented taking orders from their wives; on the other, they saw it as a working strategy and assured they did not see what needed to be done in the household. Other men unambiguously affirmed the woman's role as household manager or even demanded it of her, and did not mind receiving orders.

> *Valentin: I'm prepared to do any housework, I'm always telling Valerie that, but you'll have to tell me to do this or do that. I'm not someone who'd do it off his own bat. Apart from tidying up a bit, but I wouldn't suddenly go and clean the toilet or empty the washing machine. Not because I'm lazy. I see Valerie as the one more in charge and I always say, you know, I'll do anything, just say the word and I'll do it. And then I do it. But Valerie is the facilities manager (laughs), sort of. [Valentin, full-time dual-earner couple]*

When women corrected a man's work by doing it over or told him precisely how a specific task should be done, however, they were often perceived as meddling. Male spouses responded differently to this. Some men completely withdrew from certain tasks in response to their wives' 'meddling'. In doing so, they fostered a pattern in which the wife did most of the household chores herself. In previous research, the wife-demand/husband-withdraw interaction was found to be a typical response to asymmetrically structured conflict situations in which women were discontent with their spouse's contribution to housework, while the spouse wanted to maintain the status quo (Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1997, 2000).

> *Marc: Now, I've attempted to do the washing a few times, but I didn't do it quite right or I should have thrown this or that in as well. Or she starts moaning and nitpicking. So she automatically ends up doing it herself. So that's gone automatically. [Marc, full-time dual-earner couple]*

Other men became irritated and resisted their wives' interference, fighting back in order to claim their responsibilities:

> *Dennis: I'm a good cook, but she does it a bit differently, in a different order and then she says: 'No, you should do it like this.' Then I kick her out of the kitchen and shut the door. Then she goes and sulks in front of the TV. And then later she says: 'Oh it's delicious, oh.'*
>
> *Debby: I can't look, as soon as I start interfering I think I can point out details to him.*
>
> *[Dennis & Debby, female-as-breadwinner couple]*

Here the man's behaviour or response determined the further course of the decision-making process (see also Johnson & Huston, 1998; and Pool & Lucassen, 2005). When the men were able to assert themselves, the women did indeed withdraw. When they did not, the women were often left shouldering responsibility for the work alone or even ended up doing all the work themselves.

Women who employed the 'meddling' strategy remained responsible for household management and continued to have a say in who did what and to what standard. They avoided explicit discussion of who was generally responsible for the household. Asking the partner to perform a specific task at a certain moment was an ad-hoc 'decision-making' method. Women also taught their spouses general rules or standards for performing household tasks, for example to clean and dry the draining board after doing dishes. The men had to apply these rules each time the situation arose so that their wives had less need to intervene. Teaching general rules can be a long-term strategy and can ultimately also change the division of domestic work, provided that one's partner internalizes the rules and accepts and uses them without being asked.

3.3.3.4. Dealing with conflict.

When one of the partners was dissatisfied with how things were going, he or she communicated that frustration either implicitly or explicitly. In other words, the couples either silently disagreed and avoided conflict, or they engaged in conflict. One common pattern was that women occasionally became frustrated about the skewed division of housework but nevertheless accepted the status quo (cf. stoicism) without explicitly trying to change it. They implicitly communicated frustration or silently disagreed. Valerie, for example, showed her frustration occasionally while simultaneously downplaying the importance of any conflicts. She sent out ambiguous signals to her partner, since she avoided explicit and general discussion of their division of labour even when he tried to initiate it.

> *Valerie: Every few months or so I erupt again, I've just had enough. Once in a while I just get fed up that I have to do so much in the house and then I say to him for God's sake can you just do something every now and then or you can see that the washing machine needs emptying sometimes, can't you? And then the next day I've forgotten about it again. But really it's OK as it is.*
>
> *Valentin: Yes, no, she's right actually. I could do something too. But then I ask her, what do you want me to do? Just tell me what I should do. And then she says 'You don't have to do anything, forget it'.*
>
> *Valerie: Then just that sentence 'I know you have to do everything and that I don't do anything'. That on its own is enough. Then I know enough. Then I think to myself OK. You want to do it, but you just don't notice it. You know what, I just didn't feel appreciated. That sometimes when I'm doing the housework and I see Valentin doing nice things, and I think hey I'm not a skivvy. And then when I got a bit of appreciation I thought yes, it's OK after all. I feel alright again.*
>
> *[Valentin & Valerie, full-time dual-earner couple]*

This couple did not discuss the fairness of their division of labour explicitly, and Valentin legitimized the status quo of their arrangement by interpreting Valerie's outburst as a symptom of something else: a lack of appreciation for what she did in the household.

Valerie seemed to agree, and seemed to be satisfied with the little appreciation, at least until her next outburst a few months later, as she explained. Like Valerie, some women concealed their frustration and preferred to maintain the status quo. Many contemporary couples implicitly expected to share household tasks and responsibility, and spouses who felt their time investment was disproportional became frustrated when the expectation of fair sharing was not met.

Other couples, however, did communicate their frustration explicitly: they deliberately monitored and dealt with issues of fairness and the division of housework. It was usually the women, not the men, who raised the alarm when they had to shoulder too much of the burden. These women first became frustrated or dissatisfied with their workload, and then discussed and evaluated the status quo. Frustration had an activating or empowering effect on these women, and this often stimulated the couple to start talking constructively and find an alternative, more satisfying arrangement. Communicating frustration was thus the first step towards profound change. For example, Fiona and Austin agreed on a more specialized division of household chores.

> *Fiona: I said at one point now I've had enough, I don't think it's fair, I think I do more than my fair share of the shopping and I do all the cooking, and I don't want to anymore. So first I screamed a bit and then we looked at how you can organize these things so that you're both happy with the situation.*
>
> *Austin: Yes, so we thought up a rota in which each of us cleaned one floor at the weekend, and Fiona wrote the shopping list. And that's worked well for years.*
>
> *[Fiona & Austin, full-time dual-earner couple]*

Conflicts seemed to play an important role in decision making about the division of paid and unpaid work. Although decision making generally remained implicit for a long time and conflicts were infrequent, frustration did boil over in some couples eventually and became overt, and it was then that explicit discussion would arise. Couples often became aware of the bulk of tasks they needed to do, and they sometimes decided to outsource housework, paying a cleaner to take care of it. They left the discussion of standards and who needed to do or initiate cleaning to a professional, thereby avoiding potential frustrations.

Some of the patterns described above inherently sustain the status quo, which in daily life often means a gendered approach and practices. Specialization, for instance, is not based on preferences, opportunities or fit, but often on a traditional gendered notion that women are responsible for and do the household chores. Women who prefer to do the housework themselves in order to maintain certain standards also end up in a traditional division of labour, especially when they simultaneously cut their paid working hours.

Other divisions are possible, however. For instance, when men concede that their wives are the 'facilities managers', there is a shift in who actually performs the tasks, although the responsibility is still borne by the women. The same goes for men who apply their own standards and claim responsibility by ignoring their wives' 'meddling'. But it seems that the most powerful driver for changing the division of labour is explicit communication. Dissatisfaction and the desire to share can be stepping stones to initiating

such conversations, but the partners also need to touch on a more abstract level of task division and look at their ideologies and what 'men and women want in life'.

3.3.4. The nature of decision making and the division of paid and domestic work: a typology

The study uncovered typical patterns of implicit and explicit decision making as well as strategies leading to or co-existing with traditional or more egalitarian divisions of paid and unpaid work. These patterns of decision making are illustrated below by a typology of couples: traditional, egalitarian and transitional couples.

Table 2. Patterns of decision making and the division of work

	Traditional	Egalitarian	Transitional
Orientation towards division of work	Traditional gender roles	Gender equality and mastery	Equality and stoicism
Implicit or explicit decision making	**Implicit** Silent agreements; Taken for granted and automatic; Non-reflective interaction	**Explicit** Prospective awareness; Proactive planning; Making agreements; Engaging in disagreements: mastery	**Implicit & explicit** Vague expectations; Retrospective awareness; Silent disagreements (stoicism)
Strategies	Specialization of responsibilities	Explicitly communicating frustration; Outsourcing	Involving men in housework; Meddling; Implicitly communicating frustration: stoicism; Scaling back working hours
Preferred division of paid and unpaid work	Yes Traditional responsibilities	Yes Equal division	No Transitional state: partly equal, tending to traditional division

Traditional couples prefer the traditional domains of breadwinning and homemaking. Male partners are typically seen as the main breadwinners and are not necessarily involved much in homemaking. Women are generally responsible for homemaking and prefer to do household tasks themselves, and they also work fewer paid hours than their partners. Their decision making appears generally implicit and automatic. Each spouse knows and agrees with what his or her responsibility is, and there is little need for discussion. Conflict or frustration is uncommon and both partners are satisfied when both have workable schedules and their circumstances allow them to follow their preferences.

Equal sharing of paid and unpaid work is a key theme in egalitarian couples' relationships. Both partners typically start the relationship with the idea of sharing paid and unpaid work. It is usually, but not exclusively, the women who monitor equal sharing, and both partners explicitly discuss expectations and preferences early on in their relationship. Later, they communicate any frustration about a skewed division of labour and seek mutually satisfying arrangements. Egalitarian couples must also face the challenge of tradition, however; for example, women may interfere when their spouses do the housework, or may have different standards of cleanliness than their husbands. However, they live up to their egalitarian ideals by being explicit, discussing, compromising and outsourcing work. Where necessary, the couples plan and reach specific agreements. Essentially, the responsibility for paid and unpaid work is shared by these couples, and both spouses are generally satisfied with the division of labour.

Many couples do not fit into either the egalitarian or traditional category. While these couples agree with the notion of gender equality, they also feel ambivalent about their roles and responsibilities, and so we refer to them as transitional couples. They often engage in implicit decision making; they silently agree or disagree. Certain aspects of the decision making are explicit, mainly when women communicate their frustration about a skewed division of labour and try to involve their spouses in the housework. Men do not appreciate women interfering when they do housework and respond by withdrawing. Frustration is rarely followed by any discussion of alternative arrangements, and outsourcing is typically not considered a realistic option.

Women's demands with respect to household standards, both spouses' ambivalent feelings about who is responsible, and women's meddling and preferring to do chores themselves typically lead women to compensate the time they spend on housework by cutting back on paid working hours. Consequently, these couples often divide paid work traditionally. Transitional men carry out household chores but bear less responsibility for the household than their spouses. Transitional women typically work close to full time. These couples live in a transitional state between traditional divisions and egalitarian ideas. There were various transitional couples in this Dutch sample, and they seem to exist in other Western countries as well. They often face the typical dilemma of modern households: wanting to share the work equally but not achieving their ideal division (Knudson-Martin & Rankin Mahoney, 1996, 1998; Zvonkovic, Greaves, Schmiege, & Hall, 1996), seemingly because of their stoic attitudes and implicit decision making.

3.4. Discussion

The results of this study lead us to conclude that these Dutch couples generally do not deal explicitly with their division of paid and domestic work. When they move in together, couples usually discuss their division of paid and unpaid work in vague terms, and both spouses know approximately how the other feels about the issue. Couples generally only start talking plainly about paid work when they face a new situation, such as when they are expecting a child. The division of housework is only discussed explicitly when one of the partners – usually the woman – feels frustrated about what she perceives as an unequal division. These findings expand on other research by documenting everyday implicit and explicit decision making in couples during a unique period of their lives: the formative years of their relationship, until they are expecting their firstborn. The suggestion is that couples who wish to achieve equality need to engage in explicit decision making, at least until they have developed an egalitarian routine.

Several of the women participating in this study, and most of their partners, felt that being interviewed about the division of paid work, domestic work and childcare would be good preparation for a more equal and satisfying division of labour once they had become parents. Self-selection influenced the composition of the sample, as more highly educated couples saw the point of academic research and were therefore more likely to participate.

Given the characteristics of our sample, the prevalence of implicit decision making is surprising. We expected these young, modern couples to deal explicitly and consciously with the division of paid and unpaid work. Becker and Moen (1999), for example, found that couples who decided to reduce paid work did so reflexively and consciously. However, their research only considered decisions related to paid work, and not those related to housework or childcare. Furthermore, unlike the United States, part-time work is very common and acceptable in Dutch society and does not imply a lower standard of health care or other social security entitlements. In addition, most of the couples in Becker and Moen's sample already had children. In the present study, the couples only discussed paid work explicitly when they were planning to have children; the division of housework was only an explicit issue for the very few couples who actively pursued an equal division of tasks. A recent Dutch survey (Portegijs, Boelens, & Olsthoorn, 2004), however, found that explicit decision making is only successful when both partners' want to change the division of labour.

Viewed in the light of decision-making studies in other domains, however, the general implicitness of decision making found in the present study is not so surprising. It has been shown that 'muddling through' is an important decision-making strategy for couples, for example when they make joint purchase decisions such as a new car or a new home (Kirchler, 1993; Park, 1982). Sillars and Kalbflesch (1989) describe 'muddling through' as incremental and spontaneous decision making by couples owing to the huge demands made on their time, energy and other resources. They suggest that spouses muddle through decision making implicitly unless something out of the ordinary

prompts them to act differently (see also Lindblom, 1959). Our data confirms this for decision making about the division of paid and unpaid work.

We also conclude that gender still plays an important role in couples' division of labour. The women we interviewed were more actively and consciously involved in decision making about the division of labour than their male partners, as evidenced by their various strategies for involving their partners in housework. As Reimann (1997) showed in a study of lesbian couples, when behaviour is not dictated by gender and when equality plays a key role, couples negotiate their division of labour much more explicitly and conflicts erupt whenever one partner perceives the other as not doing her fair share of the housework.

The present study confirms previous findings that women often try to avoid conflict and prefer to accept a larger share of the housework (Johnson & Huston, 1998; Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1997; Komter, 1989; Van Doorne-Huiskes, 1992; Zvonkovic, Schmiege, & Hall, 1994). The suggestion is that women often perceive the cost of an unequal division of labour as lower than the cost of confronting their partner explicitly with their ideas of equality in domestic work (e.g. Van Doorne-Huiskes, 1992). Couples' general tendency to say that the division of domestic work is 'not worth mentioning' and to avoid explicit discussion can be interpreted as the 'myth of a good relationship'. Spouses may avoid bringing up the issue because they feel that rational bargaining about who spends how much time on which task is incompatible with a romantic relationship. In addition, doing housework for one's spouse might be seen as a sign of love (Johnson & Huston, 1998; Thompson, 1993). Our conclusion, however, is that romanticizing relationships and refraining from rational bargaining often leads to traditional and gendered divisions of work. The same could be said of using implicit strategies and involving spouses ad hoc in performing certain tasks, instead of initiating a general discussion on how to divide up housework. Many of those interviewed said that they found such discussions 'not worth mentioning' to their partner.

Zvonkovic et al. (1994) found that traditional gender role ideology and indirect influence strategies are positively correlated with marital satisfaction. Continuing this line of argument, others see the emergence of explicit rules as an initial stage in family disorganization, whereas the ability to function implicitly is an indicator of family organization (Reiss, 1981; Watzlawick, Helmick Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). The suggestion is that women's first priority is the overall well-being of her marriage. In rational terms, couples who do not engage in explicit decision-making, and silently disagree, could be considered right from this perspective.

Other scholars, however, emphasize the importance of equal sharing of power to relationship success and satisfaction for both sexes (Blaisure & Allen, 1995; Gottman & Silver, 1999; Steil, 1997; Zvonkovic et al., 1994). Some of the couples in the present study – those who were indeed monitoring the division of unpaid and paid work and who expressed their preferences and searched for the most ideal arrangements – seemed to be happy with their 'final' arrangement, which they had often reached by a process of trial and error. They hoped that the birth of their first child would not force them to change their current division of housework. One couple seemed to engage in constant conflict

about the male partner's need to do more housework, in which he was not consistent. The interview appeared to have helped both partners explain their thoughts and preferences and, as they reported in a second interview some months later, had led to a different decision-making dynamic with which both spouses were more satisfied.

If the research team had not interviewed the spouses both individually and as a couple, the aforementioned results would not have been revealed. Merely asking couples 'Do you have disagreements about the division of work?' or 'Do you explicitly divide tasks with your partner?' would have resulted in answers such as those described in the section on implicit decision-making. Qualitative, in-depth research has therefore proved indispensable in gaining a better understanding of the daily dynamics of decision making in couples.

Our findings suggest that implicit decision-making dynamics and strategies constitute a serious obstacle to changing gender roles and responsibilities in couples. This finding is supported by other studies showing that expressing feelings openly and directly and actively negotiating conflicts can promote equality in day-to-day interactions (Knudson-Martin & Rankin Mahoney, 1998; Mui-Teng Quek & Knudson-Martin, 2006; Zvonkovic, Greaves, Schmiege, & Hall, 1996). Decision-making processes in intimate relationships are changing, but only slowly. Recent studies showed that men take a more active role in the domestic arena than in the past, but they often 'help out' rather than share household tasks (Mederer, 1993). Women respond to this by asking their partner for help or by instructing and explaining tasks to him; in doing so, they confirm their partner's role as ad-hoc helper. The division of household work and, in particular, the responsibility for household management have been stubbornly resistant to major change. The slow rate of change suggests that gender divisions in intimate relationships are deeply embedded in the culture of Dutch society and in the way couples interact.

To conclude, we have extended existing research by focusing on the formative years of a couple's relationship, by applying joint couple interviews as well as individual interviews with spouses and by focusing on decision-making processes with respect to the division of paid and unpaid work between (heterosexual) couples. By doing so, we increased knowledge on the persistence of gender inequality among couples in the Netherlands. We have analysed the decision-making patterns of a relatively small sample of couples in a specific national context. In order to generalize our findings a large scale study is needed. However, this study has shown that a survey design runs the risk of not fully revealing decision-making processes within couples. Hence, it would also be valuable to aim for a cross-national qualitative study that investigates couple's decision making in-depth within different national contexts. Within a qualitative cross-national study it is possible to examine whether mechanisms and patterns found are relevant across countries and to examine the impact of societal culture on decision-making dynamics. Moreover, a longitudinal study that follows young couples across various life stages would enhance our findings and could answer questions such as whether specific life events, such as the transition to parenthood, increase the likelihood of explicit decision making.

Chapter 4

Intended and unintended changes in couples' division of work during their transition to parenthood.

A repeated interview study on couples' negotiation processes.

4. Intended and unintended changes in couples' division of work during their transition to parenthood. A repeated interview study of couples' negotiation processes.

4.1. Introduction

The trend of gendered divisions of paid and unpaid work between women and men remains persistent despite couples' modern ideas and expectations about sharing family and paid work more or less equally (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000; Blossfeld & Drobnic, 2000) and increasing educational resources for women (Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; 2009; Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007). This is especially visible among couples with young children, who start to divide paid and family work in a more gendered and specialised way after the birth of their first child (Aliaga, 2005; Bittman & Pixley, 1997; Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Hochschild, 1989; Kluwer *et al.*, 2002; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; Thompson & Walker, 1989). This means that many couples do not achieve the division that they intended. To understand why couples' division of work becomes more gendered over time despite their modern attitudes, it becomes important to investigate the underlying negotiation processes at play (Lindenberg, 2007; Pittman, Solheim & Blanchard, 1996; Scanzoni, 1989; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; 2009; Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007).

Existing studies attempting to explain the persistent gender inequality in the division of work often focus on the division of work as an outcome at one moment in time and rarely observe changes over time. Couples' division of work is, however, not a static arrangement; instead, it is part of a dynamic process of daily negotiation (Greenstein, 1996; Kluwer *et al.*, 1997; Scanzoni & Szinovacz, 1980; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006). The birth of a first child is a striking event in couples' lives that deeply impacts their division of paid and unpaid work, as shown in chapter 2. The transition to parenthood is a life stage that is likely to give rise to more negotiations about the division between partners because of necessary changes and adaptations (Ferree, 1990).

Whether couples do achieve their intended division of labour may depend on their negotiation process. Studies focussing on couples' interaction processes and negotiations show that decision-making between spouses not only occurs in an explicit and verbal way but often also takes place in an implicit and silent manner, as shown in chapter three (cf. Wiesmann *et al.*, 2008; Komter, 1989; Sillars & Kalbflesch, 1989). However, research suggests that explicit decision-making strategies play an important role in creating an equal division of work (Knudson-Martin & Rankin Mahoney, 1998, 2005; Scanzoni & Fox, 1980; Wiesmann et al., 2008).

Couples are assumed to engage in negotiations when talking about and deciding on their division of work after having their first child. As new parents who want to divide paid work and care for their newborn couples, they have certain interests in common. At the same time, the two individual spouses also have individual interests that may be

partly conflicting. Depending on the nature of couples' joint and conflicting interests, their negotiation processes may be more or less cooperative, smooth and quick.

New parents may achieve the division of work they intended and planned before the birth of their first child, or as pointed out above, they may not be able to do so. This chapter seeks to explore the intended and unintended changes in couples' division of paid work and childcare by studying the negotiation processes that occur before to after the birth of their first child. The following question was studied:

> *How can we explain couples' intended and unintended changes in their division of work from before to after the birth of their first child by examining their negotiation processes?*

In this chapter, we analyse qualitative interview data from couples over time, including the periods before and after the birth of their first child. How couples intended to divide work as future parents was taken as a starting point for the analyses of couples' negotiation process after the birth of their first child. The analyses focus on such processes, taking both spouses' perspectives into account. These data and analyses permit us to qualitatively investigate the cumulative nature of the negotiation process and path dependency. The kinds of changes that couples make with regard to their division of work are investigated, as are the negotiation processes underlying these changes.

Couples were interviewed twice: once before and once several months after they had had their first child. The interview method consisted of individual interviews with each spouse and a joint interview with both, the combination of which provided unique insights into the couples' processes. This method improves on those used in earlier studies of couples' negotiation processes that only took into account one spouse's perspective. Examining couples' joint and individual perceptions leads to us to develop the most complex and, apparently, the most valid representation of couples' negotiation processes (Zipp & Toth, 2002; Boeije & Wiesmann, 2007).

The Netherlands are an interesting case to study in considering the negotiation processes that take place regarding couples' division of work because of the wide availability of part-time work for both women and men. The Netherlands can be characterised as a modified breadwinner state in which shortening of working hours has been promoted as an important strategy for balancing work and family life (Plantenga et al., 1999). Part-time work gives couples the option to divide paid work and family work more or less equally and to deal with time pressure issues when caretaking responsibilities increase as they become parents.

4.1.1. Theoretical background

The varying preferences of parents across countries regarding how to arrange childcare indicate that parenthood is socially constructed within cultures and institutional backgrounds. Moreover, it is assumed that couples themselves construct gender and parenthood in their ongoing interactions and negotiations. We will use a grounded theory

approach in this chapter, noting some existing theories that provide direction to our investigation of couples' negotiation processes.

The *doing gender approach* sheds light on more than just the outcomes of the division of work, focussing on the processes and underlying mechanisms involved in producing spouses' gender identity (Fenstermaker *et al.*, 1991; West & Zimmerman, 1987). It posits that gender roles are produced and maintained in couples' everyday lives (see also Ferree, 1990; Thompson & Walker, 1995)

Arguments that couples use that are in line with this 'doing gender' theory may include the idea that mothers like to care for their children and may not mind doing housework and that men like to work outside the home. Spouses may also argue that one or another task suits the mother or father better.

Both of these arguments may be presented independent of any consideration of the two spouses' relative earning capacity or their incomes.

Socialisation theories argue that boys and girls internalise sex-role-appropriate behaviour by imitating their parents and other men and women in their environment. To what extent traditional gender roles are internalised is, for example, indicated in studies on preferences regarding paid work.

After becoming fathers, men seem to place more importance on the extrinsic rewards of work and less on intrinsic rewards, whereas women attach less importance to extrinsic rewards after becoming mothers (Kirkpatrick Johnson, 2005). Marler and Moen (2005) show that women have family-related reasons and men have work-related reasons to consider an 'alternative' employment arrangement (such as part-time work or self-employment). Traces of traditional gender norms are also expressed in couples' more modern divisions: women are found to be *'adapters'*, scaling back their paid work and arranging their work around that of their husbands, and men are found to be *'accepters'*, willing to care for their children when their wives are employed (Becker & Moen, 1999; Presser, 1989).

Based on economic theories such as the *resource bargaining approach*, it would seem that power within couples is gained outside the relationship via resources such as education, income and occupational status. Spouses with more resources will have the power to impose their preferences on the other spouse. According to the economic approach, in couples' negotiation processes, better earning capacity or other options for maximising financial income will be points that male and female spouses stress regardless of their gender. Additionally, both spouses may negotiate to avoid unpaid work and/or express a dislike of unpaid work because it can be regarded as costly in an economic sense.

On the one hand, power may be used in an overt and visible way. On the other hand, power has also been shown to be exercised in ways that are invisible; i.e., it can be latent or hidden (McDonald, 1980), and it does not necessarily include conflicts on the surface (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). Additionally, those who exert power and those who are affected by power do not need to be conscious of it (Bittman, 1997; Komter, 1989). For example, keeping an issue off the agenda, such that no discussion or negotiation is ever possible, is an efficient way of invisibly exerting power.

The division of household and childcare tasks also may (to its detriment) include many small decisions that individually may not be worth mentioning or worthy of explicit negotiation. However, together they accumulate to form a suboptimal, unequal or unfair allocation of time to tasks. This *'tyranny of small decisions'*, already described by Kahn (1966) with regard to consumer market decisions, accumulates to create situations to which one would not have agreed if the opportunity to agree on the 'big' accumulation of small decisions had been provided (cf. Doorten, 2008; Lindenberg, 2007).

These theoretical approaches have been used as sensitising concepts, informing the design of semi-structured interview guides and functioning as rough guides during the analysis and interpretation process.

The analyses and results section first describes quantitative changes in couples' paid work arrangements after the birth of their first child. Then different negotiation processes are explored that occur for couples who have achieved their intended division or, in contrast, have not done so. Thereby, new parents' general tendency to divide paid work, childcare and housework in a more specialised and gendered way is investigated, and simultaneously, light is shed on how new parents maintain an equal division of paid work, childcare and housework and also on how role reversal occurs. The results indicate bundles of mechanisms linked to specialisation or to couples′ equal division of work. First, the research design and methodology are discussed.

4.2. Methods

4.2.1. Research design.

To address the above-mentioned research questions aimed at the change and negotiation processes for couples becoming parents, a longitudinal design was chosen. Couples were first interviewed when they were expecting their first child and then were interviewed again when their first child was about 1 year old (Mean: 9,9 months, Min 4, to Max 18 months).

4.2.2. Participants.

Thirty-two couples participated in this qualitative interview study, partly selected from a large survey study (Netherlands Kinship Panel Study) and partly via advertising in midwife clinics. The mean age of the participating men (34 years) and women (31 years) was only slightly higher than the Dutch mean age for couples having their first child. This could be due to the over-representation of participants with a higher vocational or university degree who have their first child later in life than do less well educated men and women. The couples came from throughout the Netherlands, including urban and rural areas. Their average period of cohabitation was five years, with a minimum of one

year and a maximum of ten years of cohabitation at the birth of their first child. Fourteen couples were either married or had a comparable legal partnership. Their paid work arrangements were diverse, with some featuring male breadwinners and others female breadwinners; other options included the one-and-a half earner arrangement, in which either the male or the female works (almost) full-time and the other spouse works part-time, and part-time and full-time dual earner arrangements, in which both spouses work about an equal number of hours.

4.2.3. Data collection.

The data collection process consisted of two waves of interviews during couples' transition into parenthood. All interviews were conducted in 2005 and 2006. In the first wave, 17 interviews took place when couples were expecting their first child, with 14 interviews taking place when the child was already born and was between three weeks and eleven months old. The individuals in the latter group were explicitly asked to reflect on the period when they were expecting their child. We have reason to believe that the respondents gave us fairly precise information about that recent stage because the respondents could contrast their current situation with the ideals they had before the birth of the child. The second wave of interviews with these same couples took place half a year up to a year later, when the first child was between 3.5 and 18 months old.

The partners were interviewed both individually and in a joint interview. This process yielded three interviews per couple for each wave of interviews. The joint couple interview was a face-to-face, semi-structured interview with both spouses. This method enabled the couple to jointly reconstruct their negotiation processes based on remembered anecdotes and incidents (Allan, 1980). It has been shown that spouses are less likely to reveal their own viewpoints in a joint interview (Boeije, 2004; Hertz, 1995; Zipp & Toth, 2002).

To address this potential weakness and to make each spouse aware of his or her individual ideas and roles in the division process for paid and unpaid work, the couples were interviewed individually and asked to complete an individual questionnaire before the joint couple interview. In the questionnaire, information was requested about their paid work arrangements, how housework and childcare are divided between the spouses and whether the couples outsource childcare and housework.

In this chapter, the individual interviews from the first wave, including each spouse's ideal division of labour, are used for analysis. Additionally, interviews from the second wave, in which spouses were first individually asked about their experiences with the new division of labour after the birth, are also used. Participants were asked about the most difficult aspects of their current division of labour and the biggest changes that had occurred since before the birth. They were also asked to reflect on what worked well and what did not. In the subsequent joint interview, couples were asked to jointly discuss aspects of the changes in the division of paid and unpaid work.

The length of the interviews varied from one and a half hours to three and a half hours, with mean interview lengths of two and a half hours in the first wave and two hours in the second wave. All interviews were recorded electronically and fully transcribed.

4.2.4. Data analysis.

Interviews were read and memos were written to process the massive amount of data. Once a couple's story was broadly revealed and understood, that of the next couple was read and compared with previous ones. Summaries were written that included key themes, namely couples' ideal division of labour, their actual arrangements regarding paid and domestic work and changes in those arrangements over time, their arguments, kinds of decision-making that they use and their communication about these considerations.

Then, the joint interviews were coded using MAXqda, a software program for analysing qualitative data. Some codes were prompted by the theoretical approaches: for example, 'attitudes towards childcare', 'motivation to do paid work', 'equal sharing' and 'initiative regarding childcare'. Many codes also arose from the interviews themselves, such as 'resistance to being the breadwinner', 'worrying about one's child', 'executing childcare tasks', and 'keeping oneself from meddling'. After the first open coding, the coding scheme was hierarchically structured to indicate main codes (overarching themes) and sub codes (Boeije, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

We indicate whether the quotes originate from individual interviews with mothers or fathers or from the joint interviews by using ii for the former and jci for the latter. Whether fragments stems from wave 1 or wave 2 is indicated by a Roman numeral I or II. Thus, for example, the abbreviation [II jci] will be used to refer to a Wave II joint couple interview. The respondents' names are replaced with pseudonyms for the sake of confidentiality.

4.3. Results

4.3.1. Changes in paid work arrangements from before to after the birth

Two kinds of changes in couples' paid work arrangements stand out as prevailing within this sample of 32 couples. As can also be seen in Figure 1, 7 couples changed from full-time dual earners to one-and a-half earners: i.e., the women reduced their work hours. This is the most common Dutch arrangement. Another 7 couples who already had a male one-and-a-half-earner arrangement kept this arrangement after the birth of their first child. Other transitions that occurred were, for example, from the full-time dual earner arrangement to the part-time dual earner arrangement (3) or the male breadwinner

arrangement (2). Some couples remained part-time dual earners. Interestingly, the majority of changes that occurred created more gendered divisions (14), but an equally large number of paid work arrangements did not change (15). Nevertheless, only 3 couples created less gendered work arrangements after the birth of their first child. The changes that couples made in their paid work arrangements after the birth of their first child can be found in Figure 1.

To read Figure 1, note that the various paid work arrangements before the birth are represented by the blocks in the left column. The right column illustrates the division of work after the birth, and the arrows indicate the different changes couples made to their arrangements after the birth, with the number of couples indicated. Couples' work arrangements were divided into six categories. In the two types shown at the top, the female works more hours than the male. The two types underneath are 'dual–earner couple' arrangements in which both spouses work (approximately) the same amount of hours. In the two arrangements shown at the bottom, the male partner works more hours than his female partner or is the sole breadwinner.

4.3.2. Underlying negotiation processes

It is assumed that investigating couples' negotiation processes will help us to understand the intended and unintended changes in couples' division of work during their transition to parenthood. Underlying the changes as documented in Figure I are couples' preferences or intentions regarding their division of paid work (and, hence, childcare) before the birth of their child. By combining couples' intentions with their actual changes as shown in Figure 1, we can distinguish four different kinds of changes depending on whether couples achieved their intended division and on the kind of division couples intended to have when they expected their first child.

The first category of change includes couples that intended to specialise in childcare and paid work according to gender and did accordingly: *I– intended specialisation*. These first kinds of changes in Figure 1 are represented by either the two arrows pointing down from the full-time dual earner couples to the lowest section of the right column or those pointing across from the lower left to the lower right blocks.

The second category of change includes couples who intended an equal division of childcare and paid work but gradually created gendered roles: *II- unintended specialisation*. These couples in Figure I are represented by the same arrows as Group I because it is not visible in Figure 1 what their intentions were.

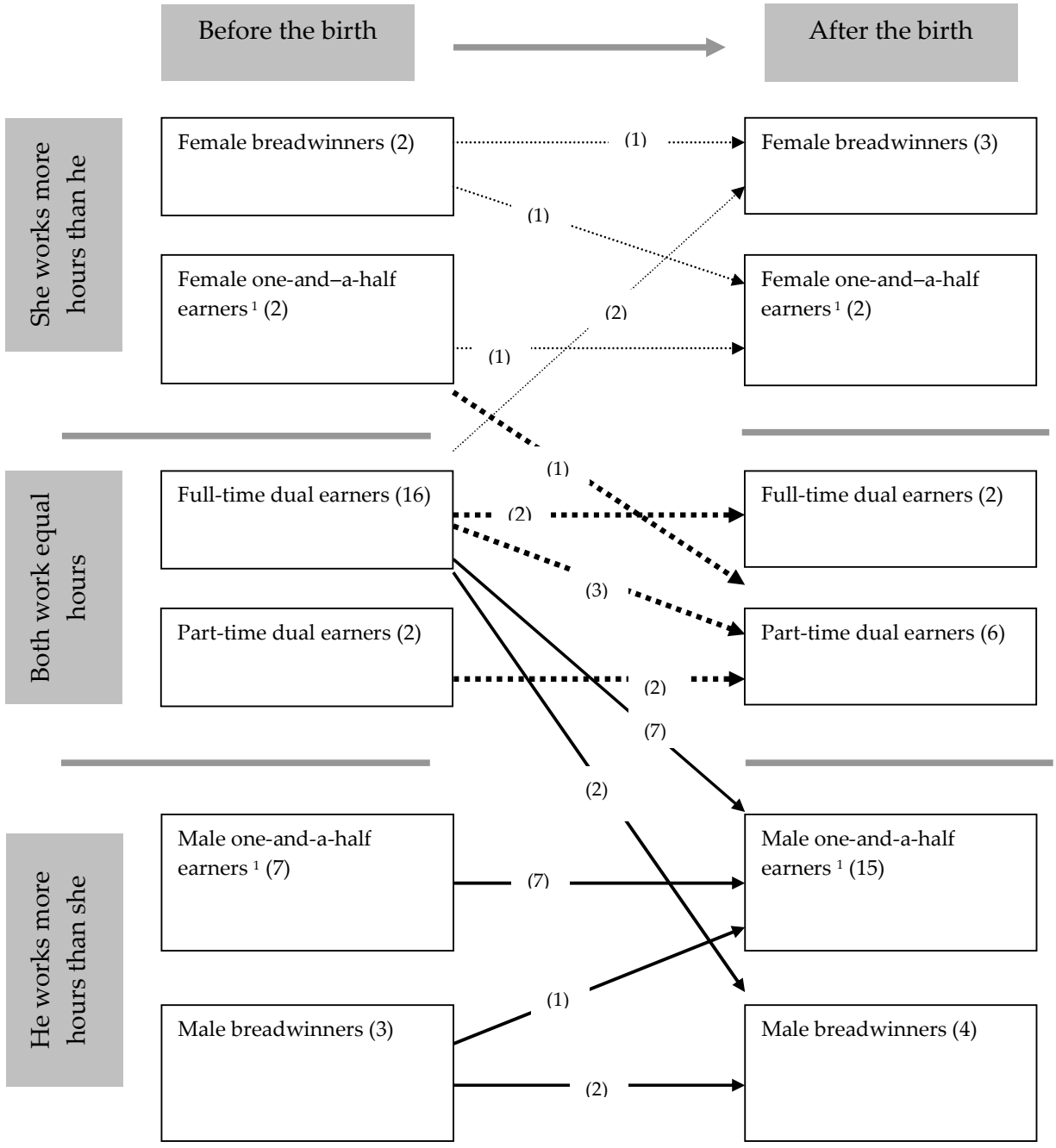
The third category of change includes couples that intended to share work equally and then did so: *III– intended equal sharing*. These couples are represented in Figure 1 by the thick dotted arrows that all point at the middle blocks on the right.

The fourth category of change includes couples in which the women became breadwinners and then men became the main caretakers even though they initially intended more gendered arrangements: *IV– unintended reversal of the breadwinner role*. These couples are represented by the thin dotted arrows that all point to the top blocks in

the right column. The other theoretically possible combinations of intentions and arrangements did not appear in this small sample.

In the remainder of this results section, the negotiation processes related to these four kinds of changes are analysed and described in depth.

Figure 1: The change in couples' working arrangements from before to after the birth of their first child (number of couples, N= 32); in brackets = number of couples



1 in the female one-and-a-half earner model, the woman works (almost) full-time and the man works part-time, in the male one-and-a-half earner modelt the male works (almost) full-time, while the female works part-time

→ = changes I and II: Intended / unintended specialisation

⇢ = change III: intended equal sharing

⇢ = change IV: unintended reversed breadwinners

4.3.3. I: Intended (temporary) specialisation

Couples that divided work in a rather gendered and specialised way either planned to specialise after the birth or already divided paid and unpaid work in a specialised way before the birth. These couples specialised to various degrees. Some couples indeed chose a breadwinner arrangement, while others chose a one-and-a-half-earner arrangement. When women preferred to keep working and men strove to care for their child as well, couples opted for the one-and-a-half earner model, which is a partly specialised and partly sharing-based arrangement. Most women in this category held part-time paid jobs or planned to get a job when their child got older, and men also helped with housework and childcare. Some mothers tried to combine childcare in the daytime with working in the evenings or on weekends when their husband was at home to care for their child. Often, these parents were required to share childcare and housework. For example, when the mother worked, father needed to take over duties at home.

For some of these specialised couples, specialisation based on (partly) traditional gender roles was presented as a temporary solution to the time crunch that they experienced after the birth. Other couples already shared paid and unpaid work in a specialised way and continued doing so after the birth of their first child. They added childcare tasks to the woman's portfolio as household manager. In general, these couples were convinced that it was best for them to care for their child themselves or to have other family members do so. Women strongly preferred to care for the child themselves, and thus, their attitudes regarding how care should be organised were in line with their own preferences. All specialising couples agreed that a 'one career/one job' strategy was the most sensible way to divide work in a family with young children. Often, fathers and mothers with specialised roles had their own particular motivations and arguments for deciding on a gendered division, as demonstrated in the section on men's and women's perspectives below.

4.3.3.1. Breadwinning as internalised duty

Many men highlighted their responsibility to provide for the family, especially upon becoming fathers. They consistently prioritised paid work above childcare and mentioned being afraid to lose opportunities for promotion if they took parental leave; others said they could not allow themselves to work fewer hours in their job or sector. Still other fathers admitted that they liked their work more than caring for the baby.

> *Xander: one day at home like this every fortnight is nice, but I couldn't just stay at home. I couldn't be a house husband. No, I would miss too much, my contacts, my work. Your world gets very small when you stay at home with a child. [II jci, Xander, 36 hrs & Xylona 32 hrs, child 6 months]*

For these men, paid work is the point of departure for negotiations about the division of work and childcare. Other specialised men mentioned wanting to care more for their child but did not talk about it with their wives. They seemed to be rather ambivalent about how to fulfil their role as fathers, leaving the decisions about who should earn the family income up to their wives. They let go of their own caring time

without discussing or negotiating the responsibility for breadwinning and childcare. They seemed to be easily convinced that their overall responsibility was to provide the family with income as soon as mothers expressed the desire to work fewer hours. Frank, for example, talked about his desire to share the work more equally during his individual interview, but he did not act on this inclination, and he remained the main breadwinner when his wife chose to work as little as possible while their child was young.

> *Frank: The nicest would be if we could both do fifty-fifty. I'd like to spend more time with the little one. In the past when she [his wife] had just started studying, she said, 'Don't think I'm going to stay at home'. But then she suddenly said, 'I'm staying at home.' Somehow it works that way, she wanted to stay at home, at least as long as they're so small. [I ii, Frank, 40 hrs & Frances 12 hrs, child 8 months]*

Frank never discussed his wish to share in the childcare with his wife. His ambivalence, possibly fuelled by her desire to stay at home and his fear of work-related consequences, may have prevented him from raising the issue of sharing paid work and childcare in a less specialised way. In the joint interview, his wife was surprised to hear that he would like to spend more time with their child.

> *Frank: No, it's not just what you think or want, it's also the reality. My salary was quite a bit higher, certainly considering my annual salary, and my boss wouldn't let me work part time'. [I ii, Frank, 40 hrs, Frances 12 hrs, child 8 months]*

Frank justified the lack of correspondence between his preferred division of labour and the reality in his family based on arguments about his higher yearly income and the impossibility of working part-time at his job, which made the arrangement appear very logical. However, his wife was more highly educated than he, and would very likely have had a higher earning capacity if she worked more hours.

4.3.3.2. 'Mother is special'

The women who intended to specialise planned to reduce their paid work hours after childbirth and preferred to be the main caregivers. However, they did not want to be full-time caregivers per se. These women mentioned complex reasons for reducing their work hours. Few women expected to become a full-time mothers or considered motherhood as the only fulfilling aspect of their lives. However, they believed mothers to have a special role in raising their children and indicated that mothers cannot be replaced by fathers or third parties in this capacity. They felt a special, biologically induced responsibility towards their children.

> *Gertrude: Actually I already thought during my pregnancy that sixteen weeks of maternity leave is far too short, and that a baby of 10 to 12 weeks is not yet ready to be separated from its mother. And a mother who such a short time ago gave birth, is not yet emotionally, physically or mentally ready to leave her baby with someone else so that she can go back to work. That's how it was for me. [II ii, Gertrude 16 hrs, Anthony unemployed, child 11 months]*

Some women indicated that they feel jealous when their husbands spend more time with their children than they are able to spend themselves.

> *Rachel: I would feel unhappy if he was spending more time with the children than me. That wouldn't feel right, I would feel jealous on the days when he was spending more time with the children. No, let me work three days. [II ii, Rachel 24 hrs & Robert 36 hrs, twins 9 months]*

Other women argued that sharing childcare and housework equally was not realistic in their particular case because it did not work out before they had a child. They were afraid that an equal division in practice would mean that they would have to do half of the paid work in addition to a majority of the unpaid work at home. For example, Ina had temporarily worked many more hours than her husband and had become frustrated because her spouse did not do more of the housework. For her, reversing or sharing responsibilities was not an option anymore; instead, she reduced her work hours to care for their child.

> *Ina: I think this is the best division for us. If we would swap, it would drive us both mad, because he just doesn't see the things that need doing at home. He says, 'It is tidy, isn't it?', while I'm thinking, 'The house needs cleaning'. So this is the best way for us. [II ii, Ina 25 hrs, & Irvin, 40 hrs, child 15 months]*

These specialised negotiation processes suggested the existence of stereotypical ideas about gendered responsibilities. Men feel obliged to provide income for the family, and women feel that it is necessary for them to provide care, though these feelings are entangled with ambiguous notions about sharing childcare and paid work. Both spouses' gendered ideas about their roles mutually reinforced their gendered responsibilities, in some cases even when mothers had a higher earning capacity. Fathers' reluctance to reduce paid work hours was fuelled by mothers' expressing the desire to take care of their babies and vice versa.

Specialisation was considered a pragmatic solution that would work for a limited time period, remaining the preferred arrangement as long as children are young. Equal sharing was not a priority for these couples; the well being of the newborn and maintaining a steady income were their first priorities. Choosing a gendered solution seemed to be one way to reduce some of the uncertainties and changes associated with their roles and identities as new parents: for example, as they worried about doing the best thing for their babies and families (cf. Cowan & Cowan, 1995). Lance, for example, previously was self-employed but planned to have a steady job and income once his child was born.

> *Lance: …it was quite uncertain. That's the most important reason why I stopped. We talked about children then as well of course, because you do want a steady income, or at least a guarantee that you'll have an income every month. [I jci, Lance 38 hrs & Larissa 0hrs]*

4.3.4. II: Unintended specialisation, ambivalence and gradual pragmatism

Whereas couples who intended to specialise planned to divide work based on gender, the 'unintended specialisation couples' began with the general idea of sharing work and childcare equally. However, sharing childcare and paid work turned out to be too challenging; these couples gradually adapted a more specialised and gendered division of childcare and housework than originally planned. This sometimes led couples to also change their paid work arrangements, making them more specialised after some time trying other options. Below we describe several mechanisms that prevented couples from achieving a (more or less) equal division of labour.

4.3.4.1. Ambivalence and stress.

A striking quality of couples that did not plan a specialised division of labour was ambivalence regarding paid work and childcare divisions. Nearly all mothers and fathers displayed ambivalent feelings and thoughts in this regard. Some of them continually appeared to have doubts about how much time they should spend at work and how much time they should spend with the child at home.

> *I: What do you think about your division of work with your husband at this moment?*
>
> *Gertrude: Hmmm, the fact that Anthony cares for our baby works very well. But I feel ambivalent about my work. It's not clear to me how I would prefer to divide the care. I like it that I work, but I don't like leaving our baby. I would prefer to work and stay with our baby. At the moment I feel that although I only work 16 hours, I am gone too much, I would rather work less. [II ii, Gertrude, 16 hrs & Anthony unemployed, child 11 months]*

Ambivalence and insecurity about what is good for the child play an important role in these couple's negotiation processes. In particular, mothers seemed to be bothered by the question of 'what is best for the baby'. When mothers felt that they were not paying enough attention to their children, they felt guilty.

> *Quiana: I hate the fact that when I am with my child, my thoughts stray to my work. I find that really irritating. It makes me feel guilty. Not only towards her, but also towards myself. Then I think to myself, now you're here and you're still thinking about work. [II ii, Quiana 32 hrs & Quentin 30 hrs, child 6 months]*

Feelings of guilt led mothers to resort to specialisation and to make plans to further reduce their work hours. Balancing domestic and professional roles often leads women to feel guilty for not achieving the norm of intensive mothering (Guendouzi, 2006).

Ambivalence about the care versus work dilemma often resulted in the selection of more gendered arrangements. Women often (implicitly) prioritised childcare when they felt ambivalence, whereas men (implicitly) remained focused on paid work. When they had doubts, this specialisation strategy was one way in which couples dealt with the new, stressful situation of having a newborn in the house.

4.3.4.2. Stressful experience.

All couples found combining paid work and childcare stressful to some extent. Sometimes spouses' preferences regarding the division of paid work and childcare changed after the experience of combining these two activities. For example, after his parental leave (one day per week), Norman preferred to go back to working full-time rather than taking care of his child one day per week. He experienced this one full day of childcare per week as very stressful because he still attempted to maintain his full-time workload, not wanting to compromise on his work. After this experience, he preferred to have his wife or sister stay at home with the child such that he could continue working full-time.

4.3.4.3. Gendered kick off through maternity leave.

Gendered routines and skills were often developed during maternity leave when mothers stayed at home full-time with the baby. This period entailed an important challenge for all couples that tried to share childcare. The mechanisms that make up the '*gendered kick-off*' phenomenon demonstrate how specialisation unintentionally occurs after the birth of the first child. During maternity leave, couples develop gendered routines and habits, and

later, their division of labour continues to develop in a traditional way. The 'gendered kick-off' starts with new mothers staying at home full-time during their maternity leave[4], while fathers return to work. During the leave, women learn the skills necessary to care for their newborn and become used to their new full-time responsibilities. Thus, new mothers seem to 'automatically' become experts who knew best how to deal with the baby and begin to shoulder the main responsibility for the childcare and housework. At the same time, fathers spend less time with their newborns and gain less experience in caring for their babies. When fathers begin to stay alone with the child, often after the mother has returned to work, they need time to learn caring skills and must become used to being responsible for the needs of a baby.

> *Xylona: Xander still finds it difficult to get into a routine and wonders for example how he can have a shower with the baby there. So he still has to find a way to do that. And I have to laugh, they're the things I struggled with in the first few months when I was on maternity leave. It's hard work and takes a lot of getting used to. [II ii, Xylona 32 hrs & Xander 36 hrs, child 6 months]*

After the first period of close contact with their babies, mothers feel very responsible for their children, and many are uncomfortable letting other people, including fathers, provide childcare. This feeling seemed to be reinforced when both partners regard the mother as the expert with regard to childcare and fathers feel more insecure about what they should or can do. Then mothers are prone to *meddle with fathers'* provision of childcare.

> *Elise: Now, in the beginning I kept hovering over Edwin giving instructions when he changed the baby's nappy or got him dressed. But after a while I thought, 'I shouldn't do that. I should just go away and he can do it his own way'.*
> *Edwin: That put me off, so I thought, 'Let's just let Elise do it, I do it wrong anyway'. The buttons had to be done up differently, or this salve here or there…*
> *Elise: But it's because I'm convinced that it has to be done a certain way, otherwise it's not right ….*
> *Edwin: Yes, and I was too insecure, and then I thought, 'Oh, what does it matter, Elise can do it.'*
> *[II jci, Elise 24 hrs, Edwin 32 hrs, child 4 months]*

These kinds of struggles with concerns related to autonomy and expertise in providing childcare often inhibited parents from achieving their preferred division of both childcare and housework. Fathers often gave up trying to help provide childcare after experiencing this kind of meddling. In this way, mothers influenced whether fathers had the chance to develop and improve their caretaking skills. However, some mothers (e.g., Elise) and fathers became aware of this psychological pattern and tried to deal with it. Sometimes other circumstances influenced whether and how much mothers interfered with fathers' care. For example, when a mother had a caesarean and was not able to care for her child immediately after the birth, or when a mother was working, the father had the chance to learn childcare skills.

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[4] In the Netherlands, maternity leave included three months at full pay during the period when these couples were interviewed. Mothers and fathers were also entitled to parental leave: each parent had the right to 13 weeks of full-time leave (which would be unpaid or paid depending on the employee's contract). This parental leave could be spread out over a longer period and used up as part-time leave. Recently (2009), the length of Dutch parental leave was doubled to 26 weeks of leave.

In addition to childcare, during maternity leave, women also often took on the majority of the household tasks. This was seen as a pragmatic solution when mothers were at home full-time and sometimes even became bored and were looking for activities. Changing these newly developed routines after the leave period, however, appeared to be very difficult, which the parents had not expected.

Once gendered patterns accumulated and became the new status quo, with mothers as family managers, parents started to refer to their new division as a temporary solution that was logical in the context of their everyday lives. As one new mother said,

> *Anne: My career has already been damaged by the pregnancy and maternity leave; I got off track, now he should make the best of his career. It makes more sense that I stay home for some more time. [II ii, Anne 20 hrs & Adrian 30 hrs, child 11 months]*

Further specialisation and gendered choices thus appear to become a rational option after the birth of the first child, when a mother may invest less in her human capital and her job.

4.3.4.4. Difficulties sharing childcare.

For Dutch one-and-a-half earner couples, when the father is at home only a little less than the mother, the gendered kick-off mechanism was very troublesome. A difficulty that these couples encountered was sharing the responsibility for and the 'management' of childcare and housework. Because one spouse (the father) was at home less often, responsibility and management often 'grew' for the female spouse, who was at home more often. These one-and-a-half earner women often complained that they had to initiate, coordinate and manage the non-daily and less routine aspects of childcare. They were not able to share these more indirect childcare tasks proportionally with fathers. For example, investigating and planning what kind of food the child should eat at what age, teaching the babies skills as brushing teeth, or cutting their nails were tasks that only mothers realised were necessary and initiated. This may simply be an effect of their having been home more during maternity leave and afterwards, which may have made it easier for them to take note of these extra aspects of childcare. Unable to share the indirect responsibilities and management of childcare with fathers, mothers felt they were solely responsible for their children's well being in these respects, which felt like a burden sometimes. In the long run, they sometimes wanted to compensate for taking on this greater responsibility by doing less paid work.

4.3.4.5. Dealing with work ambitions and demands.

Not being able to function at one's old work level because one spent less time at work, had other priorities at home and needed to leave work on time sometimes encouraged parents' decision to specialise, as Norman's example above shows. Because mothers and fathers placed a large amount of emphasis on tasks at home, they sometimes felt dissatisfied with their experience at work. To solve this problem, Gertrude reduced her work hours and moved into a less demanding role at work. Other mothers did not accept demanding jobs before the birth of their children and anticipated problems combining

childcare and work. Still others adapted to their new situation after they returned to work: for example, looking for jobs that involved less commuting time.
Whereas couples who intended specialisation to be a temporary solution anticipated problems combining childcare and paid work, those couples who preferred an equal division of paid work and childcare had various experiences that made them eventually resort to a specialised division of labour. These included the gendered kick-off and feeling ambivalent about how to be a good father or mother. These aspects led couples to re-define their preferences and adapt a more pragmatic view of how to divide childcare and paid work according to gender.

4.3.5. III: Intended equal sharing, a determined choice

Seven couples shared paid work equally before their transition into parenthood and maintained an equal division of paid work after the birth of their children. Each spouse either reduced his or her work hours after the child was born or already worked part-time before the birth. Only two couples continued working full-time. They were determined to share childcare and paid work equally. Finding a new equilibrium in sharing caregiving tasks and the increased amount of unpaid work was their challenge.

4.3.5.1. Childcare seen as meaningful task.

These new parents were convinced that sharing and combining 'the best of both worlds' (childcare and paid work) was a worthwhile investment. They saw sharing work equally as necessary to a happy and healthy relationship. Here both spouses were motivated to invest in learning to do childcare and were already sharing planning, information-gathering and preparation responsibilities before the birth. These parents saw childcare as an intrinsically rewarding task that was worth sharing in itself. Caring for the child was seen as an attractive task (in contrast to household tasks), which made it easier for them to truly share childcare.

> *Ulric: We both like looking after her. It doesn't take any effort to spend time doing that. She doesn't make it difficult for you, caring for her. I don't have any problem with it, doing that job. We both have a child, a joint child, so you take care of her together. Not only because of principles, that you share it, but just because you both want to. [II ii, Ulric 30 hrs & Ursula 30 hrs, child 4 months]*

These couples were convinced that their babies would thrive best with both their mothers' and their fathers' attention and care. They found that their styles of caretaking were complementary and that their child was exposed to different types of development stimulation as a result.

4.3.5.2. Gender consciousness and avoiding gendered kick-off.

Being highly conscious and alert to signs of an unequal division of labour helped these couples to avoid or overcome the problem of gendered kick-off during maternity leave (see above). Spouses helped each other to remain conscious by pointing out and reflecting on behaviour and thoughts that discouraged or worked against their sharing the responsibilities equally.

Some parents did experience the gendered kick-off phenomenon, with the mother accomplishing most of the caretaking and domestic tasks after her maternity leave. However, they then reflected on their division of labour and decided to change it. For example, they agreed that the mother would not meddle in the father's caretaking methods.

> *Edwin: In the beginning I did much less with the baby, that was also because I thought I didn't do it well, and that Elise could do it better. So I withdrew. If the baby started crying, for example, it was Elise who went to him first. Then I waited a bit longer, not that I did that consciously. In the end Elise mentioned it, that she thought I didn't do enough with the baby. It was only then that I realized. [I jci Edwin 38 hrs & Elise 36 hrs, child 4 months]*

Other mothers deliberately planned to *avoid meddling* when fathers were providing childcare and learned to trust. These mothers consciously gave fathers time to explore the experience of childcare and to develop their own way of providing care.

> *Wanda: I really did my best. I was already planning to do that from the start, before our baby was born. I didn't want to be the sort of mother who interferes with everything. I did have to get used to it at first, and sometimes I peeked over his shoulder. Then I thought 'I think I can do it a bit better', but I kept it to myself. [II ii, Wanda, 31 hrs & Warren 40 hrs, child 5 months]*

4.3.5.3. Paid work as a matter of intrinsic value versus financial need.

The couples who shared responsibilities equally were adamant about sharing and were willing to invest in an equal division of labour. They preferred combining paid work with caring for their children above specialising in either paid or unpaid work. Both spouses liked their jobs outside the home, and paid work was seen as important not only financially but also personally, with financial independence and the intrinsic rewards of paid work seen as essential for each individual spouse. Both men and women mentioned the importance of paid work for self-realisation and feeling useful, whereas in the more traditional couples, it was usually just the men who stressed these aspects.

Some mothers started re-valuing their paid work when they became bored and isolated during maternity leave, which motivated them to return to paid work.

> *Camilla: I really like being with the baby, but staying at home five days a week, I found it awful after being on maternity leave for a while. I really wanted to do something again. I felt really trapped here at home, really limited in abilities you make use of. I also like thinking about things and not just about when my child has to be fed again. [II ii, Camilla 32 hrs, Adam 32 hrs, child 5 months]*

4.3.5.4. Working on a jigsaw puzzle.

Equal-sharing couples searched for diverse solutions and arrangements that would allow them to combine childcare and paid work and added together the various pieces of their particular setup to make the division of labour work. Ursula, for example, took two hours of vacation every week to be able to pick up her child once a week even though her commute is longer than her partner Ulric's. Getting up at night to breastfeed is an exhausting and time-consuming task that could not be shared. However, some parents tried to counteract this difficulty by letting fathers change diapers, for example. We found one husband who consciously tried to share the breastfeeding ritual with his wife and their child.

Ulric: In principle we both get up at night, one of us gets her, and one of us takes her back to bed. It's a small task that I have, actually I don't really do much at night. I always put her hat on and then we both take her to bed, and I hold the blanket. [II ii, Ulric 30 hrs & Ursula 30 hrs, child 4 months]

It seems that here, both parents' getting up at night to feed the baby has a symbolic meaning. Sharing this task that cannot be shared in a biological sense shows a real commitment to shared responsibility on the part of these couples. This father knew exactly when and how his child needed to be fed, and also he did not need further explanation when he was alone with the baby.

4.3.5.5. Motivation through positive experiences.

As with the gendered kick-off, which encouraged more gendered specialisation after couples started to specialise, equal sharing also seemed to have cumulative, self-energising effects. Couples' persistent belief in sharing childcare and paid work helped them to resist the allure of specialisation. Both parents invested in acquiring new skills, and as a result, they were flexible about who did what. Upon sharing tasks, they experienced the positive effects of this strategy, which then stimulated them to further invest in sharing tasks. For example, after having difficulty initially leaving their babies behind with their fathers, mothers found that their children were actually doing well when their fathers cared for them.

I: And how was it for you when you handed over care after four months?
Debby: Quite easy. I expected it to be worse. Work is busy enough. And during breaks, you phone to see how it's going. And then I like hearing that he's eaten or drunk well, or how it's going. But no, it hasn't disappointed me. Because if you see how he takes care of the little one. It's reflected in the child as well, he's a very happy baby. Yes, Dennis really likes it too. So that's good for him. [II ii, Debby 32 hrs & Dennis 16 hrs, child 6 months]

This mother saw transferring childcare to the father after maternity leave as valuable. The well being of the child took away the mother's doubts about leaving the child at home and going to work. For many fathers, the experience of caring for their own child made them appreciate the joys of caretaking and made them more willing to make concessions at their jobs. One father speculated about selling one of the two family cars to save money and be able to spend more time with his daughter because he enjoyed caring for her so much.

For both mothers and fathers, the experience of sharing childcare and paid work reinforced their motivation to further share the childcare and paid work, and further invest in finding solutions to the time crunch and the influence of gender roles. Their investment in achieving 'equality' increased their desire to share tasks and evenly distribute duties.

4.3.6. IV: Reversing the breadwinner role. Landmark of emancipation?

Female breadwinner couples may be the prime example of emancipation, with men and women reversing their gendered roles and responsibilities. However, in the few cases in our sample in which women worked the longer hours, the women did not reverse their responsibility for childcare to the same extent.

4.3.6.1. Circumstances and temporary solution.

For these couples, extraordinary circumstances explained their division of paid work. None of the couples saw their division of labour as a long-term arrangement; they were all temporarily adapting to circumstances including finishing education, unemployment, or inadequate self-employment income. As a result of their particular situations, fathers had more time available at home with their babies, and in this sense, they were the main caregivers. Mothers struggled to accept that the men were playing the major caregiving role, and they expressed that they would have preferred an arrangement in which they themselves could have been the main caregivers. However, they also indicated the importance of their own paid work.

4.3.6.2. Confirming gender identity.

Mothers did not want to take on the breadwinner role in the manner of traditional fathers; instead, they strove to be their children's primary caregiver and were very engaged in childcare and housework. They seemed to take on the role of household and childcare manager despite working extended hours outside the house. These women tried to catch up on their time with the children as soon as they came home. They also continued to do the majority of the housework, including pre-cooking meals for the baby, for example.

> *Babette: As soon as I come home, I take over the shift at home with our baby, bath him, bring him to bed, and later prepare his food for the next day. Sometimes I think Bart could do more, but hmm I find it more important that our baby's food is home-made, so then I do it [II ii, Babette 32 hrs & Bart 0 hrs, child 10 months]*

Fully focusing on their child as soon and as long as they were at home seemed to be mothers' concession to traditional gender roles. Additionally, for fathers, fully letting go of caretaking responsibilities during such moment may have been a way of confirming male identity.

As with the other arrangements, cumulative effects comparable to those seen with the gendered kick-off phenomenon might have been expected here. In these instances, however, patterns that culminated in increasing specialisation were not found. The spouse's gender thus seemed to play an important role in couples' negotiation processes and outcomes. When the mother was at home more than the father, the mother took on more responsibility for the childcare and meddled with father's caretaking. When the father was at home more with the child, gendered kick-off did not occur during maternity leave because the father started taking on childcare tasks early. Then when the mother went to work, both parents were able to care for the child, and the mother's head start was relatively smaller than occurred with the 'unintended specialisation' couples.

4.3.6.3. Cumulative effects and gendered kick-off?

These couples also found that their division of work created self-energising effects. As with 'investing in equal sharing' fathers, these fathers experienced childcare as a meaningful task, which then strengthened or sometimes awakened their desire to care for their babies themselves. Female breadwinner couples also experienced a kind of gendered kick-off. They did succeed in re-distributing the routine and daily childcare tasks after

their maternity leave because only fathers were available for these tasks when mothers were at work. However, on a different level, they did not avoid the gendered kick-off. Breadwinning women remained responsible for additional childcare tasks like, for example, informing fathers about and planning what the child should eat and when, tasks that did not need to be done during the day.

4.3.6.4. Preferring parental care.

In these female breadwinner couples, all spouses preferred rather strongly to care for their babies themselves. Most of them also did not wish to hire someone to provide formal childcare, which seemed to mainly originate from the mothers' preferences. Consistent with their preferences, these parents mostly took care of their babies themselves. If formal care was still necessary, they used it as little as possible. When explaining their choice of arrangement, these couples mentioned a non-consumerist ideology, circumstances (unemployment), obligations to one's own education and training, and not being career-oriented. All regarded their current arrangement as temporary.

These female breadwinner families did not reverse traditional gender roles based on their ideas regarding emancipation or equality. They rather found themselves in atypical work arrangements that they had not chosen freely. Their strong preference for parental care, combined with their work and educational circumstances, led mothers to take on the responsibility of earning a family income while trying to remain the main caregivers.

4.4. Discussion

Why did some couples achieve the intended changes in their division of childcare after the birth of their first child while other parents did not? This longitudinal exploratory study has explored the negotiation processes of 32 couples in their transition to parenthood and shown how couples create intended and unintended changes in their division of work after the birth of their first child.

To achieve their intended division of work, parents needed to be determined, especially when they wanted to achieve a non-specialised division of labour. Some parents achieved their intended division of labour, whether specialised or based on equal sharing.

For couples who intended to share childcare, there were some processes that were challenging. One especially difficult process was the re-negotiation involved in dividing childcare tasks after maternity leave. An important challenge to realising a sharing division of labour was couples' ambivalence about their modern roles as mother and father. Sometimes small practical hindrances or voices (from people in their environment) awakened confusion in spouses about how to best care for their children and encouraged them to specialise more fully based on traditional gender roles than they had originally intended. Ambivalence regarding questions of good and responsible parenting behaviour interfered with couples' plans and intentions to share childcare. Ambivalence may be an

interim result of the change in social roles that we have witnessed in recent decades (cf. Bauman, 1990). Ambivalence has previously been found to be common in descriptions of good mothers and fathers by students, parents, and grandparents descriptions across three generations (Perälä-Littunen, 2007). Ambivalence about desirable parenting roles seems to be a general issue for modern couples.

Ambivalent feelings may be related to cognitive dissonance, an unpleasant psychological state in which one's behaviour conflicts with one's ideas and beliefs. People use various strategies to reduce cognitive dissonance and align their beliefs with their behaviour or vice versa. When spouses felt ambivalence about a certain type of division of labour, they appeared to more often make decisions implicitly. Couples who were determined to share the work equally were more explicit about their preferred division of labour. These couples made concrete plans about how to divide their work with their spouses, thought about how to work around gendered temptations and considered how to deal with biological and social differences, ultimately developing inventive ways to do so.

Ambivalent feelings about how to best divide work and childcare may make spouses quieter, so that they just go along with what the other spouse seems to want, possibly because of the assumed unpleasant nature of dissonance, which people want to avoid.

The current findings regarding explicit negotiation as enabling couples to achieve their intended equal division of work are in line with those of previous studies that found that conscious discussions about gender issues are a prerequisite for marital equality (Knudson-Martin & Rankin Mahoney, 1998). Making couples aware of their ambivalence and giving them opportunities to jointly and explicitly make decisions regarding their division of work may therefore help them to achieve their desired division of labour despite their ambivalence. When both spouses intended to share work, they sometimes helped each other by expressing their ambivalence explicitly and therefore jointly searching for solutions.

Our findings also show how cumulative processes have worked against couples' intended or ideal division of labour in some cases but helped them to achieve their intended division of labour in other cases. The gendered kick-off process impeded couples' plans to share work equally. Mothers' development of new routines with their babies during maternity leave made them increasingly responsible for childcare because of their expertise in this area. Once expertise and routines were accumulated, it appeared difficult for couples to invert these patterns in their daily negotiations. The gendered kick-off process helps to explain why many modern couples who intend to share childcare more or less equally are often not able to achieve that goal.

When both spouses explicitly agreed to share tasks and started consciously sharing childcare responsibilities from the beginning (for instance, investing in acquiring childcare skills), they were able to avoid the gendered kick-off phenomenon. This was especially true when mothers did not meddle with fathers' caretaking, and when fathers were willing to take on caring tasks. These couples developed alternative routines in which paid work and childcare were shared. Moreover, fathers who started to invest time

in learning new childcare skills were motivated and felt empowered to be involved in childcare. Their positive experiences with sharing childcare early on in baby's lives motivated them to continue investing in creative ways to share childcare. This additional motivation supported couples in their endeavours to achieve their intended shared division of childcare. This second kind of cumulative and self-energising effect helps to explain how fathers who were involved in childcare at an early stage remained more involved in childcare later on (Cabrera et al., 2008; Cook et al., 2005; Marsiglio, 2004).

These cumulative processes began directly after the birth or even before the birth of the first child, when couples started to organise and prepare for childcare. This pattern indicates that the period immediately after the birth of the first child is essential in determining couples' division of work at later points in time. The gendered kick-off phenomenon helps to explain the stubborn and persisting mechanism of traditional gender roles as part of couples' negotiations about their division of work. It suggests that sharing childcare and paid work can be difficult and demands that both spouses be disciplined and willing to help. It also requires investments in childcare by both spouses early on.

Couples with a one-and-a-half earner arrangement, which is neither a traditional nor an equal division of labour, experienced the greatest pressure to move towards a more specialised and gendered division of responsibilities than intended. These slightly specialised arrangements were hard to maintain due to the accumulation of responsibilities based on routines and newly acquired skills. Hence, the dominant Dutch family model, the one-and-a-half earner arrangement, which is also referred to as the 'one career-one job arrangement', includes the risk of cumulative specialisation into unintended gendered roles.

In other words, many small decisions finally accumulate to create an unintended division of labour for couples that they would never have actively settled on as a whole. This unintended cumulative effect has been referred to as the *tyranny of small decisions* (Kahn, 1966), as mentioned in the introduction above (cf. theoretical approaches, Chapter 1). For example, if couples decide that the mother will breastfeed and the father will take one day of parental leave per week after maternity leave, then over time, the mother will become more skilled at childcare, and small everyday decisions such as who prepares the bottle and feeds the child will keep the mother responsible for childcare after her maternity leave is over. This pattern also handicaps fathers as they seek to catch up to mothers in terms of experience, and it did lead some couples to decide that the mother should reduce work hours and care more for the baby.

These self-energising processes also explain the cumulative influence of gendered divisions as described in earlier studies. For example LaRossa & La Rossa (1981) have found that new parents' division of infant care (3rd, 6th, and 9th months postpartum) was fairly traditional but became even more traditional as time went on. Grunow et al (2007) have found that if the wife did not stop working after her first childbirth, or only stopped working for a short period in time, couples were no more likely to traditionalise their division of housework than were childless couples. However, when women did temporarily stop working after the birth of their first child, men's tendency to decrease

their share of the housework did become larger as part of their transition to parenthood. Additionally, the reallocation of tasks to fathers has been found to be difficult to achieve, and it has been discovered that both spouses must be willing to consciously work towards an equal division of work (Backett, 1982).

As also suggested by recent longitudinal studies on couples' division of work (cf Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006, 2009), gender appears to be a strong and decisive mechanism in couples' negotiation processes, as shown by our findings on the gendered kick-off and on couples that reversed the breadwinning responsibility while not reversing their responsibility for childcare. The strong influence of gender continued to create feelings of ambivalence on the part of parents about sharing tasks in a non-gendered way. Ambivalence led couples to fall back on gendered routines in their daily lives.

Among 'intended specialisation' couples who experienced ambivalence about the division of work, gender exerted more of an influence than did the idea of maximising income by arranging for mothers to work more hours. Female breadwinning couples' negotiation processes also confirmed the persisting role of gender. In these couples, it was decided that the mothers would work more hours than the fathers only out of necessity and temporarily as required by their particular circumstances.

However, the influence of gender can be overcome by couples who are determined (or need) to share childcare and paid work and are willing to invest in sharing tasks. Moreover, none of the Dutch parents in this sample shared paid work and childcare in the strictly gendered way that was popular among couples in the 1950s.

During couples' negotiations, economic resources such as income were hardly mentioned. For some 'intended (temporary) specialisation' couples , when men earned a higher income, that fact was used to explain the (temporary) choice of a gendered division of labour, even when they generally cherished the ideal of sharing work and childcare more equally. However, for other couples, maximising the family income was not a priority at all: if mothers preferred to care for their babies themselves, even though they enjoyed a higher income than their spouses, they were able to reduce their work hours without much resistance, and the men then needed to earn a family income. These cases support the idea that power resides within one's traditional sphere of interest: within childcare for mothers and paid work for fathers.

4.4.1. Limitations and future research.

The analyses in this chapter are based on a qualitative sample of 32 couples located within the Dutch cultural and institutional context. Two elements of the parenting landscape in the Netherlands that are unique are parents' generally outspoken preference for caring for their own children rather than outsourcing childcare to third parties and their opportunities to work part-time. The standard of living in the Netherlands enables the majority of couples, for example, to choose a one-and-a-half-earner model (the one career-one job arrangement). It also allows both partners to reduce their work hours if they so

desire. It could be interesting to see whether couples in cultural and institutional contexts that entail other economic and cultural restrictions employ different kinds of negotiation processes.

Standardised measures of couples' level of ambivalence and their negotiation processes, including feelings of lesser motivation to do a task because of meddling, will be important additions to current measures of the division of work. Future studies should replicate the findings explored here regarding cumulative processes and spousal ambivalence using representative samples across different national, institutional and cultural contexts to determine the influence of cultural and institutional settings on couples' negotiation processes.

In this sample, not all couples were interviewed before and after the birth of their first child; some couples could only be interviewed when their first child had already been born. Despite our confidence that these latter respondents had given us fairly precise information about their experience before the birth of their first child, their new situation as parents may have influenced their memory of their pre-child past. Future studies should investigate parents' transitions and focus on the continuing development of couples' decision-making processes during later life stages. Understanding how couples' negotiation processes change as a child grows and after they have a second or third child may reveal new insight into the dynamic nature of the division of work. A second and third child will increase couples' workload associated with childcare, and they may not have the resources (in terms of energy and time) for continued conscious and explicit negotiation as necessary for equal sharing.

Using individual and joint interviews emerged as valuable method of investigating of couples' negotiations regarding the division of work. The findings were revealing with regard to couples' everyday processes. The interviews in which the couples were able to interact proved to be very effective in revealing their negotiation processes and seem as though they would be a promising way of studying other issues that modern couples face, such as the decision to have children (see Hooghiemstra & Pool, 2003; Rijken 2009) or decisions regarding how to deal with their individual and household income.

Hochschild (1989), Bittman (1997) and others show how couples' accounts of their division of housework and childcare reflect socially desirable ideas. By interviewing both couples and individual spouses, we isolated certain inconsistencies in spouses' accounts; in these cases spouses corrected, completed or disagreed with each other's accounts. Focussing on these inconsistencies by using observational techniques to investigate the relationship between couples' accounts and their actual division of housework and childcare would be a revealing endeavour for future studies to undertake.

Ultimately, new parents are still pioneers when it comes to re-defining their roles as mothers and fathers. 'De-gendered' responsibilities are not yet taken for granted, and working around the gendered kick-off and cumulative processes is difficult when gendered routines are linked to deeply rooted beliefs about the responsibilities of mothers and fathers, which can feed ambivalent feelings about caring, fatherhood and motherhood.

Chapter 5

Fathers' ambivalence about breadwinning and childcare.

A longitudinal study on new fathers' ideals regarding and experiences with childcare and paid work

5. Fathers' ambivalence about breadwinning and childcare

5.1. Introduction

The focus in the growing field of research on fathering is slowly shifting from the 'absent father' to the involvement of fathers in child rearing (e.g. Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006). Concepts such as 'new fathers' (e.g., Reiche, 1998), 'father responsiveness' (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006), 'family man' (Coltrane, 1996), and 'caring fatherhood' (e.g., Spruijt & Duindam, 2002) have been introduced since the 1980s. Increasingly, fathers express their desire to be involved in childcare and reject the traditional breadwinner arrangements (Hofäcker, 2007), but, at the same time, they are still seen as a secondary parent (Ambert, 1994). Researchers argue that fathers are important for their children's well-being and development and, therefore, should be involved in raising them (cf. Rohner & Veneziano, 2001; Pleck, 1997). However, research also suggests that men do not always realize their preferences with regard to childcare and that their share in childcare only increases slowly (Spruijt & Duindam, 2002; Pleck, 1997; Gesterkamp, 2007).

Previous chapters in this book and other recent studies indicate that fatherhood is accompanied by ambivalent feelings (cf. Chapters 3 & 4; Perälä-Littunen, 2007). Others also stress the ambivalent character of the parents' surroundings ('new mothers and fathers negotiate parenthood in a social context full of paradoxes') (Walzer, 1998). Traditional norms expect fathers to be the breadwinner and to take care of the financial well-being of their family. Current norms for fathers, however, also prescribe actively sharing in childcare to some extent. The norms for fathers' roles have changed and broadened in the previous decades. Contemporary fathers negotiate and construct their individual role as a father in times of conflicting traditional and modern norms, ambivalent feelings and paradoxical institutional settings (Gesterkamp, 2007. Walzer, 1998).

In this chapter, the views and experiences of men becoming fathers are explored during their transition to parenthood. The focus is on how men currently view their role as fathers and what they experience regarding childcare and paid work as the father of a newborn. The aim is to understand how current men see and construct their role as contemporary fathers.

Prospective investigations of men's transitions into fatherhood are scarce (for exceptions, see Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Doherty *et al.*, 2006) as are investigations of men's negotiation processes regarding childcare. Matta & Knudson (2006) investigated how couples construct the responsiveness of fathers to their young children (up to five years of age) and suggested that the response of fathers to their children is mediated by their relationship with their wives. In Chapter 3, it was concluded that the negotiation processes between spouses on their division of work before the birth of their first child often remains implicit. On the one hand, 'woman demand-husband withdraw' patterns indicate that women want to change their division of work and that men want to keep the

status quo (e.g., Klinetob & Smith, 1996, Kluwer et al, 1997; 2000). On the other hand, 'maternal gate-keeping' mechanisms comprise various beliefs and behaviours that inhibit a collaborative effort between men and women in family work by limiting the opportunities for men to learn and grow through caring for the home and children. Walzer (1998) suggests that fathers and mothers produce and maintain the mothers' responsibility for intensive mothering and are supported and channelled into this pattern by the prevalent norms about fathering and mothering.

From a theoretical perspective, role theory suggests that men will behave according to their internalized norms about fatherhood, while the doing gender theory suggests that men will actively seek to confirm their male identity by engaging in behaviours regarded as masculine. However, in times of changing and broadening gender roles and norms, how do fathers confirm their male identity, and how do they combine old and new roles?

Socio-economic theories predict that men will fulfil their role by specializing in breadwinning when their wife earns less or by specializing in childcare when their wife earns more. Neither of these theories explains why the division of work and childcare would change; they only explain why the traditional division of work is primarily maintained. From a normative perspective, for men to stay at home and care for their child is assumed to be less desirable than doing paid work because it contrasts with their male identity. Studies on the doing gender approach suggest that gender identity can be adapted by including new aspects into one's male identity, such as caring tasks, for example (Brandt en Kvande, 1998).

The transition to parenthood is suggested to be a crucial period that sets the course for the way fathers fulfil their role. For example, research indicates that fathers who are more involved during the early stages of parenthood appear to remain more involved in the later stages up to their child's adolescence (Cabrera et al., 2008; Cook et al., 2005; Marsiglio, 2004).

The Netherlands are a particularly interesting case for studying fatherhood because it can be considered as a pioneering country for its facilities for part-time work opportunities for both women and men. Employees have the right to reduce their working time and to keep all their benefits. As a consequence, part-time work does not only occur in less-skilled jobs but is also more and more possible within professional and managerial jobs. Additionally, parental leave can be used as part-time leave, and, as such, it supports formal opportunities for fathers to work fewer hours and to combine paid work with caring tasks.

The percentage of men who work part-time is 18% in the Netherlands and is the highest compared to other countries (6% in the EU). However, compared to women (61% of Dutch women work part-time), the percentage of men who work part-time is very low (Aliaga, 2005). In general, Dutch couples are able to live from less than two full-time jobs and are thus able to have both spouses involved in part-time work and share the shifts at home. This means that in the Netherlands, the current generation of fathers-to-be has more opportunities to combine paid work with childcare than preceding generations.

Dutch fathers of young children under age five have the busiest weeks of all population groups, with a total workload of 64.6 hours versus the 61.5-hour workweeks

of mothers. On average, Dutch fathers of children younger than 5 years of age spend 10 hours a week on childcare, 9.2 hours on housework and 41.5 hours on paid work. The total workload of Dutch fathers of young children grew five hours per week since 1990. They now spend 2.6 hours more on childcare, 0.2 hours more on housework and almost 4 hours more on paid work, while they reduced their hours on do-it-yourself jobs and volunteer work (Portegijs et al., 2006). The overall proportion of time that fathers spent on unpaid work, i.e., childcare and housework, was 32.5% in 2005. After the birth of their first child, six percent of Dutch fathers reduce their working hours (Merens & Hermans, 2009). These average findings indicate that the way that fathers fill their role regarding childcare and paid work is changing. On average, fathers spend more time on childcare, and, at the same time, they still try to live up to the male work ethic of working full-time and building a career (Højgaard, 1997).

In this chapter, the perspective of men on their role as fathers and their experiences as a father of a newborn baby, with their role in work and childcare in the first year of their child's life, is investigated. A qualitative longitudinal design was applied to investigate the following research questions:

1. How do fathers-to-be see their role as future fathers regarding childcare and paid work before the birth of their child?
2. How do new fathers experience and perceive their role as fathers regarding childcare and paid work after the birth of their child?
3. How do fathers of newborns deal with the imperatives of childcare and paid work?

Firstly, before the birth of their first child, men's ideals and expectations about their role in childcare and paid work as future fathers are investigated. Second, fathers' experiences after the birth of their first child with childcare and paid work are examined. Third, these explorations provide insights into their changing views before and after the birth of their child and the way they deal with the conflicting traditional and modern norms. Prospective investigations of men's transitions into fatherhood are scarce (for exceptions, see Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Doherty et al., 2006). The current study extends previous research by adding a longitudinal dimension to the father's perspective on childcare by examining their views and experiences across the transition to fatherhood.

5.2. Methods

5.2.1. Qualitative panel design

To compare the perspective and the experiences of fathers before and after the birth of their first-born child, a qualitative panel design was used. Qualitative research methods were chosen because they are appropriate to study a subject from the perspective of the people involved here, i.e., the (future) fathers. Next, we were interested in the changes that occurred during the transition to parenthood. Qualitative research methods offer the

opportunity to follow up on changes in a flexible way by adjusting the measuring instruments to the changed situation. In most survey research, the measuring instrument is kept stable between different waves of measurement to enable comparisons. For qualitative research, it is a natural feature to examine issues that are relevant for the participants, including a change in the relevance of topics. The father interviews were part of a study that included interviews with 32 couples that participated in two waves: before and after the birth of their first child.

5.2.2. Data collection

The interview method used was a 'couple-interaction interview', which is a combination of a face-to-face individual interviews with fathers and mothers separately and a joint interview with both spouses. This combined method enabled us to compare the father's accounts in the individual interview with their accounts when their wives were present and also to investigate the interaction between the partners during the interview.

The strength of the individual interview is the opportunity for spouses to speak openly about their individual ideas and roles in the division of paid and unpaid work and to reveal their own viewpoints. The latter is less likely in a joint interview (Boeije, 2004; Hertz, 1995; Zipp & Toth, 2002). The strength of the joint interview is that the spouses recall processes together that they need to reconstruct from remembered anecdotes and incidents (Allan, 1980). Before being interviewed, both spouses were also given a short questionnaire about their actual division of paid and unpaid work.

In this publication, we use data from the individual father interviews, the joint couple interviews of the first and second wave and the questionnaire information. In the first wave, in the individual interviews, participants were asked to think about and reflect on their ideal division of paid work, housework, and childcare. In the joint interview, couples were asked to reflect on the development of the division of work, whether and how they talked about this issue when they started cohabiting, the division and or negotiation processes, and their current ideal situations that they had written down during the individual interviews.

In the second wave, the men were again first interviewed individually and asked about their experiences with the division of labour, the most difficult aspects, the biggest changes compared to before the birth, and about what worked well and what did not. In the subsequent joint interview, couples were asked to reflect on whether and how they had been discussing various aspects of their division of paid work, childcare and housework.

In the questionnaire, fathers were asked to indicate their degree of contribution to seven caring tasks, namely diapering, feeding, bathing, putting to bed, playing with the child, getting up early with child, and caring for the sick child. The answer categories were: 1) always done by the mother; 2) more often done by the mother; 3) equal; 4) more often done by the father; 5) always done by the father. The average of the sum of the fathers' scores for these seven tasks was calculated and varied between 3.25 and 1.89. The

Cronbach's alpha of the scale of these items was 0.70. This reliability analysis led us to not include two items in the scale, namely 'taking child to nursery' and 'caring for the child at night', because they lowered the alpha too much.

The length of the complete interviews varied in the first wave from 1.5 to almost 4 hours and in the second wave from 1.5 to 3 hours, with a mean length of 2.5 hours in the first wave and 2 hours in the second wave. All interviews were recorded electronically and fully transcribed.

5.2.3. The sample

Since the interviews with the fathers were part of an interview for a couples study on their transition to parenthood, the sample consisted of couples. The couples were partly selected from a large survey study (Netherlands Kinship Panel Study) and partly by advertising in midwife clinics. The mean age of the participating males (34 years) and females (31 years) was only slightly higher than the Dutch mean age of couples having their first child (first time mothers: 29.4 years). This could be due to the over-representation of participants with a higher vocational or university degree, who, on average, have their first child at an older age when compared with lower educated males and females. The couples lived throughout the Netherlands in urban and rural areas. The average length of cohabitation was five years (range one – ten years).

In the first wave, 32 interviews took place. Eighteen interviews took place when couples were expecting their first child, while 14 interviews were conducted when the child was between 3 weeks and 11 months old. The latter group was explicitly asked to reflect on the period when they were expecting their child. We have reason to believe that they gave us fairly precise information about that recent stage and that the information had gained some intensity because the fathers were able to contrast the current situation with the situation before the birth. Still, their new situation after the birth may have been influenced by their remembrances about their pre-child past.

In the second wave, 30 interviews took place; two couples did not want to participate anymore, and, in two other couples, the fathers were not involved because they refused cooperation for the second time. This resulted in 28 father interviews in the second wave. The interviews took place half a year up to a year after the first interview. In the second wave, the children were between 3.5 and 18 months old.

5.2.4. Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative data were analysed in a three-step procedure. First, the interviews were read, and extensive memos were written to capture the data. A summary was written of each couple interview, including key themes. Second, the interviews were analysed for important themes, and codes were given to the text fragments that pertained to these themes. This open coding process was conducted with MAXqda2 software for analysing qualitative data. A cross-case analysis was undertaken to find themes that re-occurred in

the interviews, and it considered the relevance of the fathers' perspective on involvement in childcare. Some codes were derived from the literature, such as 'maternal gate-keeping', 'gender roles', and 'ambivalent feelings'. Others emerged from the data and were also inspired by previous analyses of these data, i.e., 'explicit agreements', 'implicit roles' and 'autonomy as a parent'.

Second, after the first stage of open coding, the coding scheme was organized hierarchically into main codes (overarching themes) and sub-codes that were seen as dimensions or aspects of the main codes (Boeije, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Third, a within-case analysis was conducted in which the relevant themes from wave one were compared with the relevant themes in wave two. Changes and stable aspects were noted. This was followed by a cross-case analysis to find similarities and differences across fathers and detect patterns in the changes of fathers' perspectives on fatherhood.

We indicate whether the quotes originated from individual interviews (ii) with the fathers or from the joint couple interview (jci). Whether a fragment stems from wave one or wave two is indicated by I or II, respectively, e.g., I jci for a wave one joint couple interview fragment. The spouses' real names were changed to pseudonyms for their confidentiality.

5.3. Results

5.3.1. A quantitative overview: fathers' ideals and actual division of childcare

In this first section of the results, quantitative data from the individual interviews are used to sketch an overview of the men's ideals regarding childcare and paid work and what kind of division they actually realized. This overview then serves as a basis for the further qualitative in-depth analyses.

5.3.1.1. Ideal and actual number of days spent on childcare

To what extent fathers ideally prefer to be actively involved in childcare can be measured by how many days they want to spend on childcare during the week[5]. Of course, fathers can be actively involved in childcare outside of these caring days. However, since full-time breadwinning does not allow men to spend a lot of time with their children, reducing work hours to spend time on childcare is a way to measure the men's willingness to engage in active and hands-on childcare. During the individual interview before the birth, the men were asked to indicate their ideal number of caring and working days per week once their child was born; in wave two, they were asked how many hours

[5] In the Netherlands, there is a small trend for fathers to care for their child during the workweek on a part-time basis. Reducing one's work hours is possible either by taking up parental leave or by exercising one's right to work part-time. For the Dutch institutional context, see also Chapter 1.

and days they work, which then indicated how much time they were at home during the workweek for doing childcare.

In Table 5.1, the initial ideal number of caring days of the fathers-to-be in wave one is compared to their actual number of caring days after the birth of their first child in wave two. As this table shows on the diagonal, sixteen men were able to realize their preferred number of caring days during the workweek. Twelve of the fathers spent fewer caring days than they ideally preferred before the birth, and three fathers actually spent more caring days than preferred before the birth.

Looking at how much fathers ideally preferred and then actually were involved in childcare, we noticed that two men did not want to participate in childcare during the workweek at all and succeeded in doing so. Ten men realized their ideal of caring for their child one day during the workweek. Two men realized their ideal to care for their child between 1.5 and 3 days during the week, and two men realized their ideal to care for their child more than three workdays a week.

Of those fathers who do not reduce their working hours to be at home on a weekday to care for their child, two initially had the ideal of caring for their child one day, five actually wanted to care for the child between 1.5 and 3 days, and two fathers even intended to care for their child for more than three days per week.

Table 5.1 Father's ideal and actual number of caring days (number of men)

Ideal caring days (wave 1)	Actual caring days [1] (wave 2)				
	0 days	1 day	>1 - 3 days	≥ 3 days	Total
0 days	2	0	0	0	2
1 day	2	10	1	0	13
> 1 – 3 days	5	0	2	2	9
≥ 3 days	2	1	2	2	7
Total N	11	11	5	4	31[2]

[1] Calculated as five weekdays minus the number of working hours divided by eight

[2] One missing value for the combination of fathers' ideal and actual number of caring days

5.3.1.2. Ideal and actual days spent on paid work

Secondly, in Table 5.2, it is shown to what extent men were able to realize their ideal time spent on paid work after the birth of their first child. Time for paid work and time for childcare during the week are, of course, highly related. Table 5.2 presents the extent to which men realized their initial ideal number of days spent on paid work. Twelve men were able to realize their preference, sixteen men worked more than they preferred, and a minority of three men worked fewer days than they initially preferred. This means that less than half of the men realized their ideal division of paid work and that more than half of the men worked more than they had intended.

Table 5.2 Comparison of ideal with realised number of working days (number of men)

Ideal working days (wave 1)	Actual working days (wave 2)[1]				
	No work	1-2days	3- 4 days	> 4 days	Total
No work	0	0	0	0	0
1-2 days	0	1	0	0	1
3-4 days	1	1	6	16	24
>4 days	1	0	0	5	6
Total N	2	2	6	21	31

[1] One missing value for father's actual paid work hours in wave two

This descriptive comparison of stated ideals for their working and caring arrangements in wave one and their actual division of work and childcare in wave two shows that less than half of the fathers succeeded in realizing their initial ideal. Sixteen of the fathers worked full-time (more than four days a week), while they initially envisioned working less than full-time (3 or 4 days). This means that more than half of the fathers spent more days on paid work than they had initially desired.

The findings from the two tables indicate that most men envisioned spending the majority of their time on paid work. Seven of the fathers preferred to spend three days or more on child care, and one father preferred to spend one or two days on paid work; however, almost half of the fathers preferred to spend zero or one day on child care (Table 5.1). This rather fits the traditional norm of fathers as breadwinners, but, at the same time, it shows that there are men who prefer to work less than full-time, and only a small minority of men desire to work five days per week. Most men envisioned working four days or less (Table 5.2) and wanted to spend this time on childcare.

Twelve men spent fewer days on childcare than they had wanted to, and only three men spent more days on childcare than they had wanted to. These first quantitative findings generated some questions regarding men and their role as fathers; for example, why do men often spend less time on childcare than they ideally want to? And how do men who care more than ideally desired view their role in and experience with childcare?

In the following sections, men's views on and experience with childcare and paid work in their transition to parenthood are explored. First, their initial ideals and views, as indicated before the birth of their first child, are described. Subsequently, their experience of the situation after the birth of their child is investigated, including insights and interpretations regarding these fathers' ways of dealing with traditional and modern norms on fathering. In conclusion, we present a reflection on fathers' ambivalence about traditional and modern father roles.

5.3.2. *Qualitative findings: men's views on fatherhood before and after the birth of their first child*

5.3.2.1. Men's views on fatherhood before the birth of their first child

The description of the perspective of future fathers is derived from individual interviews with men and from joint interviews with couples expecting their first child in wave one. Three aspects of the men's perspectives are described: (1) men's views on their role in childcare, (2) their views on work and career, and (3) men's views on their wife's role in childcare and paid work. This section ends with a description of the ambivalent feelings expressed by the future fathers, which hint at the way that they deal with the tension between traditional and modern norms of fathering.

Men's views on their role in childcare

Men's ideas about their life as a father differ to the extent to which they see themselves responsible for daily childcare. Some fathers see themselves intensively involved in daily childcare, whereas other fathers see themselves somewhat involved in childcare before and after their (full-time) work. Their motivations for being more or less involved in childcare are diverse. Some men expect to actively take part in childcare and expect it to be a joyful experience. These men were looking forward to closely care for their child. Sometimes they considered it to be pleasurable to care for their baby together with their wives and were also willing to hand in paid working time.

> *Quentin: It's just nice of course to be able to do that together for half a year [jointly care for their child]. I think it would be really nice to be with the baby two days a week. [I, jci, Quentin, 32 hrs & Quiana, 40 hrs]*

These men expected to share daily childcare with their partners, and some discussed their future division of childcare with their wives.

> *Axel: It's something I discussed thoroughly with Eileen, that I want to do everything, like take him to bed and give him a bath. [I ii, Axel 47 hrs & Eileen 32 hrs]*

For many of the fathers-to-be, they took for granted being actively involved in childcare. Many fathers also explicitly noted that traditional roles were not a guideline for their involvement in childcare. For some fathers-to-be, they took for granted sharing all tasks equally with their wife, and they did not see the need to explicitly negotiate about whom should do what in terms of childcare.

> *Ulric: We didn't negotiate over whether one of us should do just as much childcare as the other. That didn't need to be discussed, because we both knew from each other that we are going to do the same amount of childcare and in any case are both prepared to do it. [I jci, Ulric, 20 hrs & Ursula 30 hrs]*

Many fathers also were determined to fulfil their role as a father in a very different way than did their own fathers, who, in general, were not involved in hands-on care of their children but rather had the role as the family breadwinner. Many fathers-to-be expected the birth of their child to be a huge change in their lives, which they could not yet grasp. Some of them felt uneasy about taking care of their child.

> *George: Anyway, I think we'll be very busy with the baby the coming time, because everything is new and we won't be used to it. And I never really dare, I've never dared to really hold such a tiny baby, so I'll have to learn that too. [I jci, George 40 hrs & Gabrielle, 40 hrs]*

George, for example, felt tension about whether he would be able to give hands-on care to his baby in the near future; he expected that it would take some time to get used to the new situation and to learn new skills regarding care for a newborn. He further indicated that he did not prefer to take care of his child during the workweek himself.

> *George: Maybe I see it as quite a big responsibility [childcare] which at the moment I don't really feel I would want to take. […] I do want to be home every day but I don't think it would really suit me to look after our child full time. [I ii, George, 40 hrs & Gabrielle, 40 hrs]*

George wanted to be there for the child in the mornings and evenings but did not want to carry the responsibility by himself. He foresaw a role for himself in childcare not as the primary caregiver but rather as the secondary caregiver. George appeared to be quite ambivalent about his role in childcare and also was not sure what his responsibility for childcare would look like, except that he did not want to care for the child during his working time. Later in the interview, he reflected on the traditional and modern norms on fathering and suggested that his wife may have different ideas about her role in childcare and paid work than him; he left the decision about not working at all or working part-time or full-time up to her.

Virtually all fathers-to-be realized that the birth of their child would affect their life in some way, and they developed ideas on how they would make sure that their child was taken care of. Where some took it for granted that they would equally share the childcare with their wives and regarded this as natural and unproblematic, other future fathers preferred to spend less time on the care of their child, and some felt insecure about the childcare tasks awaiting them.

Men's views on their role in paid work

Men in this sample also had different ideas about their role regarding paid work after the birth of their child. Some perceived themselves as the main breadwinner and wanted to remain working full-time; other men intended to reduce their working hours.

One group of fathers-to-be regarded earning a family income as their main responsibility as a father, and they were focused on their full-time job. These men did not want to reduce their work hours to create time for childcare, and working full-time was taken for granted. First of all, they liked their jobs, and they felt responsible to secure the family income. Valentin, for example, stated that he wanted to keep working full time because he likes his job and he likes the fact that he makes good money so that his family can live comfortably. These fathers more or less implicitly assumed that their partners would be responsible for the child and the housework, and they expected to keep working as they did before the birth of their child.

Some men argued that their work and career was important for them, either to progress in their career, or due to the importance of social contacts or for their self-development. Some mentioned the feeling of a male duty of providing and caring for their family's financial and material well-being.

> *Frank.: My father, he was there for us at the weekend, so yes, I had the feeling that that gives a sense of pride, maybe that sounds stupid. And for me too, that as a man you just make sure everything is there....financially speaking. So then you've done a good job. [I ii, Frank 40 hrs & Frances, 16 hrs]*

While these men wanted to work full-time for various reasons, other men wanted to reduce their working time but foresaw problems in actually realizing their desire. Some feared that reducing their work hours would negatively affect their career, their job security, their income, or all of these. Therefore, they did not see realistic options to work part-time. For example, Axel saw no opportunity in his current job to work part-time. He was also pessimistic about searching for a new job that would enable him to work part-time.

> *Axel: Erm, well, that paid work, that's a bit of a problem, going down to three days… I really like this work that I do. I do wonder if I go down to three days a week, how I would do that, it's not possible in this job. I don't know if it's such a good idea looking for another job at this busy and exciting time when so much is already changing. I've still got a lot of holiday, so the coming year I'm going to take a day's holiday during the week. [I ii, Axel 47 hrs & Eileen 32 hrs]*

Although Axel regarded working part-time officially as impossible, he found another way by taking one vacation day per week, which allowed him to actively participate in caring for his son while keeping his full-time salary and job. Zachery also wanted to work in a more flexible way to combine his job with childcare, but he could not imagine earning less than a full-time salary.

> *Zachery : The point is that I want to work four days, otherwise the little one would really have to spend a lot of time at the crèche. I'd really like it too, one day off. Most men would, actually. But they don't actually think it's possible in my job. […] In theory it is possible, but, as far as the pay is concerned – I actually have to carry on doing the same work. And I don't mind giving some of it up, but I think starting off with twenty percent is a bit over the top. If you then do a lot of overtime, maybe I'd still end up working forty hours a week. [I ii, Zachery, 40 hrs & Zilia, 38 hrs]*

Zachery struggled with the demands he experienced in his job and his preference to stay at home while not being willing to earn less. His ambivalent feelings about his role as a future father are an example of the dilemma many fathers face. On the one hand, the contemporary father should take care of his child because that would be good for his child; on the other hand, he expects himself to earn a full-time salary and to fulfil a full-time workload while working in a more flexible way. Tending to favour traditional norms, Zachery and other men seem to not be ready to compromise their workload and income or to negotiate with their employer about these issues; they want to fulfil the full-time work norm and, as such, confirm their male identity.

Employers play an important role in facilitating part-time work, and they may or may not show supportive signals to their employees. Thus, Zachery considered searching for a new job and a new employer, where he would hopefully be supported in dealing with the tension between fulfilling the demands of being a good employee and still being active in childcare.

Another group of men wanted to reduce their work hours to care for their child, and they did not regard it as problematic. Ulric, for example, already worked part-time before the birth of his child because he was self-employed. As such, he was already used to not fulfilling the male full-time norm.

> *Ulric: My ideal is to look after our child one day, I think that would be nice to do. And in any case, our child has to be cared for, I'm one of the parents and therefore also responsible for our baby. [I, ii, Ulric 20 hrs & Ursula, 30 hrs*

These fathers-to-be liked their challenging and interesting jobs and, at the same time, were decisive about wanting to care for their child themselves. They either highly valued caring for their child, which is worth reducing their workweek, or they want to facilitate their wives having a job or career while not wanting their child in a nursery full-time.

In addition to reducing their work hours, they also found other ways to create more time for childcare, such as restricting themselves from working long hours and overtime or searching for a new job closer to home.

> *Warren: Yes, yes. My ideal divide isn't a reality yet, but I'm looking for another job close by so I don't have to spend as much time commuting. And I would like to work four days a week. So that's what I'm actively looking for. Wanda already works three days a week and she thinks that's ideal too. I think that we, that that will work itself out. [I ii, Warren 36 hrs, Wanda 36 hrs]*

Warren was optimistic that he could realize his ideal division of working four days a week.

Yet, other fathers-to-be had a very pragmatic view on work. They perceived paid work as mainly an instrument to earn money and indicated that they intended to work as little as possible to be able to care for their future child. Quentin saw work mainly as a necessity for supporting his family, which needed to fit in with the other demands of life.

> *Quentin: Mmm…well, I think a nice job is important, but it changes every year. Yes, I kind of freewheel from job to job. I haven't found anything I think I would like to do for the rest of my life, that I like and that I find useful. But my wife has. That has influenced the choice we've made, that she's going to work four days and I'm going to work three days. [I ii, Quentin, 32 hrs & Quiana, 40hrs]*

For some men, generating a good income through full-time paid work was less important because they had alternative sources of income, such as a heritage or money from having sold their business or house previously. For example, one father did not worry about earning a lot of money because he had already completed his career and had sold his business some years ago to have more spare time for the second half of his life. This small group of fathers was able to fulfil their breadwinner role without having to work full-time; therefore, they had time to fulfil an active fathering role on top of being a breadwinner in the traditional sense. Indeed, these fathers were very actively involved in raising their child, and one father even did more than half of the daily childcare because his wife worked more than he did.

For most future fathers, earning money and securing a safe family income appeared to become more important in this period of their lives. While Quentin mentioned his easy attitude towards work, somewhat later he noted that work and money became more important to him since he was expecting a child.

> *Quentin: Job conditions, paid parental leave and all that, I've started thinking more about it all. A year ago, when she wasn't pregnant yet, I may have been able to make the choice much more easily. The obligation to earn money has got bigger. You can't just say now that you just don't feel like doing something anymore. [I ii, Quentin, 32 hrs & Quiana, 40hrs]*

Although earning a safe income appeared to become more important in this stage, most men thought that it was not only the father's responsibility to earn a family income. Many fathers-to-be saw their spouses as (co-)responsible for the family income. In the next section, the father's ideas on the mother's role are described.

Men's views on the mother's role

The ideas that fathers-to-be ideas had about the mothers' roles, and their arguments for these ideas, are again as diverse as the father's views of their own roles. Regarding childcare, many men expressed expectations that their spouse was already better prepared or naturally better skilled for caring for their newborn. Some fathers-to-be saw their wives as mainly responsible for childcare, and they indicated that mothers play a special role in childcare. Varying reasons came up in the fathers' reasons for their preference about the mother's intensive involvement in childcare.

Some had romantic ideas about the role of the mother at home. Frank, for example, missed his own mother when he was younger and wanted to offer his child a safe and secure feeling with its mother.

> *Frank: I can still remember how nice that was, when you came home and your mum was there. And said: 'Do you want a cup of tea?' That sense of security is something I want to pass on to our children too. I was 16 when my father retired.. and those two were off again, a day here or there. Then I came home and thought, 'Where are they now?' That you thought, 'Blimey, they're not even there for me, or rather, my mother isn't there for me! And that's strange, that there would be a note for me saying, 'Your dinner's in the fridge, you can heat it up'. And I thought, 'What are you doing now!' [Ijci, Frank, 40 hrs & Frances, 32 hrs, child 8 mths]*

These fathers felt that mothers have something special to offer to their child and wanted their wives to mainly take care of their child.

> *George: And that she doesn't have to work, that she can be with our child, mmm...it might sound traditional but I just think it's nice that the man works and the woman looks after the child to a certain extent, I think it's good for the family. And it also depends on what you want yourself. So if she says I don't want to spend five days doing that [being a full-time mother], then she really doesn't have to do that as far as I'm concerned. [I ii, George, 40 hrs & Gabrielle, 40 hrs]*

George first seemed to be quite clear about his ideal for a rather traditional division of paid work and childcare as being the healthiest for the family. Then, he said that the division did not need to be as strict as in his parents' or grandparents' generation. He stated that his wife might have completely different ideas about her role as a mother, which could lead to a division in which she decides to work full-time instead of caring for the child. It seemed that he left the decision up to her, considering their plans to have her mother care for the baby while both worked full-time (temporarily). George's ideal division and ideas appear indeed very ambivalent and doubtful as to how he thinks they can best divide work and childcare. He seems quite sure about his own role as the breadwinner, while suggesting that the mother should be at home with their child, which is contrary to their plans.

At the same time that they prefer that the mothers care for their children, some men indicate that childcare does not really appeal to them as an interesting or attractive task. They may suggest that childcare is a female task.

Some men find that being involved in something other than just childcare makes their wives more attractive partners.

> *Xander: My ex-wife stayed at home when we had our baby, and I think that you do miss something socially. So when I came home all she talked about was our child and the topics of conversation…..well, they kept decreasing. That was a negative experience for me anyway. So I wouldn't want to do that again and Xylona certainly doesn't either. So on the one hand it is for me too, that attention for our child, finances and social aspects. [I ii, Xander 40 hrs & Xylona 40 hrs]*

Many future fathers argued that the most important thing was that the mother felt well and that this would lead to their well-being and the child's well-being. Some had the idea that their spouses would feel best when not working (too much), while others thought that the mother would feel best when she did work substantively.

> *Ulric: And of course it's nice for me too if she's enjoying it. Then your partner is more use to you of course. So as far as that's concerned, her ideal is also my ideal to a certain extent, that she has a good feeling about her work. Other than that it doesn't matter to me how many days she works. If she wants to work five days, then she has to work five days, and if she doesn't want to work, then we'll have a financial problem. But it's completely up to her of course, so it's not really anything to do with me, but three days is a happy medium. [I ii, Ulric 20 hrs & Ursula, 30 hrs]*

Many fathers-to-be also stressed that it was the mothers' own choice as to how much they cared for their child and how much they worked, like George and Ulric stated above. They had ideals about how they would prefer to arrange the care for their child but left a large say up to the mothers to decide about their own involvement in paid work and childcare.

> *Jacob: Ideally she looks after our child two and a half days, that means someone else has to look after our child the other two and a half days, otherwise there's no-one looking after our child. But if she says, 'I want to look after our child five days [and not work]', that's fine by me too, so it's up to her. But I think it would be ideal if she also worked a couple of days, that she doesn't just limit herself to our child. [I ii Jacob, 0 hrs temporarily & Janet 0 hrs, child 5 mths]*

The argument that it is 'mother's own choice' reflects their traditional idea of men being the breadwinner and also the bourgeois idea that men show their status by being able to have a non-working wife. In terms of the negotiation processes, men also improved their position. When not sharing half of the childcare activities, seeing paid work as the mother's free choice helps them to legitimize this situation.

Men first mentioned their own preference and then quickly added that it was ultimately the mother's choice, which may indicate their ambivalent feelings about their preferred role for their wife and for themselves.

Regarding the men's ideas on the future role of the mothers in paid work, many men took it for granted that their spouse would continue to work, at least part-time. For some, this was a necessity. For others, they felt that it was good for their wives' life satisfaction to get out of the house and do something else than just raise a child. Still others believed in sharing all responsibilities.

Most men wanted their wives to be (partly) involved in paid work but to different extents and for different reasons. Some saw their financial household situation as a joint responsibility and regarded the decision of whether the wives would change or reduce their paid work as a joint decision.

Ulric: Actually I'd rather you didn't just quit your job…that would have quite some impact on our finances, and you'd also be stuck at home and I don't think that's a good idea. Or if you'd like to swap that for just doing freelance work, then you'd have to discuss that with me because we share a home and are both liable for the mortgage. You can't quit your job scot-free if you've got a house, a cat and a baby on the way, you're not free anymore just to do your own thing. You share the responsibility, so you have to discuss it. [I jci, Ulric 20 hrs & Ursula, 30 hrs]

For some men, their wife's income was a financial necessity to pay their monthly costs. Their financial circumstances seemed to force these men to engage in a different division of work than intended.

For other men, earning a sufficient income was a less urgent factor. In these cases, financial needs and the mother's time for the child were weighed against each other, and they concluded that it would be possible to reduce her work hours but not his.

Adrian: I did say you could think about working one day less but we didn't get any further than that because then you said, yes but then we'd earn less and so on... [I jci, Adrian 38 hrs & Anne 32 hrs]

Adrian and Anne agreed that working fewer hours by the mother was something to be tested. He agreed to live with the financial consequences if Anne decided to reduce her working hours.

5.3.2.2. After the birth: Experiences of new fathers with childcare and paid work

In this section, the experiences of new fathers after their first child was born are presented. First, the experiences of the new fathers with the care of their child are described; subsequently, their views on work and career are presented. This section ends with the fathers' views on the new mothers' role in childcare and paid work.

New fathers' experiences with childcare

Similar to the diverse ideas that men have before the birth of their child about their role as father, after the birth of their child, fathers also experience their role as a father in different ways. Although many men expected that their life would change, for some new fathers, the change in their life because of the baby was larger than expected. Fathers who were actively involved in childcare found the continuous care that is required and their loss of spare time to be the hardest aspects of childcare. This made childcare a demanding and tiring task for many of the new fathers.

Ted: It is tougher than I expected. I hadn't thought I would have to give up so much of my free time, because when you come home he needs attention till seven o'clock, half seven. I thought he would be able to amuse himself more, but he demands attention all day. […] Now you don't know any better. But I found it difficult that I had less time for myself. [II jci, Ted 36 hrs & Tatyana 15 hrs, child 17 mths]

Some fathers needed to get used to childcare. To actually care for their baby for extended periods meant a lot of compromising for them.

Arlen: … that you have to give up so much, much more than I thought, if I'm looking after her all day then I'm not the one who decides how the day goes – that's the lady upstairs. That took some getting used to, you try at first to have it your way but that's not possible, of course. I hadn't expected it to be that difficult, I'm OK with it now, but it took some getting used to, especially the first, second and third months. [ii, Arlen 28 hrs & Dana 28 hrs; child 4 mths]

Arlen seemed to mainly experience a loss of control over spending his time and the loss of autonomy; the baby enforced her rhythm and needs, a character of childcare that he found difficult to accept.

Not all men found childcare to be harder than they had expected beforehand. For some fathers, it worked the other way around; they found childcare to be easier than they had expected beforehand.

> *Osbert: Yes, beforehand I thought it would be more difficult. I thought that changing nappies, and that sort of thing, that it must be terribly difficult. But it's getting easier all the time. And the other things I thought would be really difficult, in the end they were quite easy. [I jci, Osbert 32 hrs & Olivia 24 hrs, child 5 mths]*

Osbert was pleasantly surprised at how easily he learned practical childcare skills and indicated that every day he got more and more skilled.

Many of the new fathers, although it was not always (immediately) easy, genuinely enjoyed the time with their child. They experienced caring as a big surplus to their lives.

> *Axel: It enriches your life, I must say, because if you come home tired after a day's work and you see him sitting there, it gives you a boost, it's fantastic. [II ii, Axel, 32 hrs, Eileen, 24 hrs, child 4 mths]*

We saw some fathers take on an active role in hands-on fathering right from the start. They, for example, took four weeks of holiday to jointly do the childcare. However, other fathers did express less desire to spend a lot of time on childcare time. Many fathers were less involved in childcare than their spouses, and half of them were less involved in childcare than they had initially preferred.

This outcome may be partly understood in the following way. Many fathers assigned more priority to paid work than to taking care of their child. They were quite open about not being interested in spending much time with the baby. Sometimes this was because caring for the child, for them, did not count as an achievement. It was downplayed with words like 'only' taking care and not having 'done' something on a caring day. For example, Lance, who works morning and evening shifts in a construction store and babysits half days when his wife is at work, does not consider his caring day as 'work' but rather considers it as 'wasted time', a sign that it conflicts with his male identity.

> *Lance: I think ideally I want to work five days. I already notice that if I'm home with her on a Tuesday, at the end of the day I feel like I've achieved absolutely nothing, then I feel like the day has passed without a purpose. Yes, I'd like to carry on working. [II ii, Lance 38 hrs, Larissa 10 hrs, child 10 mths]*

Lance's interpretation of childcare as 'wasted time' hints at his preferences and his traditional understanding of his role as a father, namely that childcare is not regarded as work. In terms of the doing gender theory, he may not be able to confirm his male identity by taking care of his child.

A strategy that some fathers used to cope with this dilemma of not considering childcare as work was to stay at home to care for their child and at the same time try to do some work from home. This turned out to be difficult once the child became older and slept less or was less predictable. When the child demanded attention and did not sleep long enough to allow the father to finish his work, this caused a constant pressure for these fathers.

We also saw that some new fathers actually may have liked to care for their child but perceived the mothers to be the natural caretakers; meanwhile, they placed themselves in the secondary position in terms of the child and childcare.

> *Adrian: Well, she says that herself, I mean, that mothering comes naturally to a woman, I think. (…) That's also because of the expectation she had herself, already. She always said she wanted to be a mother, despite the fact that we're a modern couple. [II ii, Adrian, 32 hrs & Anne 24 hrs, child 11 mths]*

When describing mothers as natural carers, fathers often believed that they themselves provided less optimal care than did the mothers. Some men perceived themselves to be less attentive to their child's needs than the mother, and, when both parents were around, the mothers picked up tasks quicker. Defining their role as a second parent includes advantages that some fathers enjoyed.

Some fathers indicated that it was easy for them when the mother took over when they did not react or reacted slowly. The fathers could then take some time for themselves.

> *Patrick: Now,..eh..I.. on the one hand I like the fact that Peggy takes our child to bed nearly every evening. Erm, and I always like being able to have a bit of peace and quiet after dinner. So yes, maybe a form of laziness. And to be frank, I find it easy that she does it. [II ii, Patrick 40 hrs & Peggy 33 hrs, child 18 mths]*

While on the one hand, Patrick repeated that he was happy when his wife took over caring tasks, on the other hand, he called himself lazy. He seemed to feel guilty about taking a quiet moment for himself after dinner. Ambivalent feelings about how he should behave as a good father seemingly underlie his evening ritual. Some moments later, Patrick pushed his bad conscience aside by suggesting that if his wife was not satisfied that they could simply discuss it and change their division. More fathers reacted in this way, and they suggested that if their wives were not happy with the division as it was, it only needed to be mentioned for a change to be made.

However, actually changing the pattern of the mother as the primary caregiver and the father as the secondary caregiver appeared to be more complex than suggested. Since both spouses were often ambivalent about their role, it was not easy for them to break out of their automatic patterns, and making clear decisions about who should do what was difficult.

For example, some fathers did not attend to their child's needs as long as the mothers were available. Getting up early with the child is one of the tasks considered unattractive by most parents. Irvin does not see any problem, and he simply states:

> *I'm hard to wake up in the morning, luckily Ina is usually prepared to get our child up of a morning and make breakfast [II ii, Irvin 40 hrs & Ina, 25 hrs, child 15 mths]*

Ina indicated that she was not happy with this situation, especially the days that she worked late nights and Irvin did not hear the child crying. Similarly, Marc did not see any problems and states:

> *Yes, I'm not really interested in it [arranging a childminder]. Although as soon as it's an issue, 'Hey, it's got to happen', then we both go for it 100%." [I jci, Marc, 40 hrs & Margaret, 16 hrs, child 8 mths]*

With his statement, Marc may support his male identity by asserting not being so interested in organizing childcare. He shows his assumption that he would rather be the

secondary caregiver who jumps in when it is necessary but not take the primary responsibility.

These situations can be understood from the underlying notion that the mother is primarily responsible for the care of the child. Here we see two confronting layers of beliefs in the fathers. On the one hand, we find ideas of equality: fathers and mothers are equal and should both care for the child. When asked directly, many fathers will argue this way. In their behaviour, we find influence from a traditional father's perspective. They seem to believe that also when the mother has a paid job that it remains her responsibility to coordinate care and remind the father of the needs of his child. At the same time, ambivalence is also found in mothers' behaviour, and the fact that both young parents are ambivalent reinforces the pattern of keeping the mother as primarily responsible for childcare. On the one hand, mothers want to share childcare with the fathers, and, on the other hand, they often go along with the fathers' secondary or slower reactions without explicitly addressing them for change.

These two ambivalent layers of attitudes help us to understand why the gender mechanisms in these patterns appear to be very persistent and difficult to change. Even when parents have reversed their breadwinner role, as Bart and Babette did, gendered responsibilities seem to dictate their division of childcare. As soon as Babette comes home, Bart leaves the caring to her:

> *Bart: When she goes out of a morning, I take over, and when she comes back home then I let it go again, so to speak. Also to give her time with him and not to want to take over, or anything like that. So if she's there I let it go, so as much as possible just do your own thing. The housework doesn't always go that well, but anyway … I mean, for me it's mainly looking after the little one, that takes a lot of effort. [II ii, Bart 0 hrs & Babette 32 hrs, child 10 mths]*

Bart argues that he enables her to have time with the child; however he also leaves other tasks up to her, such as cooking the child's food and cleaning. For him, the child is the first priority, and combining childcare with doing the household chores is too demanding. These negotiations follow complex schemes. On the one hand, modern ideas about parent's responsibilities are taken as departure points by fathers and mothers, and, on the other hand, underlying traditional urges enter into their everyday routines and negotiation processes. Fathers generate gendered expectations about who will do what, which are then confirmed time and again and become difficult to change, with mothers expected to react first for organizing childcare and getting up with the child in the early mornings.

New fathers´ experiences with paid work

In the previous section, it appeared that new fathers found that having a child changed their lives at home considerably. This was often times not the case for paid work. For many men, their paid work situation basically did not change; they continued to see paid work as their main responsibility. However, some of the men did reduce their paid job by a few hours. Some experienced that combining paid work with childcare was still challenging.

For the men whose work hours remained the same, their experience of work did often change because they now had a little baby at home or in the nursery waiting for them. Zachery, for example, starts to be annoyed by his long commuting time from and to his work.

> *Zachery: What's more difficult than I expected is just the distance to my work, that's starting to …I'm finding it difficult to put up with. Before I used to think if it's five o'clock I don't necessarily have to go home. Chill out, hang around chatting, I don't do that as much anymore. If she goes to the crèche I start at about quarter past seven and I go home at quarter past four. [II ii, Zachery 34 hrs & Zilia 32 hrs, child 5 mths]*

Combining paid work with their new caring tasks was challenging for men because it was important for them to do their work while also being home in time. New fathers who remained focused on paid work as their main responsibility stressed financial arguments as their main reason for this focus after the birth. A child is expensive, and, as a father, they felt the need to provide a stable income. Financial arguments after the birth seemed to build an even stronger reason not to reduce their work hours. Osbert, for instance, stated before the birth that his ideal division of work was a 50-50 division, and the time spent on paid work was the main argument for their division of housework and childcare (he worked 36 hours and she worked 32 hours). In wave two, the financial component was added to his argument as to why he works more than his wife.

> *Osbert: Actually there are two things to consider. One is that she always wanted to work one day less and I like working all week. And there are also financial considerations, because I earn more, and a child is expensive, then I think it's handier if I work a bit more than she does. [II ii Osbert 32 hrs & Olivia 24 hrs; child 5 mths]*

Some fathers who before the birth said they wanted to reduce their work hours to create time for childcare did not (yet) take action to reduce their work hours, while it seemed to remain an ideal that they considered.

> *Kevin: We have sometimes said; then you do twenty hours and I will too, then we can take it in turns. But in my job – I'm an electrician – the boss doesn't want that. We liked the idea, but I'm sure there's no point asking my boss. [II ii, Kevin 40 hrs & Karen 0 hrs, child 16 mths]*

Throughout the interview, it appeared that Kevin was not very happy with his job, which included physical work while he has serious pain in his back. He hypothetically suggested that he was willing to work less and care for their child if his wife could provide more income. However, he immediately wiped away this suggestion by saying that for his wife it would be too difficult to leave the child behind and find work. For Kevin, as for other men, equally sharing childcare did not appear to be a realistic arrangement, perhaps because this ideal is very much in conflict with the demands he experienced at work and at home.

When prioritizing paid work, due to long commuting times or working overtime, some fathers miss the daily morning and evening routines with their child and mostly see their child only on the weekends. Like George, some of them doubted whether they would really like this highly specialized division in which they were hardly involved in their child's life. Before the birth, George was convinced about the priority he would assign to paid work and preferred his wife to take care of their child.

> *George: I don't know if it's a fair split, I have the feeling I should do more, and that's sometimes difficult in the relationship. But there are limits too, also because I work so much. That you try to work and that you also*

have to take the child to bed and do the dishes, at those times you can't combine it all. [II ii, George 60 hrs, Gabrielle 40 hrs, child 9 mths]

Now, after the birth, George indeed works long hours and hardly gives hands-on care to his child; however, he has doubts about not being around more often with his child.
Other fathers still tried to fulfil an active role in childcare as a modern caring father, while at the same time trying to fulfil their traditional role as the breadwinner and not reducing their work hours. They tried to be super daddy (see above). Patrick struggled to combine a long workweek with childcare and got burnout. Patrick's dilemma seems to be a rather deeply rooted internal conflict about the values in his life as new father. When asked what his motivation is for working long hours, he answers:

Patrick: ….. partly having a good career but also to be able to look after my child better and my wife as well, to be able to offer them more. I rate my father role very highly, I find it really important, that's what I work hard for. But I'm also motivated to work harder and harder. And I thought to myself hey, I'm doing exactly what my father did, and what I always said I wouldn't do. And yet I do it. [I jci, Patrick, 40 hrs & Peggy 40 hrs, child 6 mths]

Although he intended to fulfil his role in a different way than did his own father and share hands-on childcare more actively, he found himself following his father's model by mainly working long hours. For him, this ambivalence between his tendency to work a lot and his desire to share the hands-on care for his daughter resulted in the experience of a double workload, which resulted in high work pressure.

Some of the new fathers actually reduced their work hours, and most of them were happy with this new situation. They did think about and organize the circumstances in which they could share childcare with their wives.

Quentin: I don't know if it's all worked out how I expected, but I would never work five days while she is so young, unless I had no choice. I just really enjoy it. I can't imagine that if people have the choice, that a father would work five days. [II ii, Quentin, 30 hrs & Quiana, 36 hrs, child 5 mths]

Quentin reduced his work hours and enjoys childcare so much that he is pondering decreasing his work hours even more. He thinks about his preference for work on the one hand and spending time on childcare on the other hand. His considerations are the pleasure he has in taking care of his child, the interest in his job, the money earned and their standard of living, which they are used to as a family, and the optimal care for their baby.

Men's experiences with their wife's role as a mother

Apparently the ideas that some men had before the birth about the future mother's being the more natural caregivers indeed appeared to be true after the birth. Many men seemed to have this feeling, both men who planned to divide childcare more or less equally and those who cared for their child more days than did the mother, such as Quentin, who spoke about the true love between mother and child being closest.

Quentin: I can picture a mother's role, but not really a father's role. That playing is more my thing, trying to raise her to be a bit of a scamp, that's certainly in me. But I can see it now also with the breastfeeding for instance, that is so beautiful, so special. I don't know, love between mother and child. And I think that's something special that a father can't do. That's something…I think I can see that in my daughter, that the real

love is closer to the mother than the father. As much as it can be when you're six months old. [II ii, Quentin, 30 hrs & Quiana, 36 hrs, child 5 mths]

Also Adrian, who cares for his child one day a week and on the weekend, suggested that Anne was more responsive and a more natural parent just after saying they were both doing their fair share of childcare.

Adrian: Yes, it'll happen more often that Anne checks on him just a little more often if something's the matter, if he's ill for instance. […]. That mothering must be a female instinct I think, she says that herself. Maybe that's because she's the one who gave birth and was pregnant, and also because of what she expected, she always said she wanted to be a mother, despite the fact that we're a modern couple. She organizes everything for our child, sometimes I can just wait a bit longer before I do it and then Anne tells me to get a move on. That has happened a few times, yes. I think she takes it a bit more seriously, I take it seriously too but she takes it just a bit more seriously than I do. [II ii, Adrian, 32 hrs & Anne 24 hrs, child 11 mths]

Mothers are seen and valued as taking their job as a parent more seriously and picking up many aspects of childcare quicker and more often, which most men seem to like about their partners as mothers. At the same time, men experienced their wives as inspecting and making sure that they did their share of childcare.

Adrian: When it's really hard work because both the children are ill, if they don't want to sleep, then it's hard work for both of us, and then because Anne wants to do just that little bit more, then she starts resenting me, that I don't do enough. Then she gets up twice during the night and I maybe get up once. I keep quiet and don't get up and then she's bound to say something about it. [II ii, Adrian, 32 hrs & Anne 24 hrs, child 11 mths]

Men were also busy establishing their own way of caring, which they often contrast with the mother's way of caring.

Quentin: I do less with her when I'm at home on my own. And I'm a bit rougher, yes that sounds strange when it's about a child. But I play a bit wilder with her and I'm a bit more laid-back. At the same time I do take certain things into account. I do put her coat on when we go outside, but in the autumn it was borderline. Or for instance if Quiana isn't there then I wash her face with a flannel, with cold water. But if she is there I use warm water. Then I ask her, do you want hot or cold water and she says hot. It's funny, the difference. [II ii, Quentin, 30hrs & Quiana, 36 hrs, child 5 mths]

While being proud of his own way of caring, when Quiana is available, he asks and listens to her.

Many of the actively involved fathers needed to assert themselves and wanted to find their own way of caring that was independent of their wives. They were happy when their wife left the house, and they were alone with the child. Then they were free to spend their time and to fully care for the child in their own way. For example, Zachery reduced his work hours and stays with the child one day during the week.

Zachery: The first few times (childcare days) Zilia was still at home as well, I didn't like that at all, then I wanted to be alone with her. [II ii, Zachery, 32 hrs & Zilia 32 hrs, child 5 mths]

Edwin: Erm… I just like the fact that I can do it my way. And often, Elise thinks - maybe that's her maternal instinct - that things have to be done a certain way. And yes usually I do things because Elise does it that way. But I also like it on a Friday when I'm on my own, looking after the baby my way. And that goes really well. And he's perfectly happy, we have a good time together. That gives a good feeling, that I do it well in my own way, I think. [II, ii, Edwin, 36hrs & Elise, 36 hrs]

For some fathers, it appears to be a struggle to create their own way of caring. Having their own caring day when the mother is at work is the time when they can create their own routines with the child and are able to experiment with it.

Some fathers became insecure when the mothers were meddling with how they were caring. Other men felt frustrated when they could not care for the child in their own way without receiving critical comments, and some fathers then left the duties more and more up to the mothers.

Sometimes mothers also encouraged the fathers to spend time with the child, willingly or not. Tatyana forces Ted to take care of their child when Ted comes home from his work.

> *Ted: If I've had a busy day at work and I come home: here, you can have the baby... but then I've had a bad day at work and then I come home and still get the baby for two and a half hours and then I think: bleeh, but I don't say that of course.*
>
> *Tayana: Yes, then I've had him from 8 till 5 and I've had enough of him of course. If you've already had enough of him after two hours!*
>
> *Ted: No, but you push him on me for two and a half hours and then I have a ten-and-a-half-hour work day, that's how it is for me. [II jci, Ted 36 hrs & Tatyana 15 hrs, child 17 mths]*

Both, Ted and Tatyana appear to share the expectation that fathers should be involved in childcare, and both regard childcare as real work. These beliefs make Ted care for his child after work, although he expresses his unwillingness to do so. From a negotiation or exchange perspective, this way he can upgrade his share in the childcare, and he makes sure that she knows that it is a big sacrifice of his (see Koppetsch & Burkart, 1999)

When it is about childcare issues, men seem to regard the mothers as the expert who they listen to. For example, Arlen tried to involve his sister-in-law to care his child for a couple of hours on his caring day.

> *Arlen: What I sometimes try when I'm looking after the baby for the day is: Can't I phone your sister and ask her to babysit for an hour or so? Dana's not OK with that, 'We've agreed that you look after the baby and you can't change that if it's not really necessary.' And she's right. [II ii, Arlen 28 hrs & Dana 28 hrs; child 4 mths]*

Dana reminded Arlen of their agreements on childcare because she was afraid of him not taking up an active role as a father. Arlen found it difficult to have his own plans follow the child's rhythm, and he wanted some time for himself. Both agreed with the decision that he needed to arrange himself with the child without making additional use of her sister as a babysitter. Their ideal and agreement on an equal division of childcare seemed to force them to take a difficult route. If he engages a babysitter on his caring day to make his life easier, they would not share in childcare equally anymore because she seems to never have considered engaging a babysitter on her caring day. And he goes along with her view on this.

In discussions with mothers about how to raise their child, it seems that many men are finally convinced by the mothers. Maybe this is also because the fathers feel that they have no right to speak up because of their smaller contributions.

> *Axel: Yes, and if Eileen explains that hey, I think it's important he's awake. If he falls asleep after two minutes that's not good either. Then you're better off changing his nappy even though it doesn't need changing. And I usually agree with her reasoning, she's thought it through, she thinks about things. [II ii, Axel, 32 hrs & Eileen, 24 hrs, child 4 mths]*

Almost all fathers after the birth were convinced that the mother was capable of giving something to the child that they could not give. Oftentimes, the men said things like being a mother is something intrinsic to women or that the father simply cannot give motherly love. Also, when fathers are involved in child care, many of them know that they do it differently than their partners; when child care is being discussed, the mother oftentimes is perceived as the expert, and, in situations of doubt, she gets the last say in the matter.

Men's ambivalence about being a father before and after the birth of their first child

It is striking that all men and fathers revealed ambivalent feelings about their role as father before and after the birth of their first child. For example, men who worked full-time and planned to remain working full-time felt that they would contravene current norms about fathering. They referred to their proposed division as old-fashioned and seemed to feel the need to defend their preference for a traditional division. They then pointed to either their employer's resistance towards part-time work or to their wives' preference for childcare or lesser motivation for paid work.

Other fathers who agreed that they wanted to share all tasks with their wives, and thus also childcare, seemed to often feel ambivalence about this sharing preference. They seemed to regard sharing childcare with their wives as a requirement of a contemporary father, while not always being internally convinced of this responsibility for themselves. The motivation of some men for sharing childcare was to help their wives proceed with their careers, while at the same time finding it unattractive to spend much time on hands-on childcare instead of paid work.

It also appeared that some fathers felt the need to become a "super daddy", similar to 'super mommies, who feel that they should have successful careers while also being fully available for their child. Yanis, for instance, tried to juggle his career, the career of his wife and the care for their child before the birth.

> *Yanis: Well I think it's important to look after our child. I also think it's important that our child is looked after by us, and I also don't want that Yasmin doesn't have the chance to do the things she wants to do for her career. If you want to get ahead in your work, then you have to put in quite a lot of hours. […] Having to go to and from the crèche means you can't both work four nine-hour days, so that's why we're going to do it like this (Yasmin plans to work 4x8 and Yanis 4x9). [I, ii, Yanis 36 hrs, & Yasmin, 36 hrs]*

Yanis' account shows how men presented logical stories about their view on what is the best way to care for their child. However, when looking at the details of Yanis' story, his ambivalence is shown by the fact that on the one hand he embraces a new definition of fathers who are actively caring for their baby and supporting their wife's career, while on the other hand he keeps a full-time job (almost) and continues to work more hours than Yasmin.

For some men, ambivalence is shown by very open ideas about their own and the mother's involvement in work. They have doubts about what would be a good way to

divide work and care, such as Warren, who can imagine a 5-2, 2-5 or 4-3 day division of paid work with his wife. He does not like his current job, which makes him ready to even switch to a reversed breadwinner arrangement in which he would work only two days, and his wife would work five days.

> *Warren: I'd rather be a good father than always coming home exhausted and not enjoying my work. So I'd rather bring that more in balance, that my work is enjoyable too. If the circumstances were different then I'd want it to be different too, you know, then as far as I'm concerned it could be 5/2. With me working five days. Yes. Or if I could earn a decent wage in two days that would be alright too but … that's actually still open. I don't really have a fixed… a fixed idea of that. But I do know that with the type of work I do now, going part time is more difficult than in Wanda's job, or she finds it easier, that could be true too of course. If it works out that way, then that would be just as good: if Wanda worked five days, and I worked two that would be possible. We haven't really got a clear picture of that. [II ii, Warren 44 hrs & Wanda, 31 hrs, child 5 mths].*

However, although Warren mentions a 2-5 day division of work with his wife as a theoretical option and repeats that they do not have a definite idea about their division of work and childcare and does not like his job too much, he works five days a week, while Wanda works four days and takes on the main role of childcare.

After the birth, men kept feeling ambivalent about the role of their wives. As with Warren and Yanis above, they saw their wives as special natural caregivers while also wanting to care for the child themselves and to build up their own bond with the child. They wanted to provide a good income for the family while also wanting to enable their wives to continue with their career. These desires of the new fathers did often conflict with one another, which often led the fathers to prioritize their traditional responsibility as the breadwinner. Especially when their wives also felt ambivalence about how to best care for their child, it was hard for fathers to assure their new role as an actively caring father because their ambivalence was fed by their wives ambivalence.

5.4. Conclusions and discussion

This chapter investigated men's views on their future role as fathers and their actual experience of being a father. Multiple methods were used for this purpose. The quantitative findings show that only half of the fathers in this sample realized their preferred amount of childcare across the transition to parenthood. After the birth, most men spent less time on childcare and more days on paid work than they had desired before the birth. The subsequent qualitative investigations showed that the father's intentions before the birth and their experiences with their role as a father, in terms of childcare and paid work, after the birth were diverse. They ranged from wishing to actively participate in or share the childcare equally with their spouse to leaving childcare to the mother.

Almost all fathers expressed and showed ambivalent feelings about their role as a father. On the one hand, most of them wanted to share hands-on childcare with their wives, while, on the other hand, they felt that their prime responsibility was the family

income. Fathers who desired an active role in childcare were prevented from reducing their work hours by feeling responsible for the family income. Others felt that their wife could offer their child special care that they could not.

Fathers carefully deliberated about their primary and secondary responsibilities. Weighing the costs and benefits of their work and caring arrangements while feeling ambivalence about their own role often led the fathers to become less involved in childcare than they had desired. Why some fathers realized a more active role in childcare and experienced less hindrance from their ambivalent feelings appears to be due to several factors. It started with men's positive expectations about doing childcare themselves and having a supportive wife who also wanted to remain working and contribute significantly to the household income. Moreover, men were more or less afraid of negative consequences for reducing their work hours; research indicates that, for example, sectors and also managers differ in the way that they support work-life balance policies.

Deciding to not reduce work hours or acting less active and quick in hands-on childcare caused feelings of guilt for some fathers. While they accepted fairness as the norm for the division of work with their spouse, they did not deliver their part, which then made them feel guilty. Other fathers simply stated that they did not care as much about the care of their child as the mother did, and, as such, found a way to legitimize their smaller input in childcare while not having to feel guilty about it.

Some men also tried to be a 'super daddy'; they tried to fulfil the traditional and modern roles at the same time by working full-time and being fully involved in childcare. They did not want to give up on certain demands. This led some fathers to experience enormous pressure and burnout syndrome. Some fathers valued their wives as natural caregivers and delegated the final responsibility for the child to the mothers by, for example, reacting less quickly to the needs of the baby. Other fathers wanted to build up their own way of caring, and they made sure that they had autonomy in childcare by guarding their own time with the child when mothers were outside of the house. However, mothers also felt ambivalence about the fathers' involvement in childcare and, for example, were meddling with their way of caring. Fathers were very susceptible to the ambivalent signals of the mothers, which often triggered them to take on a less active role in hands-on fathering.

The 'maternal gate–keeping' mechanism suggests that the mothers' beliefs and behaviours play a central role in allowing men to become involved in childcare. The opposite of the 'maternal gate-keeping' mechanism, the woman demand-husband withdraw' pattern, predicts that women would demand their husbands' involvement in childcare, and the fathers would withdraw from their wives' demands.

Although 'maternal gate keeping' behaviours, such as meddling with the husband's care and correcting them, and also the demand-withdraw' patterns did occur, our results suggest that it is rather a more complex interplay of ambivalent beliefs about the roles of women and men. Consequently, men and women make half-hearted actions, which keep the men from getting more involved in childcare. Indeed a man's involvement in childcare is mediated by his relationships with his wife and is also influenced by asserting

his own way of caring. It is exactly the father's ambivalence that leads them to only implicitly negotiate about childcare.

As we saw in the previous chapters, the women demand-husband withdraw patterns are indeed occurring in the couples negotiation process. However, fathers, in their view, do not speak about withdrawing behaviour; they see their behaviour in different ways. When reacting slowly or when not reacting to half-implicit calls for help by their wives, they see it as being 'less interested', 'approaching childcare differently' or they 'would do tasks if it were indeed (urgently) necessary'.

As the ambivalent feelings of fathers may be an indication that fathers on the one hand seem to follow and believe in modern norms of fathering, including an active role in hands-on childcare, on the other hand they still comply with the more traditional norms that make them responsible for bringing home the bacon. Combining the demands of full-time paid work with active childcare is a big challenge, not only for mothers but also for fathers. Moreover, from a doing-gender perspective, modern fathering norms, including active childcare, may be conflicting with men's needs to confirm their male identity as the main breadwinners just as the mother's childcare conflicts with her involvement in paid work in a cultural sense.

However, Brandt en Kvande (1998) showed that gender identity could be adapted by including new elements in it, i.e., caring for children. In this way, the male gender identity can be contained. However, it appears that old elements are not excluded or changed, and the breadwinner responsibility remains; fathers may somehow find that they have to become super daddies. Clinging to this old norm of the hard-working man who earns a family income and is prepared to work long hours to advance his career while also including new norms makes fathers feel ambivalent about what to do (see also Duyvendak & Stavenuiter, 2004) .

Trying to explain this ambivalence further, we suggest that different layers of attitudes are in effect at the same time. Recent studies hint at the existence of inner traditional norms that one is not aware of and the existence of official or outer attitudes at the same time. These studies hint at stronger associations between concepts according to traditional norms than associations of concepts following modern norms. The results, which show that people still have largely traditional attitudes when measuring these unconscious aspects, often times surprise the tested people about themselves (Bar-Anan & Nosek, 2009). In social psychological research, the intensity (Fazio, 1986) or centrality (Boninger, Krosnick & Berent, 1995) of attitudes, i.e., how important are equal gender roles to men or women, have been measured. These studies suggest that people possess central attitudes and peripheral attitudes that are less important to the person. The expectation is that the central attitudes are more closely linked to their own behaviour than are the peripheral attitudes. Fathers may have equal attitudes towards gender roles but may not find them important enough to also align their behaviour with them when this means investing more effort. Indeed, Van der Vinne & Brink (1997) found that men did not attach too much importance to their attitudes towards gender roles in general. These differences between implicit and explicit attitudes, or between general and specific

attitudes, may cause people to feel ambivalence. Fathers seem to behave according to implicit attitudes rather than according to their explicit attitudes.

Men's and women's implicit (inner) and explicit (outer) attitudes towards gender and their roles as mothers and fathers may explain the ambivalence that we found in the men and women in our sample; however, further research is needed to find evidence for this idea. This research should focus on how the centrality of men's attitudes about fathering may allow us to find out how important fathers find their involvement in childcare or paid work and how these attitudes and centrality change over time, e.g., across the birth of their first child. Two important questions that remain in this regard are to what extent do these fathers strive to be involved in childcare, and what costs are they willing to pay for their active involvement?

The costs of active involvement may be high in times of transition between traditional and modern roles. Active involvement of the father in childcare is not taken for granted, and working less than full-time and not pursuing a career harms expectations about men being the main breadwinner. Because the male identity needs to be confirmed by full-time work and not by caring activities, it may be too costly for fathers to invest more time in childcare. The costs of change are higher because societal norms are still ambivalent, and social institutions, i.e., nurseries, parental leave regulation and baby groups, are not yet fully prepared to support a new kind of family life in which the father plays a central caring role. For example, some fathers were certain that their employer would not take them seriously if they were to ask for a shorter workweek, or they believed that reducing work hours would be detrimental to their career. To achieve an active caring role, these fathers needed courage, self-confidence and determination about their role towards their spouse, their employer, and their wider social network and family. These fathers may be considered as 'early adaptors' when comparing sharing childcare by fathers and mothers to the diffusion of innovations (Rogers, 1962). For other fathers, who are less inclined to adopt innovative arrangements of childcare and paid work, a critical mass may be necessary to break away.

Several methods were combined to examine the view of fathers across their transition to parenthood. Material from individual in-depth interviews with fathers and also joint interviews with the couple were analysed along with brief questionnaires. This extensive material enabled us to describe the process of becoming a father, from their ideals, expectations and insecurities before the birth of their first child to their actual experiences after the birth. These two phases converge with the findings of a current systematic review of becoming an involved father of a child (Goodman, 2005). Goodman describes four phases: entering with expectations, confronting reality, creating one's own role of involved fatherhood and reaping rewards. Future research is needed to include a longer timeframe to investigate what happens during the latter phases in which the father's involvement is created and reinforced. How is the father role created and negotiated when the child becomes older? In this study, only fathers of children up to 18 months of age participated. It is possible that fathers have more opportunities to share care equally when their child becomes older and is biologically less dependent on the mother for feeding and nurturing.

Generalisation of these findings is limited. The sample consisted of 32 Dutch fathers, with a larger proportion of men from relatively high social-economic status, and the research took place in the Dutch cultural context, which includes a distinctive part-time tradition in which part-time work is largely accepted by women and also by men in certain sectors. A comparative study on how fatherhood evolves in countries with other institutional and cultural arrangements could reveal valuable insights.

Employers, national leave facilities, and, especially, mothers play similarly important roles in stimulating or preventing the father's involvement in childcare as the father's own steps and courage in creating an innovative arrangements of childcare. Half of the fathers in our sample realized their ideal division of childcare, while half of them did less childcare and worked more hours than they desired. This means that there is room for fathers to expand their childcare responsibility even further than they have actually done in the last few decades.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and discussion

6. Conclusion and discussion

6.1. Introduction

The objective of this thesis was to increase our understanding of couples' negotiation processes regarding the division of work (paid work, housework and childcare) during their transition to parenthood and to provide insight on how these processes contribute to couples' division of work.

The persistent gendered nature of the division of labour between men and women has been studied by family and labour market researchers since the 1960s. Countless studies have investigated the gendered division of paid and unpaid work between men and women, but most of these studies focused on the outcomes and analysed the economic or normative factors that explain couples' division of work, often using cross-sectional data. This thesis focused on the underlying processes that lead couples to a certain division of paid and unpaid work using longitudinal data during the transition to parenthood.

Negotiation processes were defined as ongoing dynamic processes in which couples with similar or dissimilar preferences arrive at a certain division, either implicitly or explicitly. It was assumed that divisions of work develop dynamically and crystallise over time and that they are negotiated on a daily basis and become overt during the transition to parenthood when couples need to divide new childcare tasks.

To unravel these negotiation processes, both quantitative and qualitative data were used. First, the division of work of Dutch couples in their transition to parenthood was described by quantitative panel data. Subsequently, in-depth interviews with couples before and after the birth of their first child were analysed, including individual interviews with both spouses and joint couple interviews.

6.2. Summary of findings

6.2.1. Chapter 2.

In Chapter Two, data from two waves of the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS, 2005; 2007) were used to quantitatively analyse the changes in couples' division of paid and unpaid work during their transition to parenthood. The results show that the birth of the first child had a major impact on Dutch couples' division of paid work: women reduced their work hours considerably after the birth of their first child. For fathers, however, the different stages of family formation did not noticeably change their number of paid work hours. First–time fathers worked only slightly fewer hours (1.53 hours) than men without children. Furthermore, the division of unpaid work became more unequal

after the birth of a first child. The largest impact on the division of work was couples' previous division of work and the birth of children.

In line with findings from previous research, Chapter Two showed that the birth of a first child is a critical moment in couples' division of work that crystallises a gendered division of labour (cf Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006). Women's and men's hourly wages did not explain their division of unpaid work or their number of paid work hours in wave 1. However, women's hourly wage contributed slightly to a smaller decrease in work hours over time, while men's hourly wage contributed slightly to men's increase of work hours over time. The progressive attitudes of women only influenced their own number of work hours, and not their division of housework. Men's attitudes had no influence on couples' division of work.

Furthermore, couples' attitudes and their actual division of labour appeared to be contradictory. Couples' attitudes were generally very modern; only 5% of men and women indicated traditional attitudes towards gender roles, but only 25% of couples shared housework equally. Before the birth of their first child, more than half of the couples divided paid work equally (53%), but after the birth of the first child, this number dropped to only 16% in the sample of first-time parents.

There were major changes in couples' division of work during their transition to parenthood, but what exactly was happening could not be explained by these longitudinal quantitative analyses. Therefore, the remaining chapters of this thesis aimed to increase understanding of the processes that lead couples to their division of paid and unpaid work. The focus was on the stage at which couples have children, because important shifts in couples' divisions of work occur in this stage. The qualitative in-depth analyses moved beyond the above-mentioned theories by exploring the processes underlying couples' division of work. For example, the deeper mechanisms of couples' 'doing gender' and 'doing' mother- and fatherhood were investigated.

6.2.2. Chapter 3.

In Chapter Three, couples' decision-making processes before having their first child were studied in depth. Three questions were answered: first, how the decision-making processes of couples can be characterised in terms of implicit and explicit strategies; second, how couples deal with challenges in their division of work; and third, which kinds of divisions are linked to implicit or explicit decision-making processes.

It was shown that most couples generally did not explicitly talk about their division of work. When they moved in together, couples usually discussed their division of paid work and housework in rather vague terms, such that both spouses knew approximately how the other felt about dividing paid and unpaid work. In general, couples only started talking more plainly about paid work when they faced a new situation, e.g., expecting their first child. The division of housework was only discussed explicitly when one of the partners, usually the woman, felt frustrated about what was perceived as an unequal division of labour.

Overall, three patterns of decision-making were distinguished that also appeared to be related to certain divisions of work: implicit decision-making, related to a traditional division of work; explicit decision-making, linked to egalitarian divisions of work; and a mixed style of decision-making, related to a 'mixed' or transitional way of dividing work--neither fully traditional nor fully egalitarian.

Generally, a majority of this sample applied implicit decision-making. Couples were not always satisfied with their division of work and often intended a division that was more equal than the one they experienced in practice. A general tendency among couples was to say that their division of domestic work was 'not worth mentioning'. This lack of explicit discussion of these issues hints at the persistent impact of gender roles. However, the largely implicit decision-making processes may also be interpreted as a 'myth of good relationships'. Spouses may avoid bringing up issues because they feel that explicit bargaining is incompatible with a romantic relationship. However, romanticising their relationships and refraining from explicit negotiation typically resulted in traditional and gendered divisions of work. Using implicit strategies and involving spouses ad hoc in performing tasks instead of initiating a general discussion on how to divide housework often resulted in more gendered specialisation than desired by the couples.

6.2.3. Chapter 4.

In Chapter Four, couples' negotiation processes about their division of work were analysed before and after the birth of their first child. Chapter Two pointed out that a majority of couples developed new divisions of work after the birth of their first child. This chapter investigated how couples' intended and unintended changes in their division of work after the birth of their first child could be understood according to the nature of their negotiation processes. Negotiation processes can be viewed as an intermediate mechanism between the gendered beliefs of men and women and their actual division of work.

Four kinds of negotiation processes were distinguished, depending on the type of division and whether the couples realised their intended division: (1) intended specialisation, (2) unintended- specialisation, (3) intended equal sharing and (4) unintended reversal of the breadwinner role. Types 1 and 3 realised their intended division of work. Types 2 and 4 did not achieve their intended division. Type 4 included couples who, due to circumstances such as unemployment of the husband, temporarily chose the mother to be the breadwinner.

In unintended specialisation couples, ambivalent feelings about their current roles as mothers and fathers prevailed. Moreover, powerful workings of gendered mechanisms were observed, which included a cumulative reinforcement of couples' negotiation processes. After the birth of a child, a sequence of path-dependent events was initiated that led to an increasingly skewed division of work. When couples had a slightly skewed division of childcare and the mother spent more time at home with the child, childcare increasingly became her responsibility as she became more skilled and knowledgeable

about of parenting. New parents' ambivalence about their roles as good mothers or good fathers fuelled this process of the 'gendered kick-off'. This process was often started during maternity leave, and fathers gradually became relatively less skilled and needed more instruction. Consequently, fathers easily took on a non-executive role in childcare. After some time, the mothers' childcare routines, skills and timely responses to the child were seen as a social fact, and both spouses accepted this new situation with the mother as primary caregiver and the father as secondary caregiver. This mechanism is referred to as 'gendered kick-off', because the gendered start in couples' division of childcare is continued by small and implicit decisions that contribute to the accumulation of greater specialisation.

Not all couples experienced a gendered kick-off mechanism. Couples who deliberately chose to have both spouses invest in learning and sharing childcare tasks took gendered challenges into account and tried to counteract them. These couples also experienced accumulating patterns, but towards a more equal sharing of childcare. For them, positive experiences with sharing paid work and care motivated them to continue investing in ways to share tasks.

6.2.4. Chapter 5

In Chapter Five, men's views on and experiences with their role as fathers before and after the birth of their first child were investigated to understand their involvement in the care of their first child versus their involvement in paid work. Men had diverse ideas about their role as fathers regarding their involvement in childcare and paid work, and their experiences after the birth were similarly diverse.

Almost all fathers expressed ambivalent feelings about their role as a father, weighing responsibility for the family income against their involvement in hands-on childcare. Some fathers deeply enjoyed childcare and considered reducing their work hours even more, while others were struggling with feelings of wasting their time when taking care of their child rather than doing paid work. In practice, fathers found it difficult to combine these two tasks. Some men tried to be a 'super daddy', fulfilling their traditional breadwinner role and the role of a modern, caring father and refusing to give up on some of these demands.

Some young fathers reduced their work hours to create time for childcare, while still others continued working full-time and simply had little time left for the child. However, most of the time being little involved in childcare caused moral dilemmas for fathers. Fathers considered their division of work and wondered whether they should work fewer hours and become more involved in childcare. Others regarded themselves as being lazy for not spending enough time on care for their child. At the same time, some fathers stated that they were just not as interested in the care of their child as the mother was. These fathers often let mothers take the initiative in caretaking tasks, while sometimes enjoying the extra spare time this created.

It seems that fathers, on the one hand, believe in modern norms of fathering, including an active role in hands-on childcare; on the other hand, they also try to comply with the traditional norms of fathering that prescribe their full-time work and responsibility for breadwinning. It is suggested that attitudes of contemporary couples exist on an inner core or personal layer and an outer peripheral or general layer. Ambivalent feelings may arise from differences between general or peripheral attitudes and inner or personal attitudes when applied in one's own life. Fathers' ambivalence about their roles before and after the birth of their first child often prevents them from realising their intended division of work. Only half of these 32 fathers realised their preference with regard to childcare, and half of them care for their child less than they preferred and work more than they desired before the birth.

6.3. Conclusions

6.3.1. Transition to parenthood crystallises gender roles

The birth of the first child has a crucial effect on Dutch couples' division of work: mothers reduce their paid work hours, whereas fathers continue working the same amount of hours. In turn, their division of housework and childcare also becomes more unequal after the birth of a first child. These findings are in line with previous studies that found the transition to parenthood to be a critical moment in the development of unequal routines in the division of work (Baxter, Hewitt, & Haynes, 2008; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; 2009; Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007).

A majority of the couples who participated in this research followed a process of traditionalisation during their transition to parenthood. A combination of factors contributed to this process. First, couples experienced ambivalent feelings regarding their roles as men and women, mothers and fathers. This ambivalence is supported by institutional arrangements, which often do not consistently facilitate parents sharing paid work and childcare equally--for example, the availability of maternity leave but not paternity leave. The ambivalent feelings of individual spouses led to mechanisms such as largely implicit negotiations, the cumulative effects of small decisions, and the gendered kick-off.

6.3.2. Ambivalence

A majority of the fathers and mothers are ambivalent about their role and their division of work, which makes it hard for them to change the pattern of a gendered division of work. In addition to their desire to share childcare equally, many fathers feel that earning a family income is their main responsibility. At the same time, mothers feel they can

provide the best care for their child. These ambivalent feelings pervade couples' negotiation processes throughout their transition to parenthood and enhance their gendered divisions of work. Some couples, however, explicitly address their ambivalence and make explicit agreements. As such, they are able to realise equal divisions of work.
Intra-personally, the prevalence of modern norms of equality conflict with the still-important guiding principle of traditional gender roles. On the one hand, gender norms have been broadened for both sexes in contemporary Western societies. Mothers are expected to contribute to household income, just as men are expected to contribute to housework and childcare. However, it appears that men and women in general still feel most responsible for their traditional domains. Indeed, on the one hand, women and men are happy with their paid work arrangements in which men mainly work full-time and women have small part-time jobs. On the other hand, 31% of women indicated a willingness to increase their work hours, and 17% of men encouraged their wives to increase their working hours (Keuzenkamp et al, 2009).

The following points may clarify the ambivalence of many couples. The conflicting traditional and modern norms may operate at different levels, as studies on general and personal attitudes suggest. Attitudes have multiple layers and can be conflicting or dissonant. For example, the final responsibility for paid work, housework and childcare still appears to be based on deeply ingrained traditional gender roles. Although both spouses may agree in abstract terms on the norm of equality, they may feel differently about their personal situation. Indeed, studies on attitudes towards family issues found significant differences between personal and general ideas (Thornton, 1989; van der Vinne & Brink, 1997).

The prevailing ambivalence about gender roles is a major source of implicit negotiations. It affects the tyranny of small decisions, and it feeds the gendered kick-off.

6.3.3. Implicit negotiation processes

In general, the negotiation processes of couples with respect to the division of paid and unpaid work were found to be largely implicit. A majority of couples only engaged in explicit decision-making when frustrations had piled up or when large decisions about changes in paid work or childcare needed to be made because of the birth of their first child. Often, couples assumed that they knew the preferences of their spouses about their division of work, including childcare. They also assumed that their division of work would develop naturally without discussions or agreements.

We suggest two explanations for the tendency of many couples to implicitly deal with these issues. First, the myth of a good relationship: in the ideal romantic relationship, mundane household tasks do not need to be discussed. Second, it is easier for couples to follow internalised gendered scripts in their daily negotiations. For example, the time squeeze and pressures arising from the birth of their first child increase their tendency to follow gendered paths. Only couples who were determined to break gendered patterns in their divisions of labour applied explicit negotiation.

6.3.4. Gendered kick-off

The mechanism of the gendered kick-off leads new parents to gradually adopt a more traditional division of work than they initially desired. The mechanism is simple: new mothers establish routines during their maternity leave, and they subsequently become more skilled in childcare than new fathers. This head start makes it more practical in many situations for the wife to take care of the child. Consequently, the main responsibility for these new tasks shifts towards the mother.

Many couples considered the specialised roles regarding paid and unpaid work after the birth of their first child to be a temporary solution for as long as they had small children. Specialisation is applied as a coping strategy for dealing with the increased workload after the birth. Considering specialisation as a temporary solution is also a way of coping with the inconsistency between desires and one's actual division. However, contrary to many couples' ideas, specialisation is often a kick-off to more gendered divisions in the long run.

Other coping strategies detected in previous research on working women also hint at the gendered nature of couples' allocation of housework and childcare. For example, Groenendijk (1998) found that women were delegating or outsourcing tasks, scaling back their standards, working harder, or resigning themselves to not changing their arrangements.

6.3.5. Cumulative effects and the tyranny of small decisions

Kahn's (1966) 'tyranny of small decisions' pointed out the workings of undesired cumulative processes. In a couple's mundane allocation of housework and childcare tasks, this tyranny led to the undesired accumulation of many small tasks that produced gendered divisions. Couples who regarded decisions about housework and childcare as 'not worth mentioning' implicitly made small decisions and 'automatically' followed gendered norms. In contrast, couples who regarded the division of each task as part of a cumulative and larger division of work, and made explicit agreements on how to divide small tasks, were better able to achieve their intended division.

This tyranny of small decisions and accumulation helps to explain why couples who tried to share work (more) equally often did not succeed. Each small decision itself did not appear to be harmful, but the accumulated outcome appeared different and more gendered than initially desired. This also hints at the strong implicit influence of gendered prescriptions or identities on spouses' behaviour.

Therefore, the theory on undesired accumulation may need to integrate the workings of 'doing' gender or gender roles. We found the accumulation of small decisions to work mainly in traditional gendered directions, i.e., women doing increasing amounts of childcare tasks over time. However, couples who reversed their gender roles (because the husband was unemployed and took care of the child) did not experience this

accumulation of household and childcare tasks on the men's side. The men´s behaviour followed the traditional gender mechanisms. They cared for their child during the day and compensated for this 'unmanly' behaviour by leaving the care to their wives as soon as they came home. Consequently, small childcare tasks did not accumulate more than desired on the fathers' side. The men´s gendered behaviour counteracted the tyranny of small decisions. The need to reinforce one's gender identity, especially when performing tasks not in line with traditional roles, countervailed the cumulative nature of small decisions.

6.3.6. Have we changed in the last 25 years?

Focusing on changes in couples' negotiation processes over time, the findings of this study may be compared to Komter's (1985, 1989) findings in the 1980's on couples´ underlying mechanisms of power, including their division of work. Her conclusion--that latent power ruled within couples, which she referred to as 'the power of taken-for-grantedness' or 'hidden power'--seems comparable to the current findings on couples' implicit styles of decision-making.

When comparing Komter's conclusion on the situation in the 1980s to the findings from this study, it may seem that little has actually changed in couple's negotiation processes. The current study found that couples' negotiations are still largely implicit, while explicit negotiations are needed to realise equal divisions of work. Gendered divisions are still a general phenomenon in contemporary households. At the societal level, women still lag behind men in terms of income, societal status and power. This inequality at the societal level is partly a consequence of couples' divisions of work at the micro level.

However, the division of work among couples has significantly changed in the past three decades. Gender roles have broadened, and current gender norms include less specialised roles for women and men. Contemporary couples, like couples with young children, divide their work more equally than couples did in the 1980s.

Indeed, the developments of the previous decades may suggest that the move towards more equal gender roles is not yet complete. For example, women recently achieved the same level of education as men. We may argue that Dutch institutions are in a transitional stage of adapting to new family arrangements. This transitional nature of institutions may make (partly) gendered specialisation a less costly option for contemporary parents than sharing childcare equally. Couples who wish to specialise in gendered directions already need less explicit negotiations with their spouses, have less complex logistic organisation, and may take less risks in their employment by fulfilling the traditional male norm of full-time work (Correll, Benard & In Paik, 2007; Lewis, 1997).

6.4. Strengths and limitations

This study has some unique strengths and some limitations. Regarding theoretical insights, socio-economic theories suggest that when both spouses are equally highly educated and have equal wage expectations, they would equally share paid and unpaid work. However, we observed that equally highly educated couples also followed gendered divisions. Socio-economic theories are not able to explain the initial skewness between the sexes when both are evenly educated and earn the same wage. Gender mechanisms have additional benefits in this respect and can help explain why couples divide tasks in a gendered way from the start: both spouses construct their identity by following (traditional) gendered norms.

The initial skewness of the couples' gendered divisions of work was strengthened by cumulative and path-dependent processes during the transition to parenthood. For this process, socio-economic theories do provide a plausible explanation: specialisation becomes a cost-saving strategy once differences in human capital and routines or skills in childcare have developed, e.g., due to pregnancy and maternity leave. Both socio-economic theories and the theory of the tyranny of small decisions are extremely suitable to integrate with the 'doing gender' approach.

The multi-method approach has proven fruitful by enhancing insight into couples' negotiation processes regarding their division of work during the transition to parenthood. The approach in this study was a longitudinal mixed methods approach. Analyses of longitudinal quantitative data were combined with analyses of longitudinal qualitative data. The findings of the quantitative study gave direction to the qualitative in-depth analyses. Both types of analyses provided the opportunity to follow couples' divisions of work during their transition to parenthood over time.

The current longitudinal approach, including various methods, was effective in furthering insights into couples' negotiation processes. The in-depth study of couples' negotiation processes revealed how couples are actually doing parenthood and doing gender in their daily negotiation processes. This study identified mechanisms of doing gender that underlie couples' division of work. It found that couples were either determined to behave in a non-gendered way or were implicitly following gendered roles, either because they decided on a gendered division or because they felt ambivalent and were not determined enough to make explicit agreements. Theoretical insights on doing gender have been deepened. The doing gender approach proved fruitful.

The transition to parenthood provided a successful focus for exploring couples' negotiation processes. Essential mechanisms such as the gendered kick-off were revealed. A limitation of the study could be that this stage of life is deviant because (biologically) newborn babies are more dependent on their mothers than on their fathers. Therefore, biological factors that bind the newborn to its mother may play a bigger role in this stage than in later stages. It would be interesting to study how negotiation processes change when the child gets older and grows out of the need for full dependency on its parents and intensive physical care. The transition to parenthood is an extraordinary situation,

and it remains interesting to see how the dynamics of couples' negotiation processes change over time and throughout life stages.

The qualitative interview approach included three different methods: individual interviews, couple-interaction interviews and questionnaires for each individual spouse. The strengths of each method were combined to obtain a valid and reliable impression of these couples' negotiation processes. The 'black box' of couples' negotiation processes could be opened from three perspectives: his, hers and theirs. Individual respondents sometimes revealed sensitive information only in the questionnaire or in the individual interview, but not in the couple interview. Some partners did not try to make their responses more acceptable for their partners' ears, while others hid or changed their information somewhat when their partners were listening. The use of different methods to collect information therefore contributed to a more valid interpretation of the data.

If spouses had not been interviewed both individually and as couples, these findings on couples' decision-making processes would not have been revealed. Merely asking couples, for example, 'Do you have disagreements about the division of paid work?' or 'Do you explicitly divide childcare with your partner?' may have resulted in answers that did not mirror reality as much as the current results on negotiation processes do. These data and our open view within the analyses revealed a diversity of arrangements, processes and ways couples deal with and make decisions about their division of paid work, housework and childcare before and after the birth of their first child. This diversity would have remained undiscovered in quantitative analyses. For example, only after probing questions did couples start to talk about issues such as mothers meddling with their husband's childcare, causing the husband to become de-motivated to care for their baby. Spouses' feelings of ambivalence were also detected only in the combined analysis of all three interviews and questionnaires (his, hers and theirs). Spouses presented different views on their division in the individual interview and the questionnaire than in the joint interview, which enabled the interviewer to double-check certain answers in the joint interview.

Analysing quantitative and qualitative data gathered at two points in time enabled us to investigate the dynamics of couples' division of work and its changes over time. The longitudinal qualitative analyses enabled the investigation of dynamic processes, changes and ambivalence in couples' accounts. Furthermore, the specific focus on men before and after the birth of their first child provided insights into the father's situation.

The longitudinal research design thus resulted in rich and complex data. There were 18 different comparisons possible within this data--for example, between men or women, between couples or across two waves (Boeije & Wiesmann, 2007). The diversity of methods was valuable in detecting mechanisms that explain why couples' division of work is so persistently linked to gender. However, which comparisons to study within this project had to be prioritised. Consequently, not all information available could be used. In future research, the current data may be used for secondary analyses; they are available for the research community through the NKPS website. The data may be re-analysed or combined with comparable international data sources for cross-cultural comparison (cf. Transparent project, Grunow & Evertsson, 2010).

The small qualitative sample of 32 couples, although diverse in educational level and urbanity, is not statistically representative of Dutch couples in their transition to parenthood. With these qualitative data, it was possible to explore mechanisms and processes. Future studies may focus on testing these findings in more representative samples. The sample contained an overrepresentation of highly educated couples. It may be likely that those couples were explicitly interested in the division of work, agreed on the usefulness of academic research on this topic and were therefore more likely to participate. As a result, the experiences of couples with certain work arrangements do not generalise to the overall population. A second possible consequence of the relatively small number of low educated people is that other mechanisms may not have been detected in this study.

However, working with a small sample and qualitative research techniques also allowed this study to consider mechanisms involved in exceptional couples. Although couples with equal divisions of work and reversed-role couples were a minority, it was especially interesting to study those more exceptional couples and their mechanisms. More than once, their difference exposed the 'obvious' mechanisms of the majority.

6.5. Implications of this study

6.5.1. Future research

The high prevalence of ambivalence among couples regarding their division of childcare and paid work presents a challenge to the study of attitudes in survey research, as one may answer questions based on the outer/impersonal layer of belief, while the inner layer remains hidden. Future studies should account for measures of ambivalence by, for example, directly asking how certain one is about one's answer and how important one finds this belief or attitude. For example, asking how important one finds attitude X or Y, the centrality of attitudes, is a way of getting better measurements of attitudes. Additionally, measuring implicit and explicit gender attitudes concurrently may be a way of assessing measures of ambivalence that will better predict couples' actual divisions of work and their negotiation processes.

It would also be valuable to study couples' processes in different cultural settings, to find out how these processes function in different institutional and cultural settings. For example, it would be interesting to see how the decision making common to the typical Dutch one-and-a-half earner couples, where gendered kick-off and cumulative forces push towards more specialised divisions of paid and unpaid work, unfolds in other countries. Dynamics could be revealed that are tied to cultural backgrounds in certain organisational sectors or countries. Moreover one could explore how decision-making dynamics are tied to different national policy backgrounds.

In the quantitative analyses in Chapter Two, a general operationalisation of gender attitudes was used. These gender attitudes contributed only slightly to explaining

couples' division of work. Taking the difference between inner and outer layers of attitudes into account may help future studies to investigate gender theories more accurately. Recent studies support the existence of deeper implicit and unconscious attitudes. For example, the link between women and childcare versus men and childcare is measured by reaction times when linking these concepts. This research hints at stronger associations between concepts following traditional norms than associations of concepts following less traditional, modern norms. Implicit (unconscious) gender stereotypes are found to be uncorrelated to explicit expressions of sexism (Banaji & Greenwald, 1995). The results on their own implicit attitudes often surprise test subjects because they are themselves unaware of their deeper traditional attitudes.

These implicit (unconscious) workings of gender help explain our findings of the implicit workings of gender in couples' negotiation processes. Including implicit measures of attitudes in future studies on couples' division of work may help unravel the interaction between implicit and explicit attitudes in couples' negotiation processes. Moreover, studying implicit associations over time will help to explain whether deeply ingrained gendered attitudes (and thus also behaviour) change over time, how quickly they change, and which factors may stimulate the change of deeply ingrained attitudes.

Furthermore, a longitudinal study following young couples across various life stages, from cohabitation, the birth of a first child, the birth of additional children and children's progression from nursery to school, would broaden findings on couples' dynamics in these life stages. Chapter Two pointed out that it is mainly the transition to first-time parenthood that is crucial for the changes in couples' division of work, and not the birth of a second child. However, in-depth exploration of how couples' negotiation processes may or may not change over time and throughout later life events will further insights into the underlying mechanisms of couples' division of work. For this purpose, a specific design is needed that focuses on measures specifically around these life events. A general study, as for example the NKPS study with three to four years between the different waves, cannot adequately distinguish the different stages of the transition to parenthood and having a second or third child.

Future studies should develop quantitative scales on the explicitness of decision-making processes in couples' division of work. Quantitative studies may test whether associations can be found between the explicitness of decision-making and certain divisions of work in representative samples across different institutional and cultural settings. Furthermore, this study revealed a number of practicalities that hinder couples in dividing their work in their intended ways. These aspects, such as meddling behaviour and spouse's autonomy in domestic work and childcare, can be added to questionnaires to determine to what extent these findings can be generalised.

6.5.2. Practical implications

Translating the current findings on micro-level mechanisms into practical implications is a difficult endeavour. As suggested by the current study, couples' negotiation processes

around their division of work present a complex social phenomenon that researchers have sought to understand for decades. Various actors have a stake in the couples' division of work: the couples themselves, governments and policy makers, and employers. Solving the dilemma of the current generation's work-life balance will require creative thinking. Policies with a narrow focus on one piece will not be able to solve the complex puzzle. Therefore, we should think broadly and aim at integrated approaches for facilitating the division of work for families of the future. Many disciplines contribute to such an integrated approach, including landscape architects, city planners, and food, school and traffic experts who could jointly resolve the logistics of daily problems such as the logistics of working, picking up children, and cooking. Some rather narrow implications for three kinds of stakeholders (governments, couples, and employers) are presented below and linked to the findings of this study.

Currently, governments, policymakers and some employers aim to increase women's participation in the labour market to prepare for the ageing society. From the economic viewpoint, including as many people as possible in the labour force would be desirable. This suggests not necessarily striving to reduce men's work hours and increase their share in unpaid work, but rather striving to increase women's share in paid work while opting for outsourcing of childcare and housework to professional market providers. However, couples desired diverse divisions of work, and policies do not always meet these preferences. Some parents desired better outsourcing facilities for their child, while other mothers and fathers would rather spend more time with their child themselves or have close family members care for their child.

Furthermore, one of the largest challenges for couples in sharing work and childcare was the gendered kick-off immediately after the birth of their first child. When fathers and mothers were able to share childcare from the beginning, they were better able to work around the gendered kick-off and the accumulation of small decisions. The Dutch strategy of part-time leave, which results in one father-caring-day per week after maternity leave, is a measure that comes too late and is too small to counteract the cumulative processes of small decisions and the development of childcare skills and routines.

Germany and some Scandinavian countries have introduced mandatory parental leave policies for fathers, often up to a child's first birthday. However, these parental leave policies do not necessarily seem to prevent gendered kick-off effects. Therefore, we suggest that policies need to be directed even more specifically at the first weeks after the birth, to give spouses the chance to jointly adapt to the new tasks of childcare and its combination with paid work.

Couples also struggled with their ambivalence about their division of paid work and childcare. Implicit negotiations within couples and their failure to discuss preferences and possibilities for their realisation further enhanced the tendency to divide childcare and paid work in a traditionally gendered way.

In order to avoid fuelling couples' ambivalence about good care for their child, policies may also strive to not only improve the capacity, quality and affordable pricing

for childcare facilities, but also to enhance and clarify the public communication around this process of modernisation.

Furthermore, couples hindered by their ambivalent feelings and their implicit negotiation processes could be supported in clarifying their ideas about their desired division of work. This could be realised by informing them about gendered kick-off effects, and by facilitating their ability to make explicit and feasible choices.

How could this be done? In the Netherlands, couple training courses that facilitate couples in their process of constructive clarification of both spouses' roles and making explicit agreements are already available and offered by some employers. These training courses, however, are mainly aimed at couples who are retiring and entering a new life stage after their work life. Recently, some initiatives have begun that focus on couples in their economically productive years (for Dutch examples of training or coaching, see Expertisecentrum LEEFtijd, Instituut Werk & Stress, Career & Kids). A business case could be built to indicate costs and rewards of this kind of programme that supports couples in their transition to parenthood, in the rush hour of their lives.

Summary in Dutch

Samenvatting

7. Samenvatting

7.1. Inleiding

Hoewel veel Nederlandse paren vinden dat betaald werk, zorg voor kinderen en huishouden gelijk zou moeten worden gedeeld, blijkt uit onderzoek steeds weer dat de verdeling van betaald en onbetaald werk na de geboorte van het eerste kind traditioneler en gespecialiseerder wordt (Aliaga, 2005; Baxter et al., 2008; Kluwer ea., 2002; Pittman ea., 2001; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; Van der Lippe, 2000). Vrouwen die net moeder zijn geworden verminderen vaak hun werkuren of stoppen soms helemaal met werken om zich te concentreren op de zorg voor hun kind en het huishouden, terwijl vaders vaak fulltime blijven werken. Deze verandering in de taakverdeling na de geboorte van het eerste kind heeft uiteraard ook gevolgen voor verdere ongelijkheid op de arbeidsmarkt op de langere termijn (Mandel & Semjonov, 2005; Ruhm, 1998).

Tegelijkertijd is de verdeling van betaald en onbetaald werk minder vanzelfsprekend en ook minder rigide geworden in de afgelopen decennia. Deze ontwikkeling werd gestimuleerd door processen zoals de emancipatie van vrouwen, toenemend individualisme (Beck, 1986), naast economische ontwikkelingen en een toegenomen vraag naar arbeid op de arbeidsmarkt. Deze ontwikkelingen hebben de manier waarop paren hun relaties definiëren beinvloed: er heeft een verbreding plaatsgevonden van de voorgeschreven rollen van mannen en vrouwen. De scheidslijn die vroeger duidelijk was tussen het vrouwelijke en mannelijke domein vervaagt: van zowel mannen als vrouwen wordt nu verwacht dat ze bijdragen aan het gezinsinkomen en dat ze hun bijdrage leveren aan het huishouden en aan de zorg voor kinderen (Pfau-Effinger, 2000).

Door deze ruimere rolvoorschriften voor vrouwen en mannen wordt er vaker onderhandeld over wie wat moet doen in het huishouden en daarbuiten (Scanzoni, 1978; Jansen & Liefbroer, 2006). Paren zijn dagelijks bij onderhandelingsprocessen betrokken, waarin zij bijvoorbeeld beslissen wie vandaag kookt, wie het kind naar bed brengt en wie de krant kan lezen.

Op de een of andere manier leiden die onderhandelingen echter vaak niet tot een meer gelijke verdeling van werk. Ondanks de winst die vrouwen hebben geboekt op het terrein van opleiding en arbeid, besteden vrouwen nog steeds meer tijd aan de zorg voor kinderen en het huishouden dan mannen (Blossfeld & Drobnic, 2001b; Gerhard et al., 2003).

Het doel van dit proefschrift is om het begrip van de onderliggende onderhandelingsprocessen, die ervoor zorgen dat paren tot een bepaalde taakverdeling komen, te vergroten. Om deze onderhandelingsprocessen te ontrafelen zijn zowel kwantitatieve als kwalitatieve data gebruikt. Eerst is de taakverdeling van Nederlandse paren in hun transitie naar ouderschap beschreven met kwantitatieve panel data.

Vervolgens zijn diepte-interviews met paren voor en na de geboorte van hun eerste kind geanalyseerd. Er zijn zowel individuele partner-interviews met beide partners gehouden, als ook paar-interviews met beide partners samen.

In dit onderzoek worden onderhandelingsprocessen als een continu en dynamisch interactieproces gedefinieerd, waarin partners met overeenkomende of afwijkende voorkeuren of doelen op een impliciete of expliciete manier tot een bepaalde uitkomst of besluit komen (cf. Sillars & Kalbflesch, 1989; Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1981; Scanzoni, 1976, 1989).

7.1.1. Samenvatting per hoofdstuk

In hoofdstuk twee zijn de veranderingen in de verdeling van betaald en onbetaald werk van paren tijdens hun overgang naar ouderschap in kaart gebracht met behulp van gegevens uit twee *golven* van de Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS, 2005; 2007). De resultaten laten zien dat de geboorte van het eerste kind grote invloed heeft op de verdeling van betaald werk: vrouwen verminderen hun werkuren aanzienlijk na de geboorte van hun eerste kind, terwijl de verschillende stadia van gezinsvorming het aantal werkuren van vaders niet merkbaar veranderen. Mannen die een eerste kind kregen, werkten slechts iets minder dan mannen zonder kinderen. Bovendien wordt de verdeling van onbetaald werk meer ongelijk na de geboorte van een eerste kind. De grootste invloed op de huidige taakverdeling had aan de ene kant de eerdere taakverdeling en aan de andere kant de geboorte van een kind.

In overeenstemming met bevindingen uit eerder onderzoek laat hoofdstuk twee zien dat de geboorte van een eerste kind een cruciaal moment vormt waarin zich een sekse-gebonden taakverdeling uitkristalliseert (vgl Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006). Het uurloon van vrouwen en mannen verklaart niet de verdeling van onbetaald werk, noch het aantal uren betaald werk op tijdstip 1. Maar als vrouwen een hoger uurloon hebben reduceren zij hun werkuren minder tussen tijdstip 1 en 2, dan vrouwen met een lager uurloon. Dit terwijl mannen met een hoger uurloon meer uren gaan werken op tijdstip 2 dan mannen met een lager uurloon. Vrouwen met een meer progressieve houding werken meer uren, maar hun houding heeft geen effect op de verdeling van huishoudelijk werk. Een progressievere houding van mannen heeft geen effect op hun aandeel in het huishouden en in de zorg, noch op het aantal uren dat zij of hun partner werken.

De houding van paren en hun feitelijke arbeidsverdeling lijkt tegenstrijdig. Terwijl attitudes over het algemeen zeer modern zijn—slechts 5% van de mannen en vrouwen hebben een traditionele houding-- verdeelt slechts een kwart van de paren het huishouden gelijk. Vóór de geboorte van hun eerste kind, verdeelden meer dan de helft van de paren betaald werk gelijk, maar na de geboorte van het eerste kind is dit aantal gedaald tot slechts 16%.

Tijdens hun overgang naar het ouderschap verandert er veel in de verdeling van taken tussen paren, maar wat er precies gebeurt kan niet voldoende verklaard worden

met deze longitudinale kwantitatieve analyses. Daarom zijn de resterende hoofdstukken van dit proefschrift gericht op het ontrafelen van de processen die leiden tot een verdeling van betaald en onbetaald werk van paren.

In hoofdstuk drie worden de besluitvormingsprocessen van paren over de verdeling van betaald werk en huishouden bestudeerd met behulp van analyses van de interviews vóórdat paren hun eerste kind krijgen. Drie vragen worden beantwoord. De eerste vraag is: hoe kan de besluitvorming van de paren worden gekarakteriseerd in termen van impliciete en expliciete strategieën? De tweede vraag is: hoe gaan paren om met uitdagingen in hun verdeling van werk en huishouden? De derde vraag is: wat voor verdelingen houden verband met impliciete en expliciete besluitvormingsprocessen?

Aangetoond wordt dat de meeste van de onderzochte paren in het algemeen hun taakverdeling (werk en huishouden) voor de geboorte van hun eerste kind niet expliciet aan de orde stellen. Op het moment dat ze gaan samenwonen, spreken paren meestal over hun verdeling van betaald werk en huishoudelijk werk in brede zin. Vervolgens weet men ongeveer hoe de ander het werk wil verdelen. In het algemeen echter beginnen paren pas duidelijk te praten over de verdeling van betaald werk en zorg wanneer ze met een nieuwe situatie geconfronteerd worden zoals de komst van hun eerste kind. Een andere aanleiding die ervoor zorgt dat de verdeling van huishoudelijk werk expliciet aan de orde komt, is wanneer een van de partners, meestal de vrouw, zich gefrustreerd voelt over wat zij als een oneerlijke taakverdeling beschouwt.

Drie patronen van besluitvormingsprocessen zijn onderscheiden. Deze patronen lijken een samenhang te hebben met bepaalde verdelingen van het werk. Als eerste de impliciete besluitvorming, welke we vaker in verband zagen met een traditionele taakverdeling. Ten tweede de expliciete besluitvorming, welke gekoppeld lijkt aan meer egalitaire taakverdelingen. Ten derde een gemengde stijl van besluitvorming, gedeeltelijk impliciet en gedeeltelijk expliciet, gerelateerd aan een transitionele taakverdeling die niet geheel traditioneel noch volledig egalitair is.

In het algemeen, passen paren impliciete besluitvorminsgprocessen toe. Een algemene tendens onder paren was om te zeggen dat hun verdeling van huishoudelijk werk 'niet de moeite van het bespreken waard was'. Dit gebrek aan expliciete bespreking van kwesties rond de taakverdeling verwijst naar een aanhoudende invloed van traditionele *gender*-rolpatronen. De grotendeels impliciete besluitvorming zou echter ook geïnterpreteerd kunnen worden als een 'mythe van goede relaties'. Partners benoemen elkaars bijdrage niet omdat ze het gevoel hebben dat expliciete wederkerigheid onverenigbaar is met een romantische relatie. Het romantiseren van hun relaties en het niet aangaan van expliciete onderhandelingen resulteerde vaak in traditionele seksespecifieke taakverdelingen. Het gebruiken van impliciete strategieën en het ad hoc betrekken van partners bij het uitvoeren van taken, in plaats van de algehele taakverdeling expliciet te bespreken, blijkt vaak in meer specialisatie te resulteren dan door de paren wenselijk wordt gevonden.

In hoofdstuk vier zijn de onderhandelingsprocessen van paren over hun verdeling van het werk vóór én ná de geboorte van hun eerste kind geanalyseerd, en staan de veranderingen rond besluitvormingsprocessen door de tijd centraal. Hoofdstuk twee liet zien dat een meerderheid van de paren een nieuwe taakverdeling ontwikkelt na de geboorte van hun eerste kind. In dit hoofdstuk is geprobeerd een beter inzicht te krijgen in de aard van onderhandelingsprocessen en in de 'bedoelde en onbedoelde' veranderingen in de taakverdeling na de geboorte van het eerste kind.

Op basis van dit onderzoek zijn vier soorten van onderhandelingsprocessen onderscheiden, afhankelijk van de aard van de verdeling en of de paren hun voorgenomen verdeling hadden gerealiseerd: (1) bedoelde specialisatie, (2) onbedoelde specialisatie, (3) een gelijke verdeling en (4) omkering van de kostwinner-rol. Types 1 en 3 blijken hun beoogde verdeling van het werk te realiseren, typen 2 en 4 niet.

Bij type 4-paren zien we dat door omstandigheden zoals werkloosheid van de man, de vrouw ervoor koos tijdelijk kostwinner te worden. Bij de paren die uitkwamen bij onbedoelde specialisatie, hebben ambivalente gevoelens over hun huidige rol als moeders en vaders de overhand.

In de analyse werd duidelijk dat *gendered* mechanismen een belangrijke en cumulerende rol spelen in de onderhandelingsprocessen rond de taakverdeling. Na de geboorte van een kind, begint een sequentie van padafhankelijke gebeurtenissen, die tot een steeds schevere verdeling van het werk leidt. Wanneer er sprake is van een enigszins scheve verdeling van de zorg voor het kind en de moeder meer tijd thuis met het kind besteedt, wordt zorg steeds meer haar verantwoordelijkheid. Zij wordt steeds deskundiger en geroutineerder in de verzorging. Vaak wordt dit 'gendered kick-off proces' versterkt door ambivalente gevoelens van nieuwe ouders over hun rol als goede moeders en goede vaders.

Dit proces vond zijn aanvang vaak tijdens het zwangerschapsverlof. Vaders raakten, wanneer de baby eenmaal was geboren, geleidelijk aan relatief minder vaardig in de verzorging van hun kind ten opzichte van de moeder. Mede daardoor namen vaders ook steeds minder een initiërende rol in de verzorging in. Na enige tijd worden de routine van de moeder, haar vaardigheden en snellere reacties op het kind gezien als een feit ("zij /ik kan dit nou eenmaal beter"). Vaak aanvaarden beide partners deze nieuwe situatie met de moeder als primaire verzorger en de vader als secundaire verzorger. Dit mechanisme wordt aangeduid als 'gendered kick-off', omdat de verdeling van de zorg voor het kind gespecialiseerd begint tijdens het moederschapverlof en dan wordt voortgezet door kleine en impliciete beslissingen die bijdragen aan het cumulatieve proces tot meer specialisatie.

Niet alle paren ervaren een *gendered kick-off* proces. Paren die er bewust voor kiezen om de zorg gelijk te verdelen en die beiden actief investeren in het aanleren van vaardigheden voor de verzorging van het kind en een expliciete stijl van besluitvorming hanteren, slagen erin de specialisatie tegen te gaan. Deze paren ervaren ook cumulerende processen, maar dan in de richting van een meer gelijke verdeling van de zorg. Vooral de positieve ervaringen met het delen van werk en zorg motiveren hen om verder te investeren in manieren om taken gelijk te verdelen.

In hoofdstuk vijf zijn de opvattingen en ervaringen van mannen vóór en na de geboorte van hun eerste kind onderzocht. Het doel van dit hoofdstuk is hun rol in de totstandkoming van de taakverdeling beter te begrijpen.

Bijna alle vaders geven aan ambivalente gevoelens te hebben over hun rol als vader. Ze voelen aan de ene kant zware verantwoordelijkheid voor het gezinsinkomen terwijl ze aan de andere kant ook direct betrokken willen zijn bij de zorg voor hun kind. Sommige vaders genieten van het zorgen voor hun kind en verminderen hun werkuren nog verder, terwijl andere vaders worstelen met het gevoel hun tijd te verspillen bij het zorgen voor hun kind in plaats van betaald werkzaam te zijn. In de praktijk vinden bijna alle vaders het moeilijk om deze twee rollen te combineren. Sommige mannen proberen een 'super papa' te zijn, waarbij ze de traditionele kostwinnersrol op zich nemen en tegelijkertijd een moderne, zorgzame vader probereen te zijn. Sommige jonge vaders werken minder uren om tijd voor hun kind te creëren, terwijl anderen fulltime blijven werken en weinig tijd thuis overhouden. Weinig tijd besteden aan zorg voor het kind levert vaders echter meestal morele dilemma's op. Sommigen bedenken mogelijkheden om minder uren te kunnen werken, terwijl anderen zichzelf weliswaar als lui beschouwen omdat ze niet veel tijd besteeden aan hun kind, maar geen plannen maken om dit te veranderen. Andere vaders verklaren dat ze gewoon niet zo geïnteresseerd zijn in de dagelijkse zorg voor hun kind. Zij laten moeders vaker het initiatief nemen bij zorgtaken en genieten ook soms van de extra vrije ruimte die hun dit oplevert.

Het lijkt dat vaders aan de ene kant geloven in de moderne normen van het vaderschap, met inbegrip van een actieve rol in de directe zorg voor hun kind en aan de andere kant proberen te voldoen aan de traditionele normen die voorschrijven dat ze kostwinnersverantwoordelijkheid hebben en fulltime dienen te werken. Deze ambivalentie van vaders over hun rol vóór en na de geboorte van hun eerste kind verhindert hen vaak de beoogde taakverdeling te realiseren. Slechts de helft van de 32 vaders realiseert hun voorkeur wat betreft de zorg voor het kind. De andere helft geeft aan meer te werken dan hun wens was voor de geboorte.

7.2. Conclusie

De hier toegepaste multi-method aanpak heeft waardevolle inzichten opgeleverd. Het bestuderen van de onderhandelingsprocessen van paren heeft inzicht gegeven in '*doing parenthood*', '*doing gender*' en in cumulatieve mechanismes in hun dagelijkse onderhandelingsprocessen. Het blijkt dat paren oftewel vastbesloten zijn om zich op een niet-sterotiepe manier te gedragen of dat zij min of meer impliciet traditionele gender rollen opvolgen. Deze laatste paren besluiten hier bewust toe, of zij ervaren ambivalente gevoelens die vóórkomen dat zij expliciete en bewuste afspraken over hun taken maken. Deze studie heeft relevante mechanismen zoals de gendered kick-off laten zien.

De kwalitatieve data die in hoofdstuk drie, vier en vijf geanalyseerd werden, bestaan uit drie verschillende methoden: individuele partner interviews, *interactie-interviews* met paren en vragenlijsten voor de individuele partners. De voordelen van deze

methoden konden worden gecombineerd om een valide en betrouwbare indruk van de onderhandelingsprocessen van deze paren te verkrijgen.

De 'black box' rond de onderhandelingsprocessen kon hiermee vanuit drie perspectieven worden belicht: de zijne, de hare en vanuit beide partners samen. Zo blijken individuele respondenten gevoelige informatie soms juist in de vragenlijst of in het individuele interview te uiten, maar niet in het gezamenlijke interview met de ouders. Sommige partners lijken niet te proberen om hun antwoorden meer acceptabel of sociaal wenselijk te laten klinken op het moment dat hun partner aanwezig was. Anderen blijken tijdens het paar-interview minder te vertellen of veranderen zelfs hun verhaal enigszins. Deze onderzoeksstrategie waarin meerdere technieken werden gebruikt om data te verzamelen heeft dan ook bijgedragen aan een meer valide interpretatie van de gegevens. Juist met deze kwalitatieve longitudinale gegevens konden wij inzicht krijgen in de diversiteit en verschillen in onderhandelingsprocessen en in de uitgangspunten van paren in de tijd rond de geboorte van hun eerste kind.

7.2.1. De overgang naar het ouderschap kristalliseert rolpatronen

Doel van dit proefschrift is het beter begrijpen van de onderhandelingsprocessen van paren over hun taakverdeling (betaald werk, huishoudelijk werk en zorg voor kinderen) tijdens hun transitie naar het ouderschap en welke rol deze onderhandelingen spelen bij het totstandkomen van de uiteindelijke taakverdeling.

De bevindingen van dit proefschrift komen overeen met eerdere studies. Ook hier is gevonden dat de overgang naar het ouderschap een kritiek moment is in de ontwikkeling van ongelijke routines in de verdeling van het werk (Baxter, Hewitt, & Haynes, 2008; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Schulz & Blossfeld, 2006; 2009; Grunow, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2007). De geboorte van het eerste kind heeft een cruciale invloed op de verdeling van het werk van Nederlandse paren: de moeders gaan minder betaald werken, terwijl vaders hetzelfde aantal uren blijven werken. Ook de verdeling van huishoudelijk werk en zorg voor kinderen wordt meer ongelijk na de geboorte van een eerste kind.

Een meerderheid van de paren die deelnamen aan dit onderzoek volgt een proces dat leidt tot een traditionelere taakverdeling tijdens hun transitie naar het ouderschap. Een combinatie van factoren draagt hieraan bij. In de eerste plaats ervaren paren ambivalente gevoelens ten aanzien van hun rol als mannen en vrouwen, moeders en vaders. Deze ambivalentie wordt mogelijkerwijs deels ook gevoed door institutionele omstandigheden, die deels een gelijke verdeling van paren stimuleren en dat deels tegenwerken, zoals de aanwezigheid van zwangerschapverlof en gebrek aan vaderschapsverlof. Ambivalente gevoelens van individuele partners spelen een rol in verschillende mechanismen, zoals de veelal impliciete onderhandelingen, de cumulatieve effecten van kleine beslissingen en de ‘gendered kick-off’.

7.2.2. Ambivalente gevoelens over nieuwe en oude rollen

Een meerderheid van de vaders en moeders hebben ambivalente gevoelens over hun rol en hun verdeling van werk en zorg. Dat maakt het moeilijk voor hen om het patroon van een seksegebonden taakverdeling te veranderen. Vaak hebben vaders naast het gevoel dat het gezinsinkomen hun belangrijkste verantwoordelijkheid is, een verlangen om de zorg voor de kinderen te delen. Tegelijkertijd hebben moeders vaak het gevoel dat zij de beste zorg aan hun kind kunnen geven maar tevens willen zij deelnemen aan het arbeidsproces. Deze ambivalente gevoelens beïnvloeden de onderhandelingsprocessen van paren gedurende de hele transitie naar ouderschap en versterken hun neiging taken seksespecifiek te verdelen. Sommige paren zijn zich bewust van deze ambivalentie en besteden er expliciet aandacht aan. Vaak worden er expliciete afspraken gemaakt en helpen de partners elkaar om ermee om te gaan.

Deze ambivalente gevoelens kunnen mogelijk worden verklaard door het tegelijkertijd bestaan van oude en nieuwe normen. Van moeders wordt steeds meer verwacht dat ze bijdragen aan het gezinsinkomen en van mannen wordt steeds meer verwacht dat ze bijdragen aan huishoudelijk werk en zorg voor hun kinderen. Ook blijkt dat mannen en vrouwen zich over het algemeen nog steeds sterk verantwoordelijk voelen voor hun traditionele domeinen.

Deze ambivalentie kan wellicht beter worden begrepen vanuit de gedachte dat attitudes meerdere lagen hebben die tegenstrijdig of dissonant kunnen zijn. De eindverantwoordelijkheid voor betaald werk, huishoudelijk werk en zorg bijvoorbeeld lijkt nog steeds gebaseerd te zijn op diepgewortelde traditionele rollen. Hoewel beide partners het vaak in abstracte termen eens zijn over de norm van een gelijke verdeling, kunnen ze in hun persoonlijke situatie vaak goede redenen bedenken om af te wijken van deze norm. Deze bevinding komt overeen met studies naar attitudes waarin werd gevonden dat er significante verschillen zijn tussen wat men het beste vindt voor het eigen gezin versus wat men in het algemeen het beste vindt in termen van taakverdeling (Thornton, 1989; van der Vinne & Brink, 1997).

De heersende ambivalentie over rolpatronen is een belangrijke bron voor het impliciet blijven van onderhandelingen. Het beïnvloedt de tirannie van de kleine beslissingen en die versterkt wederom de ‘gendered kick-off’.

7.2.3. Impliciete onderhandelingsprocessen

De onderhandelingsprocessen van paren over de verdeling van betaald en onbetaald werk blijken overwegend impliciet te zijn. Pas wanneer frustraties zich hadden opgestapeld gaat een deel van de paren over op een meer expliciete manier van onderhandelen. Ook wanneer men voor grote beslissingen staat, zoals veranderingen in betaald werk vanwege de geboorte van een eerste kind, wordt er expliciet onderhandeld. Vaak gaan de partners ervanuit dat ze de wensen van de ander ten aanzien van hun

verdeling wel kennen. Vaak is ook de veronderstelling dat de taakverdeling zich vanzelfsprekend zou ontwikkelen zonder overleg of afspraken.

Er zijn twee mogelijke verklaringen voor de algehele neiging van paren om impliciet om te gaan met de taakverdeling. Een eerste verklaring is de 'mythe over goede relaties': het idee dat in een ideale romantische relatie de alledaagse huishoudelijke taken niet besproken hoeven te worden. Een tweede reden is dat het gemakkelijker is voor paren om geïnternaliseerde gender scripts te volgen in hun dagelijkse leven. Dit geldt in het bijzonder als het leven erg druk is zoals na de geboorte van een eerste kind. Alleen paren die vastbesloten zijn om gender-specifieke patronen te doorbreken in hun verdeling blijken daadwerkelijk vaak expliciet te onderhandelen over hun taakverdeling.

7.2.4. Gendered kick-off

Het mechanisme van de 'gendered kick-off' leidt ertoe dat jonge ouders geleidelijk een meer traditionele taakverdeling krijgen dan ze aanvankelijk willen. Nieuwe moeders bouwen tijdens hun zwangerschapverlof ervaring en routines op in de verzorging van hun kind, die, relatief groter is dan die van de vaders. Vaders hebben immers door hun betaalde werk immers minder tijd voor de verzorging van hun kind. Deze voorsprong zorgt ervoor dat het in veel gevallen praktisch is dat de vrouw het kind verzorgt. Zo blijft de hoofdverantwoordelijkheid voor deze nieuwe taken bij de moeder. Het later veranderen van deze routines blijkt voor veel paren een moeilijke zaak.

Veel paren beschouwden de specialisatie van taken na de geboorte van hun eerste kind als een tijdelijke oplossing, zo lang de kinderen heel klein zijn. Zij passen specialisatie toe als een copingstrategie om met de toegenomen werklast na de geboorte om te gaan. Door specialisatie als een tijdelijke oplossing te zien, kan ook beter met de tegenstrijdigheid tussen wens en werkelijkheid gaande een gelijke verdeling om worden gegaan. In tegenstelling echter tot de ideeën van deze paren, is een beetje specialisatie vaak een start of *kick-off* tot een meer *gendered* specialisatie op de lange termijn.

7.2.5. Cumulatieve effecten en de tirannie van de kleine beslissingen

De 'tirannie van de kleine beslissingen' (Kahn, 1966) verwijst naar het mechanisme van ongewenste cumulatieve processen. In de alledaagse verdeling van huishoudelijke taken en zorg, leidt deze tirannie tot een ongewenste verzameling/ophoping van veel kleine taken die als geheel een gendered verdeling vormen. Door beslissingen over de verdeling van taken in huishouden en zorg als "niet de moeite waard van verdere bespreking te beschouwen" blijven deze impliciet en leiden ze vervolgens 'automatisch' tot traditionele *gender* normen. Paren daarentegen, die de verdeling van elke kleine taak beschouwen als een onderdeel van een groter geheel en die hierover expliciete afspraken maken, zijn beter in staat een meer gelijke verdeling te bereiken.

De tirannie van de kleine beslissingen en processen van cumulatie helpen te verklaren waarom paren die aanvankelijk proberen de taken (redelijk) gelijk te verdelen daar toch

vaak niet in slagen. Elke kleine beslissing op zich lijkt voor deze paren niet belangrijk, terwijl de gecumuleerde uitkomsten uiteindelijk meer traditioneel blijken dan aanvankelijk gewenst. Ook dit duidt op de sterke impliciete invloed van gender voorschriften of gender identiteiten op het gedrag van beide partners.

De theorie van de kleine beslissingen en van cumulatie processen biedt samen met ambivalente gevoelens en het *doing gender* mechanisme een verklaring voor de bevinding dat de taakverdeling van paren vaak traditioneler is dan men graag zou willen. De opeenstapeling van kleine beslissingen blijkt vooral in traditionele richting te werken. Dat wil zeggen dat vrouwen steeds meer gingen doen in de zorg voor het kind. Terwijl paren die de gender rollen omkeerden (omdat de man werkloos was en overdag voor het kind zorgde) deze opeenstapeling van 'vrouwelijke' taken niet beleefden. Bij deze paren zien we dat mannen en vrouwen een traditionele verdeling volgen zodra dit mogelijk is. De man verzorgde overdag het kind en compenseerde dit 'onmannelijke' gedrag door de zorg aan zijn vrouw over te laten, zodra zij thuis kwam. De *specialisatie kick-off* lijkt dus vooral in de richting van een stereotiepe rolverdeling te werken. Het '*doing gender*' gedrag van mannen en van vrouwen, dus het bevestigen van hun mannelijke en vrouwelijke identiteit ter compensatie, gaat tegen de tirannie van kleine beslissingen in.

7.2.6. Huidige taakverdeling in transitie

De afgelopen decennia zijn paren, ook paren met jonge kinderen, taken gelijker gaan verdelen. Dit proces van verbreding en modernisering van rolpatronen heeft tot op heden nog niet tot een volledig gelijke verdeling van taken geleid. Men zou kunnen stellen dat het proces tot meer gelijke taakverdelingen tussen mannen en vrouwen nog niet is afgesloten. Zo zien we bijvoorbeeld dat vrouwen weliswaar hetzelfde onderwijsniveau bereiken als mannen, maar op de arbeidsmarkt nog steeds minder verdienen. Ook zouden we kunnen stellen dat Nederlandse instituties (bijv. aanrecht-subsidie, geen vaderschapsverlof, wachtlijsten kinderopvang) zich nog in een overgangsfase bevinden waarin aanpassingen plaatsvinden aan de moderne ontwikkelingen in gezinnen. Omdat instituties als het ware nog steeds ambivalente signalen afgeven aan paren, brengt taakspecialisatie voor ouders minder transactiekosten met zich mee dan een gelijke taakverdeling. Paren die taken op een traditionele manier verdelen, hoeven minder expliciet te onderhandelen, hebben minder te organiseren rond de logistiek in het gezin en nemen wellicht ook minder risico's in hun werk door aan de traditionele norm van fulltime werk te voldoen (Correll, Benard & In Paik, 2007; Lewis, 1997). Dit laatste althans waar het de mannelijke partners betreft.

7.2.7. Implicaties voor toekomstig onderzoek

De veelvoorkomende ambivalente gevoelens bij paren over hun verdeling van zorg en werk vormen een uitdaging voor toekomstig kwantitatief onderzoek naar attitudes. Paren geven op attitudevragen zoals die hun meestal worden gesteld (vgl hoofdstuk 2) vaak een

sociaal wenselijk antwoord dat dan gebaseerd zou zijn op de algemene laag van hun attitude, die gaat over hoe zij in de algemeenheid over bepaalde aspecten denken. Om een meer valide antwoord te verkrijgen dat het gedrag van partners beter voorspelt zouden in toekomstig onderzoek vragen moeten worden opgenomen die ambivalentie meten. Er zouden vragen kunnen worden geformuleerd die proberen te achterhalen in welke mate de buitenste laag van de overtuigingen congruent is met de binnenste lagen van overtuigingen. Dit kan bijvoorbeeld door direct te vragen naar hoe men zelf het betaalde werk of zorg met een partner zou willen verdelen als er een kind op komst is. Dit kan ook door na een vraag over attitudes een tweede vraag te stellen, namelijk in welke mate men deze attitude belangrijk vindt. Deze laatste vraag duidt aan hoe centraal een attitude in het leven van een persoon staat. Het centraal staan van attitudes zou ook gemeten kunnen worden door bijvoorbeeld te vragen of een attitude in het algemeen geldt of juist specifiek voor de respondent zelf geldt. Het meten van impliciete en expliciete attitudes binnen een vragenlijst kan worden gebruikt om mogelijke ambivalentie te voorspellen. Op die manier kan men realistischer voorspellingen doen over de te verwachten taakverdeling en ook over de aard (impliciethed/expliciethed) van de onderhandelingsprocessen.

Toekomstige studies zouden zich ook moeten richten op de ontwikkeling van kwantitatieve schalen die meten hoe expliciet of impliciet besluitvormingsprocessen van paren over hun taakverdeling plaatsvinden. Kwantitatieve studies zouden kunnen gaan testen of er verbanden kunnen worden gevonden tussen de expliciethed van het onderhandelingsproces van paren en bepaalde uitkomsten qua taakverdeling in representatieve steekproeven.

Deze studie heeft een aantal praktische zaken aan het licht gebracht die een belemmering vormen voor paren om hun taakverdeling naar wens in te richten. Deze aspecten, zoals bijvoorbeeld de autonomie van partners in het huishouden en de zorg zouden ook een waardevolle toevoeging zijn voor toekomstig vragenlijst onderzoek, om te onderzoeken in hoeverre de bevindingen uit deze kwalitatieve studie gegeneraliseerd kunnen worden.

7.2.8. Praktische Implicaties

Dit onderzoek heeft duidelijk gemaakt dat het gendered kick-off mechanisme samen met ambivalente gevoelens één van de grootste uitdagingen voor paren is in het verdelen van werk en zorg onmiddellijk na de geboorte van het eerste kind. Wanneer vaders en moeders in staat zouden zijn om vanaf het begin het kind gezamenlijk te verzorgen, zouden ze beter de cumulatie van kleine beslissingen kunnen omzeilen en zouden ze vervolgens niet ongewild een traditioneel rolpatroon opbouwen. De Nederlandse strategie van deeltijdverlof, die resulteert in één vader-zorgdag per week na het zwangerschapsverlof van de moeder, is wat dat betreft een maatregel die onvoldoende is om cumulatieve processen van de kleine beslissingen tegen te gaan en te voorkomen dat

er verschillen ontstaan in het ontwikkelen van vaardigheden in de verzorging van het kind.

Bijvoorbeeld Duitsland en enkele Scandinavische landen hebben verplicht ouderschapsverlof voor vaders ingevoerd, dat vaak voor de eerste verjaardag van het kind opgenomen dient te worden. Dat soort verlofbeleid voorkomt niet per se het gender-kick-off mechanisme. Het beleid zou daarvoor nog specifieker moeten worden gericht op de eerste weken na de geboorte van het kind zodat de partners de kans krijgen om gezamenlijk te beginnen met de verzorging van het kind en het opbouwen van routines.

Paren worstelden met ambivalente gevoelens over hun verdeling van werk en zorg. Impliciete onderhandelingsprocessen van paren, het feit dat zij er niet in slagen om hun wensen voor de verdeling rustig te bespreken en na te gaan hoe die te realiseren zijn, versterkte de neiging van paren om zorg en werk traditioneel te verdelen. Om te voorkomen dat paren ambivalente signalen blijven krijgen met betrekking tot hun taakverdeling, zou beleidsmatig na kunnen worden gestreefd om naast verbetering van de capaciteit, kwaliteit en betaalbare prijzen voor kinderopvang, de openbare communicatie rondom dit proces van modernisering te verduidelijken.

Bovendien zouden paren die gehinderd worden door ambivalente gevoelens en impliciete onderhandelingsprocessen kunnen worden ondersteund bij het verhelderen van hun ideeën over de gewenste verdeling. Dit zou bijvoorbeeld gerealiseerd kunnen worden door hen te informeren over gendered kick-off mechanismen en door hun mogelijkheden te verbeteren om expliciete en haalbare keuzes te maken.

Op welke manier zou dit moeten gebeuren? In Nederland is reeds een aantal cursussen beschikbaar, waarin paren worden begeleid bij hun onderhandelingsproces, door hen bijvoorbeeld te leren constructief en duidelijk hun wensen en de rollen van beide partners te bespreken en er expliciete afspraken over te maken. Deze cursussen worden onder andere aangeboden door een aantal werkgevers. Deze trainingen zijn tot nu toe vooral gericht op paren die met pensioen gaan en die op dat moment een nieuwe levensfase betreden. Recent is een aantal initiatieven gestart die gericht zijn op paren in het midden van hun carrière, (zie bijvoorbeeld Expertisecentrum LEEFtijd, Instituut Werk & Stress, Career & Kids). Om deze maatregelen ook door werkgevers te stimuleren zou een *business-case* kunnen worden samen gesteld, waarin de kosten en baten in kaart gebracht worden van dit soort programma's, die paren gedurende het spitsuur van hun leven kunnen ondersteunen.

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9. CURRICULUM VITAE

Stephanie Wiesmann (1976) was born in Mettingen, Germany. She got her high school degree (Abitur) at the Fürstenberg Gymnasium in Recke, Germany in 1996. She traveled some months in Canada where she did some volunteer work on organic farms. In 1997 she went to the Netherlands and learned the Dutch language in order to study psychology at the Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, where she graduated in march 2003 in work and organizational psychology. In 2000/2001 she spent a year at the University of Berkeley, California. She worked as an intern at the German leadership development institute, USW Schloss Gracht (now part of the ESMT, Berlin). In January 2003 she started to work at Utrecht University within the Interuniversity Center for Social Theory and Methodology (ICS) as a PhD student. In 2007 she continued her work at the department of Sociology as a lecturer. Since 2008 she works as trainer, coach and consultant for Schouten & Nelissen International, where she facilitates and manages international in-company trainings and coaching on personal development in the areas of (intercultural) communication, leadership and negotiation skills.

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