



Caring is sharing

Involvement of fathers in care and household tasks in five European countries

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Table of content

Foreword	5
1. Introduction	7
1.1. Theoretical background	7
1.2. Methodology of the interviews with fathers	9
2. Fathers in Spain	17
2.1. Introduction	17
2.2. Realisation of tasks and time division	23
3. Fathers in Poland	35
3.1. Introduction	35
3.2. Relationship of the parents	44
4. Fathers in Italy	63
4.1. Introduction	63
5. Fathers in Latvia	93
5.1. Introduction	93
5.2. Realisation of tasks and time division	96
5.3. View on the division of tasks	99
5.4. Contextual factors	109
6. Fathers in The Netherlands	117
6.1. Introduction	117
6.2. View on the division of tasks	120
6.3. Relationship of the parents	126
6.4. Relationship of father and child	128
6.5. Contextual factors	130
7. Conclusions: A fair distribution of work and care	139
7.1. Introduction	139
7.2. The tasks	140
7.3. The fathers	144
7.4. Mechanisms of change	146
7.5. How to balance work and care?	151

ANNEXES

For the annexes 1 to 9 we refer to the full report on action 1 on the Pariteia website www.pariteia.com : 'Final report of Action 1: A comparative survey'.

Foreword

Pariteia goals and objectives

The Pariteia project aims to establish a European citizenship based on the active participation of women and men in all social, political and professional activities, in order to create the conditions for positive changes within personal and collective culture. Significant differences still exist in Europe from country to country concerning the quality of the economic, social and civil life of women and active citizenship. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a strategy aimed at involving men in the promotion of equal opportunities and in their active participation in gender issues.

The key objectives of Pariteia are:

- To promote full integration of men and women in European citizenship and equal participation in professional, family, social and public life.
- To identify and reinforce the good practices present in the different European countries which are useful for overcoming the existing gaps.
- To promote positive synergies on this issue among the local and European network.
- To implement the awareness and the active participation of men for the realisation of equal opportunity policies in all fields.

These objectives are in line with the objectives of the EU programme on equality between women and men in economic, social and civil life, equal representation and changing gender roles and stereotypes in a mainstreaming perspective. In particular, Pariteia wants to promote a balanced male and female participation in the following fields:

- Employment market and professional life
- Family and care-taking responsibilities
- Managing decisions and power in public and private spheres

The project is based on a multidisciplinary approach, which aims to create a bridge between gender policies and active European

citizenship. Moreover, the project uses the mainstreaming approach to reinforce the competencies on the issue of gender policy.

In order to achieve these aims, the Pariteia Project consists of different actions among which the collection of good practices, the drafting and dissemination of the 'Pariteia Charter of Intents for Equal Citizenship' and a broad survey in the five countries involved. 'Caring is Sharing' is one of the products of this survey. For more information on Pariteia see: www.pariteia.org.

Pariteia partners

The following partners were involved in the Pariteia project

- European Movement International (Transnational coordinator)
- Amsterdam School for Social Science Research (ASSSR) (The Netherlands)
- D&S Group - Napoli (Italy)
- Fundacion Directa (Spain)
- Leon Kozminski Academy of Entrepreneurship and Management (Poland)
- Efeso (Italy)
- University Milano Bicocca (Italy)
- Centro di Iniziativa Europea (CdIE) (Italy)
- Provincia di Napoli (Italy)
- Resource Centre for Women "Marta" (Latvia)
- Comune di Forli (Italy) - associated partner

The Amsterdam School for Social science Research is the responsible partner and the editor of this report. The Pariteia partners that actively contributed to the interviews with fathers are: Resource Centre for Women "Marta" (Latvia), Fundación Directa (Spain), University Milan-Bicocca (Italy), Leon Kozminsky Academy of Entrepreneurship and Management (LKAEM) (Poland). We want to thank them very much for their valuable contributions.

1. Introduction

Author: Sandra ter Woerds

The aim of the interviews with fathers is to assess the differences across the participating European countries concerning the role of fathers in household tasks and care tasks. The main question for the fathers is: what is your view on care and household tasks and how do you deal with these tasks in daily practice? Other important questions to the fathers are:

- How did the current division of tasks come into being and does it correspond with your views?
- Which changes in the division of tasks will take place if your partner would like to work more hours per week? What kind of hindering factors are at stake here?
- What kind of possible solutions do you see yourself? What could the government undertake in this respect?

1.1. Theoretical background

In many countries of the European Union men take the largest share of paid work, while women still have the largest share of household and child care tasks. In most European countries, women spend about twice as much time on childcare tasks than men. Women carry out more household and childcare tasks in all European countries, even if they are in full-time paid employment (Duyvendak & Stavenuiter 2004).

For several reasons the governments of EU countries aim at increasing the participation of women in paid employment. The objective of the countries of the European Union - increasing employment participation of women - is only fair if it is accompanied by an increase in men's share in household and childcare tasks.

Furthermore, concerning the household tasks, it is mainly a question of fair sharing that men make a comparable contribution to household and childcare tasks.

To achieve a more equal distribution of work and care tasks, the first requirement is to have good national arrangements which are essential for a more equal distribution of tasks between men

and women. They enable men to take on more household tasks and allow women to do more work outside the home. However, simply making it possible for men to stay home more and for women to work more is not sufficient for a fair distribution of tasks. A lot more will need to change in order to distribute tasks more justly: who takes on which tasks, including the less enjoyable ones. When we look at fairness, therefore, the goal is not only a balance in **quantity** (how much time) but in **quality** (are the less enjoyable tasks not left for women and who will carry out the tasks that cannot be put off?).

The fact that ideas about the femininity or masculinity of certain care activities have a cultural character means they *are open to change*. The question is then: how can this change be brought about? Why, for example, did shopping become a care task that men were able to take on? Do today's men not mind as much carrying out a task that for a long time has been considered as 'female' or, if these tasks has become 'gender neutral'.

In order to bring about a truly fair distribution of tasks between men and women it is essential that 'caring' and 'femininity' be disassociated. This means stepping away from the fundamental thought that women are better at caring and men are better at doing paid work; that in the end, women are mainly mothers and men are mainly breadwinners. To achieve this, it is essential to de-gender household and family tasks. Any link between a care task and gender may result in a confirmation of gender stereotyping. To be more precise: the care task itself, must become neutral, the way this was successfully achieved with, for instance, doing the shopping. Both men and women can carry out this care task without struggling with the idea that they are doing something that conflicts with their gender identity. Needless to say, the person carrying out the task is still a man or a woman doing the things in their own way. To achieve this de-gendering, we have to look for a number of micro conditions that may explain why and when a certain task will become 'beyond gender'. In order to do so we firstly have to find out who does what tasks within a household? In doing so, it will become clear which tasks are considered male, female or gender-neutral. By interviewing fathers both from standard families (father, mother, and children) and single parent households, we will get more insight in these processes.

1.2. Methodology of the interviews with fathers

Interview guidelines

In each of the participating countries (Holland, Latvia, Spain, Italy and Poland), the Pariteia partners conducted interviews with ten fathers. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. With the transcriptions and the pre-structured answers as ground material each partner drafted their country report according to a prefixed format (see annex 2).

The subject of part one (the standardised questions) was the use of time and the sharing of family tasks: who does what in and around the house of the respondent? The tasks are divided into four groups: Household tasks, care tasks regarding children, supportive tasks and management tasks. This served three goals. Firstly it got the respondent thinking about the issues at stake so that he could enter the interview prepared; Secondly, it gave the interviewer a point of reference for part two (e.g.: is what he says reflected in what he does?), and it gave insight into the actual situation within the households in the respective countries.

In the in-depth interview (part two) the interviewer asked the respondent questions to which the respondent could answer freely. The topics in the topic list merely served as a guideline for the interviewer. It gives openings for the respondent to comment upon his own situation and to expose his vision and views. The order of the questions could be changed according to the line of the conversation. The four main subjects in the interview were the division of tasks, the relationship of the parents, the relationship between father and child and the contextual factors that play a role in the task division.

All the interviewers stuck to the interview outline as prepared by the Pariteia team as much as possible. Our Italian partner drafted her own version of the topic list in order to make it more accessible and workable for the interviewers.

Recruitment of interviewers

Interviewers in the different countries were selected, keeping the following features in mind. Ideally, the interviewer should:

- Be enthusiastic about and have affinity with the subject of gender equality.
- Be able to discuss this issue with male respondents.

- Be able to follow the interview instructions.
- Have an open attitude: let the respondent do the talking.
- Be able to ask critical questions.
- Be able to translate to and from English versus the native language.
- Be able to write the report in English.

In Latvia, the Pariteia partner recruited one interviewer to conduct the interviews and write up the report. In Poland, the interviews were conducted by two persons - in the ratio of 8 to 2. Most of the deeper-going interviews were conducted by a person responsible for this component of the project - a researcher with a wealth of experience in social research, especially in that which is carried out with qualitative methods, specialising in gender studies. This person was also responsible for preparing the research report. In Italy the interviews were carried out by two female interviewers from the University of Milan-Bicocca, The interviews in the Netherlands were done by a researcher of the Verwey-Jonker Institute, and the country report was written in collaboration with a colleague researcher. The interviews in Spain were conducted by an expert in gender issues and the report was written by her.

Recruitment of respondents

The method for selection of the fathers to be interviewed was a non-probability sample, also known as the snowball-method. The partners in the different countries recruited fathers from their own circle of colleagues, friends and family. The total number of interviews that were held in each country is ten. This is a relatively small amount of respondents that will not allow us to make overall conclusions. Instead, it will give us qualitative insight into the situation of fathers in the respective countries. Of course, local differences among the countries are unavoidable. Below we give an impression of the recruitment process per country.

In Latvia the standard fathers were found among fathers that were known personally. They were acquaintances and/or colleagues and friends. Three of the single fathers were found by asking acquaintances. However, it must be stressed that it was extremely difficult to find the other two single fathers. In the end, our Latvian partner did manage to find five single

fathers that agreed to be interviewed. But the reasons why it was so difficult were:

- there were fathers which are formally responsible of a child (it means they get alimony and/or child care allowance, but actually another person is taking care of a child/children (child's grandmother, man's sister, girlfriend or even his grandmother);
- there were fathers which were registered as a person who gets pension or benefit but a child/children had a guardian;
- there were fathers who got alimony from their ex-wives and got married again;
- there were fathers whose child/children were already after 14;
- there were fathers who said that they are extremely busy to give the interview and didn't find time for it even they showed willingness in the beginning;
- there were fathers in municipalities (most in countryside) that has no phone and it was hard to reach them;
- some fathers rejected to be interviewed.

In addition, in The Netherlands the search for single fathers was the most difficult one. While the 'standard fathers' were easily found, the single fathers needed an extra effort. The website www.1ouder.nl has put an advertisement on their website and the website www.vve-online.nl sent the members of their database an e-mail about the project Pariteia. Only four persons reacted on this advertisement and two of them were older than 50 years old and thus did not belong to our target group. One father was recruited via the forum of the website www.vadersalleen.nl

The search for standard fathers was easier although most of the fathers that were approached were busy and very occupied men and couldn't find time for an interview.

Our Spanish partner aimed at finding a heterogeneous group in selecting respondents. This in order to achieve a wide diversity among their answers. The recruitment has faced several difficulties, as either the majority of separated men lived with other persons or the children lived with their mothers.

What proved most effective in Poland was the snowball method for acquiring respondents. As might have been foreseen, respondents belonging to the 'single fathers' group proved most difficult to enlist. In Poland, 5.2 % of court cases over parental

rights end in victory for the fathers. So there's immense difficulty in finding and enlisting such persons. For that reason, the research project leader posted appeals for volunteers to 5 of the biggest Polish websites catering for fathers, but these too, brought no effect. Fathers approached via chat lines - who are fighting for their rights - did not want to consent to be interviewed. Their reasoning can be presumably attributed in large measure to the suspicion and fear that "everything they say could be used against them." Finally, we succeeded in interviewing one widower, three fathers with partial custodial rights over their children. It was decided to supplement the 'fathers' pool' with someone whose wife is working abroad, spending most of the year there, and visiting the family only in holiday periods and on important festive occasions.

That, in any case, is a very interesting new situation, encountered with increasing frequency since Poland's accession to the European Union. In Poland, the permanent absence of a partner is commonly termed 'grass widowhood'. That is why we decided to interview a respondent who fulfilled the criteria of a 'single father', if not in the formal sense, then in the practical sense. The recruitment of fathers enjoying a standard relationship was easier. Although here, the implementation of interviews encountered certain difficulties that might be worth mentioning. One interview with a man encountered the suspicion of his partner. More often than not, the condition of consent for the husband to be interviewed was the prior consent of his wife. It occurred rarely, but there were situations in which the respondent justified his refusal to be interviewed by the excessive intrusiveness of the topic. Such refusal was founded on the need to protect the sphere of intimate relations. It should generally be asserted that the group of respondents in the research proved difficult to recruit, and the research topic was characterised by a big dose of 'social sensitivity'. The respondents in Italy were firstly selected with the "objective" sample technique, so as to single out potential interviewees with specific characteristics, and subsequently with snowball sampling, i.e. through the information the interviewees themselves gave about other fathers willing to be interviewed.

Description of the respondents

In selecting the ten fathers to be interviewed, the Pariteia partners in the five countries were asked to keep a few criteria and guidelines in mind.

There were criteria concerning the type of family and age of respondents. As to the type of family we asked the Pariteia partners to select five fathers within so-called 'standard families' meaning: living with mother, father and child(ren), and five single fathers (lone parenthood families): fathers living with their children without the presence of the mother. As to the age-criterion, the fathers should be between 18 and 45 years old and their child or (one of their) children must ideally be between 0 and 14 years old. Also here, partners managed to fit this criterion.

Next to the criteria, there were a few guidelines for the selection process of respondents; these were suggestions in order to create diversity among the respondents. We suggested to select people from both settings: as well from rural area as from the city, if possible. Secondly, we wanted to include fathers with different working circumstances. Among the respondents there should exist some variation as to the amount of working hours, working from home and outside, and 9 to 5 working hours or irregular hours (e.g. weekend shifts and nightshifts). Last and third, we wanted to have fathers with different professional background. So the partners were asked to select fathers with different work settings (e.g. working class and white collar, office and factory) and fathers with differing levels of education.

In annex four, you can find five tables in which we give an overview of all the fathers interviewed on their main characteristics (according to the criteria and guidelines) per country. From these tables, we can conclude that the partners succeeded very well in putting together a heterogeneous group of fathers. Time investment and setting of the interviews .

All the interviews took place between June and October 2006. The pre-estimated time of the interview was between 1,5 to 2 hours. In Latvia the recruitment of respondents started in May 2006. It took approximately 2 weeks between the first call in which the father was invited for the interview and the actual taking place of the interview. Interview time ranged between 1 ½ to 2 hours. In the Netherlands the interview duration varied

from 45 minutes to 1,5 hours. In Spain the time engaged for the performance of interviews differs from one father to another. This aspect is mainly related to the capacity of oral expression and writing skills, and this is mainly due to the educational level of respondents. For example, it was necessary to fill in the answers of practically illiterate fathers, which led to a great engagement of time. Roughly, the average time dedicated to each father was about 4 hours.

Two interviews in Latvia took place in an outdoor café chosen by fathers. The rest of interviews were held in the homes of the respondents. Eight fathers filled out the interview cards themselves, while two fathers preferred to be interviewed and cards were filled out by interviewer.

The fathers in The Netherlands were interviewed from their homes. They filled in the cards beforehand and returned them to the interviewer. During one interview, the partner was nearby but wasn't involved in the conversation.

Most of the interviews in Spain were performed at their homes, but some were also performed at their work places. In Poland, most of the interviews, except for two, were held at the respondents' homes, typically after work or during free time. The interviews were conducted in an authentic environment as far as the research topic was concerned. Frequently it tied in with the presence of third parties - children and/or wives, who, as mentioned earlier, frequently tended to keep an eye on the interview process. A wife's presence could have, on the one hand, a restrictive effect on the sincerity of the answers but, on the other, it could give them credibility. Most the partners were only present at the beginning of the interview.

In Italy, almost all the interviews took place deliberately in quiet, calm places with no other person present. In two out of the ten interviews, the wife's presence could not be avoided. This was definitely a problem, in that it prevented the emergence of expressions of dissatisfaction, conflict and unclarified points due to a power relationship within the couple. In one interview this emerged very clearly since the husband let himself go in critical observations regarding the mother-daughter relationship only when the mother was absent. During the first part of the interview, when the mother was present, a much rosier "cover up" family picture was depicted than that emerging when the interviewer and interviewee were alone. In

the mothers' presence, critical family situations were presented more often through jokes and by playing down the drama. And not so much through the organic, in-depth and exhaustive discourse which might be obtained without the presence of their wives.

Structure of this report

This report is edited and compiled by the partner in The Netherlands. In the chapters two to six we present five country reports that were drafted by each of the Pariteia partners or the researchers and authors that were contracted by them. These chapters all have a similar structure but, depending on local circumstances and ways of working, will differ. For example, some of the partners found certain parallels between the fathers, and others discovered a link between childhood and current ways of dealing with task division. In the annexes 5 to 9 you can find the results of the questionnaires that the fathers filled in concerning realisation of tasks and time division. Per annex the results of one country are presented. Chapter seven contains the overall conclusions in which we will overview the situation in the five countries and come to some general denominators but also to substantial differences between the countries.

2. Fathers in Spain

Author: M^a Dolores Jiménez Guardado

2.1. Introduction

The increasing role of women in the labour market - which is the most important social change of the last decades - leads to a multiple dimension challenge for balancing contemporary society.

The increasing process of women's participation in the labour market is a constant feature of Western industrialised countries. The participation rate of women in Spain has increased from 38,18 per cent in 1996 to 47,93 per cent in the second quarter of 2006 . When analysing the situation of Córdoba - located in the Andalusian region - the information and data collected are quite similar: the female participation rate has increased from 35,67 per cent in 1996 to 43,25 per cent in the second quarter of 2006¹. However, the trend of the occupation rate in the following analysis turns out to be more illustrative: in the same evaluation period it has increased from 28,2 per cent to 42,9 percent² . The registered improvement on employment affects exclusively women, while men suffer a loss in the number of workers.

Although the truth is that this evolution is positive from the point of view of women, we should not restrict our analysis to participation or employment. In that case, we would only analyse the less significant part of the remarkable change that is taking place. According to several authors as Garrido, women start their occupational activity later and they retire later. Thus increasing notably the intensity of their labour participation, as well as the intensity of their commitment and dedication. This situation gave rise to a reorganisation of the age profile of occupational activity among women. This reorganisation, linked to the increase of their educational level, forms a complete

¹ Source: INE (Spanish National Institute of Employment). Survey of Active Population.

² Source: INE. Survey of Active Population.

transformation of their labour biographies. The named reorganisation has dramatically affected other kinds of activities that are performed by women, which mainly consist of the upbringing of children.

Maybe we should consider fertility as the most influential demographical phenomenon throughout the last years. This raised the alarm among our demographers that are responsible for social politics and education. If we take into account a generations' reproduction - which demands an average number of 2.1 children per woman - we are far from the verge of replacement: in Andalusia the average number of children per woman in the year 2005 was 1.472³. Women have fewer children, and the first childbirth is delayed increasingly. In the specific example of Andalusia, the average age was 30.35⁴ years in 2004, gathering the reproductive period in a short period. The delay in the maternity calendar is increasingly threatening and might become irrecoverable.

As for the figures, we could state that the entrance and persistence of women in employment have created new demographic issues. The incorporation of women into employment involves an additional demand for the social protection system. On the one hand, there is a great demand of care tasks for children and dependent persons in helping with the reorganisation of the traditional "child care professionals" to another form of fulfilling these tasks. On the other hand, we found specific conditions of time management, flexible working hours and mobility. All the mentioned items must be added to the compatibility of family and labour responsibilities in equal opportunities, which requires a complex and integral architecture in favour of life sustainability for both men and women. It is obvious that the fact of women leaving their homes would imply the entry of men in the world of care and household tasks. This phenomenon has been called by some authors as "sliding doors" or the "Arquimedes' principle" (one leaves and the other enters to keep the same level of assistance). Apart from this reasoning, it is important to stress the fact that once one of the mentioned pillars fails (services, flexible hours for men and

³ Source: INE. Basic demographic indicators. Birth rate and fertility. 2005.

⁴ Source: INE. Basic demographic indicators. Birth rate and fertility. 2004.

women, mobility, shared responsibility of men in housework and assistance tasks) the “settlement” between the mentioned responsibilities mainly come down to women. This leads to “balancing acts” that undermine the welfare and health of women against the welfare of men.

So the paradox perceived in Spain as an “ordinary dysfunction”, that takes part of our everyday reality, arises. On the one hand, the incorporation of women in employment is, more and more, becoming a requirement to face the new challenges of our welfare state. This is linked to the demographic challenge of an ageing population and the markets’ globalisation. On the other hand, it threatens with overflowing the capacity of the social protection system to cover and give enough securities to everyone.

Over the last years, women have become the central focus of state politics in Spain, both from the point of view of the access and persistence in employment, and from the point of view of social benefits balance. This situation led men to the margin of the changing process, which might entails a future of uncertain invasions without their co-responsibility and participation. Women have a new social leading role. To fulfil this role they require the same terms of payment than their male partners, as well as leadership and authority positions in the labour market that contribute to complete the circle of the desired social change. However, patriarchal values, beliefs and gender stereotypes represent an invisible wall, persistent within institutions, organisations, families and society in general. The ways we define the “gender contract” in our society (where and how women and men must be situated) determine and will determine the nature and scope of the “employment contract” desired by women and men. Equal opportunities turn up as a compulsory objective, but above all, as a way to standardise and make compatible the gender and employment contract.

Family well-being and collective well-being (radically different one from another) are both important. Of course, they are not restricted to private negotiation based on the free relation between persons, families and market. The gear between the double social contract is created by the state, and more directly by the organisations and institutions that provide the necessary channels to reach the people favoured by their actions.

In spite of everything, there is not much to do if we do not approach the problems. Neither if we do not apply strategies and consensual tools that are determined and carefully articulated. Equality requires centrality and the capacity to recreate a new reality that gives new opportunities to men and women, from the same stage of politics, programs and projects. Regarding the conciliation of family life and professional life, the initiatives in Spain have been addressed to promote more and better childcare services and to make the work organisation more flexible. On the other hand, services for dependent persons, especially old people, have been paid little attention to. With the future Dependence Law, the situation of old people and dependent people with chronic diseases in our country will considerably improve.

In spite of the increasing importance of this kind of politics, conciliation has supporters and critics. According to the supporters, conciliation involves the transition from the family model where the male is the only maintainer, to a family model with double incomes. For these supporters, conciliation enables the women to leave home and to strengthen ties in the labour market. Theoretically, the double income model would involve men and women in an equal way in remunerated work and unpaid work at home, favouring elimination of differences. In practice, we will see this is not completely true. On the other hand, for some authors, conciliation policies will not change gender relationships because they don't affect the model of housework distribution developed in private spheres. The results achieved in the present investigation are a clear sign of that.

In fact, the effectiveness of conciliation politics on women's life quality depends on the conception of the social role of women and of the orientation of equal opportunities policies developed by governments. In this particular case of Córdoba, where the predominant stereotype is that of women as mainly responsible of family care, the conflict solution in private spheres is left in women's hands.

Measures in favour of increasing male involvement in household tasks and family responsibilities are the answer of to profoundly reorganise the traditional division of work. However, the institutions find it difficult to face.

Presentation of the interviewed fathers

We will start the report on the interviews and questionnaires with a short presentation of the ten fathers that were interviewed and their social origins.

Fathers from standard families

Father 1 grew up in a “gypsy clan” ruled by “gypsy” law, which enhances the highest expression of the patriarch and reduces women to submission towards the husband and devotion to child care, family and relatives. The patriarch always has the last word. He is a middle-aged gypsy respected and obeyed by the clan. He acts as a judge to extend the Gypsy Law. Women must pass on customs and they symbolise ‘honour’. When a woman gets married, she becomes part of the husband’s lineage, but she is not completely incorporated until she gives birth to children. This father has not finished primary education. His father needed him for the family trade business. Nowadays he works as a travelling trader.

Father 2 comes from a standard family and has three brothers and one sister. He explains that “housework was done by my mother and sister, who left the school once she finished primary education to help my mother.” He states that he is not in favour of the discrimination his sister suffered and he is trying not to treat his two daughters in that way. He declares that those were ‘different days’. He studied general education in a public school and once finished, he started a vocational training in the metal industry, and he still works in this field and has set up his own business.

Father 3 states that his mother used to do everything concerning the house, the children and the husband. He often heard his mother saying: “you have to study to become a good man in the future.” Nowadays, he has two daughters and he is married with a working woman. He tries to introduce a different concept of sharing tasks to the one he experienced in his youth. Despite having a university degree, he hasn’t found a job related to his education. Nowadays, he is a part of the public administration staff and he works as a caretaker in school.

Father 4 was raised in a well-off standard family, surrounded by right-wing views. He studied in a school in which the main regulations were according to Opus Dei. In this school they were urged to analyse carefully the knowledge of the orders given by bishops of the diocese and those of the Episcopal

Conference. Nowadays he works in a fruit shop in a supermarket, the same place where his wife works, but on different shifts.

Father 5 literally exposed that “religion at home has the same function as a decorating vase.” He explains that it was difficult not to be a catholic because it involved not meeting the norm of the dictatorship of General Franco. However, his family was very open to new ideas. He studied tourism and he works from time to time as a tourist guide. He is preparing to become an Evangelic Religion teacher. With regard to his religious change he exposes: “I have reached stability and I have more time to spend with my family.” He is characterised as a man that enjoys the life among his family.

Separated (or single) fathers

Father 6 is of gypsy origin and his convictions are in line with his origin, for example when it comes to the role of women. He comes from a numerous family. Nowadays, he does not live with his wife. He declares “*I manage with my sisters’ help, who is like my mom.*” He didn’t finish primary education and he states that “school was only for payos, how we call Spaniards. My mom had problems with that and a lot of people who were worried came to our house about us not attending school.” Currently, he is unemployed: “I just get along by wheeling and dealing. Life is expensive and we have to get ahead. I have 4 children and I must help them.”

Father 7 has spent his childhood and adolescence in a standard family, where the father worked outside the house and the mother was dedicated to housework with her daughters’ help. He was the only male and his only obligation was to study. His two sisters also studied, but he remembers that “they used to get up when one of the men needed something.” He followed administrative studies and he currently works in a sport federation as a public employee. He is separated and has a 7 year old daughter who lives with the mother.

Father 8 comes from a numerous family, him being the youngest one. His father worked outside home and sometimes his mother also worked. Two brothers studied at the university and another one chose the vocational training. One sister studied at university and the two others worked and learnt sewing and embroidery. He has a university degree and spent some years in

the army. Then he studied environmental studies, and he now is a public employee in the local government.

Father 9 was raised in a middle class family and he only has one sister: “my sister had the same opportunities that I had. I can assure you of that.” He has a daughter, 2 years of age, who lives with her mother. Although he doesn’t have a university degree, he is educated in subjects related to literature, cinema and music. From the early age he had temporary jobs that were evidently insufficient to maintain the house. Currently, he works for a company dedicated to electronics and computing.

Father 10 was raised in a countryside family where both parents worked as farmers. His sister did the housework and he studied. He has one son. He has a university degree in speech therapy, the subject he nowadays teaches. He is waiting to pass the competitive exam to achieve a fixed post in public administration. He already has economical stability, but he would like to achieve also geographical stability.

2.2. Realisation of tasks and time division

Household tasks

One of the standard fathers sincerely declares: “according to my culture a man in charge of household task is not acceptable. The gypsy male must be a real man and the woman is the one in charge of care tasks, cleaning and washing. The kids help her, except for male gypsies. If a gypsy man helps a woman, he will be branded as gay.” The interviewer asked if he really feels what he has just said. He hesitates when acknowledging that “maybe if I lived in another place without the influence of my family. But everyone knows what happens in my neighbourhood and I would be considered a henpecked husband.” He ends his answer with the following phrase “at least I put the rubbish out.”

Father 2 says: “I am dedicated above all to help my daughters and to do the shopping. Physical care tasks are usually done by the mother. His wife works outside only for several hours, so she still has time to complete the housework. He states that “my daughters have grown up, so we should all collaborate. However, my wife is still in charge of the biggest part of the tasks.” He defines himself as a *handyman* who helps, whenever he can, with the maintenance of the house. He doesn’t mind to

do the shopping, but he only takes his daughters to the doctor when his wife can't do it.

A father whose partner works in a hospital in different shifts, states that "I do the same tasks at home that my wife does. When she works at night I prepare dinner for my daughters and wash up the dishes. Then, I put them to bed and I make sure they are fine. During the afternoon I help them with studying." When asked about what happens when he and his wife are both at home, he responds that they both collaborate, "even sometimes I ask her to have a sit and relax and I take care of my daughters." When asked who is in charge of turning on the washing machine, who takes the children to the doctor or who visits the "baby clinic", he declares that he finds laundry and ironing difficult. If the mother is not available he takes the children to the doctor otherwise his wife is in charge of everything related to health.

Father 4 states that they share their tasks, as his working timetable does not fit in with the one of his partner. They both work at a supermarket and they ask their shifts not to coincide with each other so that both of them can take care of their son. On the other hand, he acknowledges that he is completely useless for household tasks and he needs help from the women from his family to perform basic organisation and household tasks. For him, to be around and come back home to be with his son is far enough.

Father 5 acknowledges "my wife spends nearly all her time cleaning the house and taking care of our daughters. I work out of the house so I dedicate less time to the household tasks. Maybe I spend more time going for a walk with my daughters and helping them with their homework, etc."

According to the interviews, there are more separated than single men who help with household tasks. Three of these fathers declare they clean the house, but the frequency changes, depending on the available time and their will. One single father has his sister's help, so she is the one that cooks and cleans the house. He doesn't do anything a woman can do.

Care and family tasks

Among the standard fathers there is one father that forms an exception. He states to be in charge of the physical and emotional care of his son, in the same way as his partner is. She works on changing shifts and when they planned their respective

jobs they took into account the following fact: “We asked to have different shifts so that at least one of us can always be with the kid.” The rest of the fathers of this group affirm to take care more of tasks related to discipline than physical ones or development-related tasks. One father explains that “My wife works with changing shifts so if we are both at home I admit I try to turn a deaf ear and spend the time doing things that satisfy me. If I am alone I have to manage on my own as I can.” Regarding the single fathers, circumstances help to define the division of care tasks concerning sons and daughters. However, when the father has a new partner, we face a transfer of care tasks towards the new woman. It causes a chain of care activities carried out exclusively by women. Except for one, all interviewed fathers explain that they are alone and they in general have little time to spend with their children (weekends and holidays). They have to take care of their children with the support of their close family (mostly these are female family members). Father 6, however, mentions “my children are with their mother so when they come home my sister takes care of them because I ’m not used to do things related to the children care.”

Supporting tasks

The results achieved from the questionnaires on supporting tasks show similarities among the respondents (whether they are separated fathers or standard fathers). They all declare this kind of tasks are shared fifty-fifty with their couple or ex-couple. These tasks are the most pleasant for them, as they feel they are more prepared for them. Fathers admit to enjoy helping the children with their homework, taking them to activities outside the school, playing with them in parks, and going to the cinema or to a match. On the other hand, they agree on the difficulty of facing several topics depending on the sex and age of their children. Several fathers respond they don’t know how they would act with children of the opposite sex to the ones that they have now. During the interviews we found answers like: “I treat my son the same way I treat my daughter”, “I only have daughters so I am not sure what I would do if I had sons, but I think I would treat them equally.” Father 6 states: “sometimes I do take care of the boy; the girls keep up with her mother.” Father 1 made similar comments when he states “my boy has to learn to sort out his life on his own. About my daughter, my only

concern is that she gets married to a good gypsy man who is going to respect her.”

Management tasks

Two standard fathers responded that in their marriage both spouses take care of the organisation tasks. They agree when they affirm that their wife is as qualified as they are to perform any organisation activity, and even they prefer them to perform some of these tasks. One father answers: “I am the only one who performs these tasks my wife delegates them to me, so. I manage the finances, although she is the one who spends the great part of the income.” Another father says: “I am dealing with paperwork, I manage finances at home, but she gets everything she asks for. She is the one who takes the children to the doctor, to the school, etc.” Only one of the fathers delegates these tasks to his wife: “I trust in her doing better than I do, she is smart and has got better character for that.” The standard fathers admit that their wife is in charge of school, neighbours, district, family and health. They take care of local community, banks, taxes, insurance, etc. This represents a “typical” share of roles.

As for the single fathers, when they live alone, they have to deal with organisation tasks related to their own situation.

Management tasks related to children are performed by the mothers, because they all have the children’s custody. This group agrees with the previous one as far as school is concerned, which is entirely managed by the mothers. None of them visits the school to follow their sons and daughters educational progress. If any problem arises, they will act. Only in specific situations, they admit to have performed these tasks.

Time sharing

The standard fathers devote between 50-60% of their time to the performance of professional tasks (activities inside or outside home related to work). The rest of the time they merely stay at home or carry out some administration jobs, which results in having left time for leisure activities, usually during the weekend. The group of separated (single) fathers devotes between 40 and 50% of time to the performance of professional tasks. The rest of the time is devoted to household or management activities related to children when they are over the

weekends or holidays with the fathers. They clearly devote more time to leisure activities than the previous group. As for the two interviewed members of ethnic minorities, they are the fathers that devote less time than the others to their wife and children. They spend nearly all their time with their businesses and male activities held by what they call 'brojneros' (chiefs of family groups) or by 'batós' (fathers of families).

View on the division of tasks

All of the fathers who were interviewed, with the exception of the fathers of gypsy origin, have spoken about the idea that it is necessary that all family members help with household tasks. They also agree that there are no male or female tasks. They do, however, recognise that men prefer specific tasks and usually they choose to do these tasks. As for the gypsy fathers, collaboration and sharing of tasks is completely out of their cultural reality. Their culture is full of rules based on solidarity, freedom, purity, respect to agreements and the help to the family; everything is created by and for males. Some of the fathers see their help as subsidiary, as 'helping' their partners. When talking about household tasks, one father states: "If she doesn't ask me to do something, I never take the first step." Regarding preferences when choosing tasks to perform, they all select management tasks, except one of them, who prefers to leave this task to his wife. Another task they admit to prefer is to promote and provide children's leisure. As to the other household tasks, whenever they can, they let their wife or other persons do them.

When organising the division of tasks, the married fathers agree that the decisive factor is the time available to the two partners. Two of the fathers work in shifts and this was an important fact to bear in mind. The separated fathers do most of the tasks themselves or acquire the help of someone else. When asked about the difficulties found trying to reconcile family and working life, they state they haven't found too many difficulties. However, they all complain about the loss of leisure time and personal commitments. It's worth stressing that those fathers with partners with paid work are more involved in household tasks than those with non-working partners. The last group of fathers admits to collaborate only in specific situations and only when their partners ask them to do so.

Regarding governmental collaboration, respondents agree with the necessity of an increase in the number of childcare leave, flexible working hours and economic assistance to facilitate women working more and more outside their home. Regarding company policies and working hours, they consider that it is impossible to make changes because customer service hours or civil service hours are already fixed. They declare things have already changed and nowadays women have better conditions than in the past.

Relationship of the parents

Only one of the five separated fathers does not keep contact with his ex-partner. During his interview, the constant rejection of his children's mother was obvious. For this reason, he has no contact with the mother and the rest of the family. It is even inappropriate, due to the family quarrels that may occur. The rest of the fathers affirm to have a fluent and correct relation and communication with their children's mother when they need to solve any problem or there is a social event. Solutions are achieved by mutual consensus. Sometimes the father gives in, and other times it is the mother who gives in. They consider this is the only way to achieve understanding and to take accurate decisions. Some answers were very frequently given, such as: "we talk about it and finally reach an agreement" "sometimes she must give in, other times it's my turn to give in."

Talking about the division of household tasks based on gender, respondents don't think there are any activities related to the care for children that fit either better the mother or the father. The division depends on the will and sensitivity of each person, and frequently men are considered not "sensitive" enough to perform several tasks. In any case, they admit they are still under the influence of the education they received, and the things they have seen in childhood at their homes.

We asked our respondents if they feel their partners' support and encouragement when taking care of household tasks and they answer positively. However, they point out that, sometimes, women don't appreciate the effort they are making when they perform activities they are not trained for. They consider their partners only pay attention to the result, without appreciating their intention. They sometimes even receive

critical comments for the performed tasks, such as ‘the bed is not made correctly’ or ‘the salad is tasteless’. A father says: “sometimes my wife refuses my help because, according to her, I double her work.” They consider this attitude of several women discouraging. Especially, when it comes to those tasks that can be done by both, such as cleaning the house and cooking.

Relationship of father and child

Paternity is considered by our interviewed fathers as a great responsibility for which they are not sufficiently prepared. They consider this to be a factor that can generate problems with their partner. For them paternity means to help the children in their physical and emotional development and to facilitate their independence and the development of their personalities. These are tasks that they do not consider to be complicated. Most of the interviewed fathers agree that there is no reason to treat boys or girls differently. Although they consider that some tasks are easier for them than others depending on whether the child is of the same sex as the father. When raising the question: “would you give the same time limit for coming back home to a son and a daughter?” the fathers who have sons respond ‘yes’ promptly. Those having daughters are not so sure. They come with answers as “life is very bad, there is lot of craziness around.” The fathers of gypsy origin affirm to dedicate more of their time to male children leaving the girls in the hands of the women. Within the gypsy culture, the virginity of the women until the marriage is associated with the family and lineage honour.

Contextual factors

When asking the fathers to compare their paternity with the one of their own fathers, all respond categorically that it is completely different for them. One of them explains that “my father was a stranger to me.” Some of the interviewed fathers agree that the roles of their fathers’ were to work, to bring money and in some cases to go to the bar with friends; that is the way they lived. They state also that they hardly saw their fathers and that their mothers took care of their problems. They underline the differences between their way of fulfilling fatherhood and what they experiences with their fathers.

They criticise, or consider it as an extreme attitude, when a child does not distinguish the father from a friend. Many fathers try to come closer to their children in order to become their friends. According to them, a father must play his role and fulfil his function as it is: as a father. The child must know how to differentiate between the character of a father and the one of a friend.

Generally they consider themselves as “children of their time”, according to comments of one of the fathers, whose mentality has been changing and he is open to new ideas. These mentality changes can be appreciated more noticeably in urban environments, although gradually they are being extended also to small populations.

In the case of fathers pertaining to the gypsy ethnic group, they point out that the changes of mentality are more difficult to obtain. They state: “We have been in Spain for hundreds of years and continue doing almost the same things as in the past. The different cultures do not mix.”

The vision of Spanish fathers on the use of kindergartens and baby-sitters has changed over the last years. Fathers agree that years ago the use of these services was not considered appropriate. It was like leaving your children, and it is still difficult for the older generation to accept it. Nowadays, it is more normal and necessary for the parents and it is considered to be beneficial for the development of the children. All interviewed fathers made or are making use of these services and recognise their importance as far as the education and the development of personality of the offspring is concerned. It is a first necessity in the families.

Finally, in this section we asked who could influence more and in a better way the division of tasks: the family, the society, the companies, or the government. The answers are diverse: “the partner is the one that has the biggest influence” affirms father 4. In the case of father 5, he states that everybody should contribute but “I do not like too much interventionism on behalf of the government concerning what I should think or do.” Others do not know it very clearly but, if necessary one can always blame the society and the government.

Conclusions

Analysing the questionnaires and the interviews made with this sample of Spanish fathers we can draw the following conclusions as a summary:

1st) The necessity of collaboration of all the family members in the household tasks is an answer that has appeared frequently in the interviews.

2nd) The help offered by men in the household activities is considered as 'assisting' or 'helping' their wife and normally the tasks are carried out by women. The fathers do not consider themselves co-responsible.

3rd) On the other hand, the fathers whose partner has a job, dedicate more time to domestic tasks than those whose spouse does not work.

4th) Some fathers whose wife does not work outside home, consider that the distribution of household tasks is automatically arranged: one family member works outside the house and the other does all the tasks at home. They state "women being at home all day long have enough time to do each thing and they are not going to expect me start cleaning when I come back home."

5th) The separated fathers mainly perform the household tasks themselves, because they have no choice. But, whenever they can, they transfer tasks to other women within their family or hire a cleaning lady.

6th) In case of child care, the mother usually is in charge of the physical and emotional care and the father takes care of the disciplinary aspects. These seem for them to be less complicated. According to the fathers, they have not received any specific education allowing them to take over the tasks that are usually performed by mothers. They feel a little bit unconscious and in some cases incompetent. There is however a distinction between the separated fathers and the standard ones, as one of the interviewed separated fathers stated: "It is a question of will and how much you want to learn."

7th) The separated fathers claim to be able to perform the same tasks as their ex-partners. However, they make use of support of third persons.

8th) Assisting tasks, in general, are carried out by fathers in the standard families.

9th) Considering the distribution of tasks, the time factor is the determining one. In cases where both spouses work, it is certain that the time available puts pressure on the distribution of tasks according to the working day.

10th) There is a necessity for companies and the state to offer more flexibility in terms of working hours, family finances and use kindergartens. The interviewed fathers do not seem dissatisfied with their work arrangements, since they give the impression to be able to find facilities at the time of conciliating family and working life. We have to keep in mind that the majority of the interviewed fathers works in public administration or are employers themselves. They do not feel any time pressure, because the support they give in their houses seems to be only the tip of the iceberg of the total amount of care and domestic activities. This also goes for fathers whose partners work outside the home.

11th) As far as the necessity of financial aid and the flexibility and extension of opening hours of kindergartens, all fathers agree that an improvement is necessary.

12th) It is very important to reach an agreement between partners where the children are concerned. It is necessary 'to negotiate' and 'to renegotiate' continuously the terms of the 'contract'. Our interviewed fathers agree that it is essential to reach a mutual consensus and to be able to give in, when there is no agreement. They express clearly that nowadays the children demand a lot and have many rights. As far as the education of children is concerned, the enforcement of discipline is the reason it becomes difficult. In the past, men did not have to justify and to negotiate everything. This gives them an impression of the loss of rights and power.

13th) According to the results of the interviews, the fathers do not consider the existence of certain masculine or feminine roles in the distribution of tasks and taking care of children. However, that depends largely on the will of the person and the partner, as if it was a matter of an intimate and personal trade.

14th) There is a great difference in the conception of paternity in relation to ones own childhood. And, there is a great similarity with respect to friends of nowadays. It has been shown that the way of understanding paternity is influenced by the political, social and cultural changes that occurred over the last 30 years. These changes have influenced fatherhood. We can see that for example in the intergenerational communication between parents and children.

15th) With respect to the subject of the kindergartens and baby sitters, it is considered a necessity not only for the fathers but also for the children. In the case of fathers, when both spouses are working, the use of the kindergarten and baby sitters is necessary for time management reasons. Within couples where one of the partners does not work, the use of the kindergarten is seen as an important socialisation and education place for the children.

16th) All interviewed fathers articulate and support their conformity regarding the importance of the collaboration of society regarding facilitation of services and in guaranteeing the rights of women in the labour market. They think that this should proceed without discrimination of any kind. The ethics of equality and participation exists in the gathered information from fathers and in their discourse. In their words, this ethic is noticeable and very clear. However, in the behaviour and attitude of most interviewed fathers this ethic is not always present.

3. Fathers in Poland

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3.1. Introduction

The aim of the interviews with fathers was to establish the differences in the existing male role models - of the partner and father in taking on domestic duties and looking after children - between the countries participating in the survey. The main research question was:

How does the father see his share in fulfilling domestic duties and how does he perform them in everyday practice. How did the present division of duties arise, and is it consonant with their conception (and thus to what extent does it accord with how it should be in their opinion). Would any changes have occurred in the division of duties to date if the partner (wife) began to devote more time to paid work (working longer hours each week)? What are the factors influencing the changes in the division of duties between the partners? What are the possible solutions in this regard? Is there any role for the government (legislation) in this field?

View on the division of tasks

Among single fathers, the prevalent conviction was that the division of duties into female and male ones is 'justified', in which the female ones are understood to be running the house, and the male role being that of provider to keep the house, i.e. the earner. 'Women's activities' in their view are washing, cooking and cleaning. The male function is to earn a living and take on chores requiring physical strength such as domestic repairs, lawn mowing, chopping fire wood, or stoking up the boiler. In any case, the division into activities requiring physical strength and those which can be done without such exertion was the criterion most commonly applicable not only to the group of single fathers but to the whole sample.

“Cooking or washing - that’s more a woman’s job ... and for the man - some sort of repairs, tidying up the yard, or cutting the grass.”

“I would like the woman to take on such duties, and I am not even talking about cleaning, washing up, but about such care for the house that ensures that some bills are not lying about unpaid, in other words, household management as such, because its not even that, because I can do some washing up, only I wouldn’t want to bear this responsibility.”

Several fathers presented such a division of duties as ideal, but impossible to implement in practice in their cases, one - because of his partner’s resistance, others - because of life’s ineluctable demands such as the woman’s professional work or her permanent absence (in the case of widowers and single fathers) due to death, duties away from home or divorce (the divorce itself was caused by differences of opinion on what is a ‘fair’ division of duties).

“By my reckoning, it should be that what I do now when my wife is out of the house, should be done by my wife, but since the situation required that it should be her that had to go and work abroad, its too bad. It is as it is.”

“Before, when she didn’t work, she looked after the house more, and I did not involve myself in that, but now, for the last two years, when she went to work, I do a little bit of everything, whatever’s needed.”

“As I was with Agnieszka, the position was that we lived in Milanówek, I would go to work in the morning and come back late and that was also one of the reasons why our marriage fell apart, she expected some greater involvement in bringing up the children.”

The relatively more prevalent traditional view of the ‘marital contract’ among single fathers can be ascribed to the greater representation in this category of respondents from rural areas that are further away from the big conurbations.

The remaining fathers declared that the stereotype of masculine and feminine activities has no application in their cases. The criterion of allocation of activities is time and skills, and the existing division of duties is the result of the organisation of work as worked out within the framework of a joint household, and not as the result of tradition. One of the fathers perceived a

partnership and equitable relationship to be one in which when the man works more and generates more income, he is thereby relieved of most household and child-care duties, and the woman then takes care of the house and does extra paid work.

Generally, most of the respondents considered their household regimes (currently in retrospect) as egalitarian, fair and 'right', The division of activities according to which the woman does the cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, and takes care of small children, while the man grapples with paid work (working longer hours than the partner) and electively, (if they have the time), performing work requiring exertion, is regarded as accidental and adapted to existing conditions: longer work outside the home relieves them of most household duties, early morning rising justifying the fact that the woman also reacts to the night-time needs of the child. Caring for babies and toddlers is ascribed to mothers, due to the woman's essential innate delicate touch.

In the opinion of most respondents, women themselves take up those workloads more gladly, with the absolute consent of their partners, since they are better and faster at it which could be, some respondents suggested, the result of socialization acquired at home (they know how to do it). Putting the issue thus by the respondents flags the fact that they do not banish all suggestion of performing household chores and if they do not undertake them it is not for lack of will (or conviction, that it does not become them) but because they lack the skills, time, which they devote to work away from home, as well as the circumstance that there is somebody who can relieve them in this.

"At the beginning it was difficult too. You know how it is with a bloke - I neither knew how to do the washing nor did I know ... well, I also coped with cooking, that's not something I have a problem with as it happens. It was worse with doing the washing and cleaning, but after a couple of mistakes, one learns. Fear only came upon me when I got back from work, shut the door and it turned out that I had to do everything myself because my wife was gone."

Justification of the one-time division of duties (retrospection) - in the case of single fathers - is thus based not on ideological premises, on a wish to defer to tradition, but on pure pragmatism.

The 'post-' situation - seems to give credibility to this thesis by the current status. A widower assumes all the duties of the wife, he learns all the activities performed by the wife to date, passing onto the eldest daughter only those duties which give him most difficulties - cooking.

The case of the 'grass widower' clearly shows that the departure of the wife with the aim of earning money (earnings that are considerably higher than his) induced him to accept duties which until then were performed by the wife with the accompanying feeling not only of it being unavoidable but also justified.

"I would prefer it for my wife to be at home, cooking, cleaning... that is to say I always helped her cook, and we would look after the children together, but it's not like that at the moment. But I agree to that. If I didn't agree, she would not have gone."

The experience of most single fathers indicates that the assumption of duties connected with running the house was a necessity in their case. Previously, they had done so on an as and when basis, more frequently only choosing the chores that they liked, like cooking.

"I think that if my wife was here, the division of duties would change for certain, its 100 % certain that it would be like it was at the beginning... cleaning, doing the washing, washing up, that certainly wouldn't be me, I would do some cooking only, if I had the time."

In most cases single fathers express the conviction that no activities in the field of domestic duties are ascribed to people on account of their gender, and the existing division of duties, according to which the man works most of the time away from home, the woman runs the household, in which they only play a supporting role, is the result of realities - women bring into the household those skills (and not infrequently the conviction of such duties of theirs and the wish to perform them), and the man is more useful earning a living (he can earn more than a woman) and in performing work requiring exertion - for which he is predestined by virtue of his physique.

“So I think, just like every person is different and women are different and men are different and people have various characteristics even in that concoction, and I think that the division should be such that everybody did what they could do best in accordance with their capabilities ...well we do not have any strictly specified principles of division...no!... though no, we do have! - Edyta does the ironing because I hate it.”

“That is to say there was no strict division of duties... what I didn't touch was the washing. My wife always did that and never asked me to do it... so she did the washing and the dinners, and with cleaning, well it varied. I think dirt annoyed me more than her, so I did the cleaning.”

In that respect, not seeing the interdependence between the education of fathers subscribing to such a view, their age or their place of abode, what is rather more significant are the circumstances in which they set up and ran their households. Those of them who set up a full family (with children) in situations of significant resource deficits (e.g. unplanned pregnancy) represented the more traditional view. However, in this perception, there is a lack of conviction about the inferiority of the woman's role. She is a partner in the decisions concerning the future of the family, to the same degree as the man, she co-manages the resources, she co-decides in current and strategic matters. In presenting such a scheme of division of duties, respondents do not have the conviction that the division of various duties is at odds with the egalitarian assumptions of the partners' status, but that they are of equal value, as long as the aim is to safeguard the family's material conditions. In the name of that cause, they agree to an exchange of roles - when the woman's earning capacity can be of more advantage to the family.

“That was dictated by life, the situation dictated that I got some job position, then she takes over, but once it was the reverse, she worked more and I sat at home and it was on the principle that the situation rather dictates the division, not us.”

They also undertake traditional female tasks when there is no other woman about the house. If, apart from the mother, there is still a daughter, granny, mother-in-law or sister-in-law, then some of these tasks are delegated to them - most often they do the washing, ironing, clothes mending (sewing) and cooking.

Those performing such delegated tasks are never the male members of the family - sons, uncles, granddads.

To sum up: single fathers believe that the division of duties should correspond to the abilities and personal predispositions of husband and wife and to the maximisation of the benefits for the family as a whole. None of the fathers referred to tradition in justifying such a division; it is the reality of the market that prefers men, and the social reality that socialises people for certain roles, that ensures that women dedicate more time to domestic duties, and men more to remunerative work. However, by their experience, they prove their great flexibility in this respect - they adapt to a change of roles and/or assume the tasks so far played by their female partner. Fulfilling these roles, which is very difficult to begin with, becomes part of their normal scope of duties. Both partners sacrifice their individual aspirations on the altar of a common family group interest.

Respondents had great difficulty in answering the question whether the government could take steps to ensure a more equitable division of duties. They were short of ideas on systematic solutions. Most of the proposals concerned improvement on the labour market - government efforts aimed at increasing the number of work places and better pay. These were comments no more addressed to government than of simply being the expression of the conviction that good work and pay will allow for a dignified life, and will be the best help for the family. The suggestions included the idea that the state or NGOs should provide support for welfare institutions - nurseries, crèches, and to subsidise summer holidays for children especially for incomplete families. The necessity of both parents having to be wage-earners limits the possibility of providing personal care over children, a job held by one parent ties in with his/her significant exclusion from household duties, which disturbs the postulated equilibrium.

Standard fathers

Most fathers in this group considered the current division of duties to be identical with that which is postulated. In the majority view it is not the result of any agreement, negotiation, or compromise, but rather, as one respondent put it, of evolution.

Further statements made by interviewees, however, indicate that the way in which duties were being assumed presently, changed depending on circumstances - but for none of them does such an arrangement come as a surprise; it does not diverge from expectations and generally it seems to satisfy most of those interviewed.

Everybody, with the exception of one interviewee, connect professional duties (paid work) with those relating to running the house and looking after the children. From their statements it would emerge that this division is horizontal, that is: - the joint performance of most tasks, without ascribing a specific group of tasks to one of the partners. Here again, the division of tasks is determined by time and predisposition. The lack of division of duties according to the principles of complementary action like: she cooks, he washes up; she does the washing, he hangs it out; etc. Most of the respondents declared that they engage themselves willingly in numerous chores at home and in looking after the children - the only restrictions being those imposed by time and skills.

The case of the father on parental leave shows that these declarations are not empty. The wife, generating more income returned to work after a period of maternity leave while the husband, utilizes his accumulated leave allowance for looking after their twins. In that way they do not put themselves at risk of losing their income (they only utilize paid leave allowances) at the same time assuring continuity of care for their children up to their first birthday. The declared values of parental ties with their children are implemented in practice. In this case there is an evident absence of division of tasks or roles based on the conviction that it's the man's task to work and the woman's to look after the children. Reluctance, as well as the impossibility, to entrust children to the care of someone from outside the family (lack of family support) or institution with the simultaneous preservation of a double pay packet, was strong motivation for the organisation of work which is characterised by great egalitarianism in 'social exchange' (roles) as continuing within the marriage.

Most of the remaining arrangements which the respondents presented in this group are close to this egalitarian model. The men claim that they actively participate in the running of the house and caring for their children. Nonetheless they admit that

frequently they carry out their wives' instructions - it is she who marks out the scope and method of performing the tasks. The respondents, in describing the scheme of things prevailing at home regarding the division of tasks, also frequently used the expression 'I help my wife'; or 'we have to help each other' in describing their guiding lights in their relationships. This could be indicative of the fact that although they undertake domestic chores like cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing, looking after the children or spending their free time with them - they regard their wife as being chiefly responsible for such issues. Being in no way different to the single father group, which I already mentioned, the only typical masculine tasks recognised by fathers from standard families are those requiring physical exertion - repairs, odd jobs and chopping up firewood. The remaining ones are neutral in their assessment and should be performed jointly.

“Ordinarily, my wife always blames me for all household setbacks, I am some so and so ... I promise everything and do nothing, that I haven't banged in that nail for so many months, that I am not doing bathroom repairs, that the light's been out for so many weeks, she simply always says that it's my fault. Well, but really they are duties that belong to me, she does not hold it against me that the washing hasn't been done, or that things haven't been ironed or that the cooker is dirty...”

Certain vertical divisions in the assortment of tasks connected with the running of the household is also seen in the fact that in this group it's mostly men who take care of organisational issues relating to the future, such as insurance or loans. Though, as all respondents declare in unison - the impulse for making large scale shopping (which ties in with drawing loans) comes from the wife, the implementation of tasks, the control of legal-financial formalities is their preserve.

However, as to the question of what they feel responsible for as men - fulfilling the role of father and husband, they admitted without exception that it was for the material condition and well-being of their family. They regard all setbacks in that respect as their personal defeat. The statements of interviewees show one more condition: the respondents' life companion. Despite earlier statements that they are equal ranking partners

within the relationship, they also weigh down the men with the moral burden of the responsibility for the family's existence:

"He has it as is typical for all ... that everybody goes on holidays and somehow manages to earn the money for it, but not you ..."

In two cases respondents pointed to the interdependence in which the disproportion in the amount of time devoted to the performance of domestic duties remained strictly correlated to the time devoted by each of the parties to their professional work. Asked to take a look at the criteria of the division of household duties in a dynamic fashion (from the perspective of several years) they spoke of the changes in this respect which depended on who was working professionally at the given time:

"Once there were changes, above all ... my wife has been working for two years because earlier she couldn't go to work, because Adam was too small so, simply, she had to take care of the child and she assumed all the responsibilities: she looked after the house, did the shopping ...that is, I mainly did the shopping due to the fact that I run a shop and know places with cheap goods"

Most of the respondents in this group thus abide in their relationship by the marital partnership model, trying to ensure an egalitarian status for both the partners involved. However, the spectre of a stereotypical 'gender contract' hangs over the wholly egalitarian ideal, in which it is, when all is said and done, the man who carries the burden of responsibility for the family's material well-being, and the woman remains in charge of the 'home hearth', albeit with an increasingly willing helper in the shape of the husband.

With that it should be added that all partners of the interviewed fathers work professionally, devoting comparable amounts of time to it and generating comparable or greater income than their husbands. At the same time, most of the respondents saw the equal division of duties as a valuable asset. Thus it is difficult to say whether the balanced distribution of forces is the result of a declared egalitarian posture or is it the well-paid work of women that is the factor conducive to the egalitarian model of the relationship.

Asked to propose systemic solutions, which would be conducive to a fairer division of tasks between the woman and the man in the relationship - the interviewees stressed the value of individual strategies, shying away from ideas of state intervention in these matters. In their majority, above all, respondents would like the government not to do any damage by interfering, and the best form of help on its part would be attentiveness to the economy so that these individual strategies could be implemented. They also pointed at the family origins as the medium of inbred gender models. Girls learn to be housewives and in charge of the home hearth, and boys are taught how to be served. Later, in adult life, they find it easier to agree to such an arrangement in their relationship. Thus they set great store by their primary socialization and early education.

3.2. Relationship of the parents

Single fathers

In this group, the model of relations between father and mother are determined either by the mother's absence - (widowers) or bad relations with their partner. The latter type are characterised by confrontational and hostile attitudes, which bring in train an inability to reach consensus in educational matters. Consultations aimed working out consistent principles for bringing up children are rare among parents who are at war with each other; more often than not, they scold and lecture each other on what's right and wrong.

"...she does not let her cuddle up to me and blackmails her that if she won't want to stay with granny - her mother, my ex-mother-in-law, she won't go to see daddy."

As far as single fathers bring up their children alone are concerned, the models of behaviour they present are wholly different. In the recollection of a widower - as parents, in many issues they were of one mind, without the need to agree uniform principles but also without particular concern to present a united front to the children.

“There was no conferring; it was rather that when my wife said something then I too was of like mind, it somehow came without prompting.”

Most respondents remember that at the time of running their households jointly, decisions in petty matters were made on the spot by whichever parent was to hand. They could not recall situations requiring decision-making in fundamental questions.

“No, no, together. And today it is so that if some principle must be broken, we phone and inform each other that ...we are keeping an eye on it.”

Respondents were in agreement that for their harmonious development, the child/children need a mother and a father, but without specifying the role each is to play. They themselves presented a broad range of behavioural models from emotional distance to strong emotional attachment.

“Her mother should surely give her lots of warmth and bring a bit of something else into her life, as the father should offer something different. When the child is brought up only by the mother or only by the father, it is always odd. But when it comes to bringing up, then it should rest on both equally because both must teach the child about life.”

In one case - of a father fighting a court battle for custody of his child - there was a situation in which the mother strongly disapproved of the emotional attachment between father and child and its demonstrative nature through physical closeness (cuddling, kissing) but that should sooner be ascribed to bad father-mother relations than to the conviction that the display of feelings by the father is an inappropriate way to behave.

“In court she testified that it's inappropriate for a father to carry a 6-year old girl in his arms and cuddle her in public... and now, when I take her in my arms she is so scared, looking all round as if to check that mum or granny aren't looking.”

Apart from that, in the view of respondents, there is a lack of behavioural models regarding what belongs to the father and what to the mother. Despite this conviction, redolent of egalitarianism, they simultaneously believed that to satisfy its emotional needs, the child chooses the mother more frequently.

“Even Kasia told me that I’m a good father and maintains all the time that Zosia has better contact with me than with her, but I still think that a mother’s always a mother and nothing will change that, even if the father were to split a gut in providing care for his child, he will not replace her.”

Only in one case (of a ‘grass widower’) did the father have disciplinary duties in relation to misdemeanours.

“The wife allows them to do anything they want, when she’s not there I set strict rules, and when she comes again she lets the children get away with everything.”

In the remaining cases fathers (they were so not while the relationship lasted) are not ‘deterrents to naughty children’ though, as would emerge from the accounts of several single fathers that is what their partners expect from them.

“She probably wanted me to be tougher. But at the end of the day it seems to me that I was milder towards the little mite. I never had to smack her bottom. And that’s how it has stayed to now, that she phones me to tell me to take note of something because she can’t cope with it herself.”

Fathers from standard families

Among respondents from the standard fathers’ group, the dominating model of father-mother relations is the partnership one. Decisions regarding children are made together, the opinions of the spouses tend to be uniform, and it’s on them and not on the mechanism of negotiated provisions, that is based the consistency of decisions towards the children which are made somewhat spontaneously. In a situation of possible divergence of views - the parents try to reach consensus through discussion behind closed doors so that the children are not witness to differences of opinion or perceptions. In this group the conviction regarding the need to present a united front by the parents’ vis-à-vis the children was frequently found.

“It’s like this: we sit and clarify things and together arrive at some decision. It’s not as if one allows something and the other doesn’t and the one that does is better, only we rather accept, and that is a rule which I spoke about, that it is we who have to stick together in this matter; it cannot be that you go your way and I go mine ...”

In the case of respondents from this group it can be said emphatically that participation in domestic duties, especially in looking after children, is something that is expected, desired, stimulated and, if it's not in evidence, enforced by their partners. With that, it would emerge from the accounts of respondents that more frequently they are given negative spurs rather than positive motivation, which indicates that from the point of view of their partners their participation in domestic chores is the norm and any divergence from it must elicit a caution.

"...she simply does not appreciate whether I do it or don't do it, she thinks that that's natural in our relationship. You simply do it ..."

Standard fathers also steer clear of the 'just' father model, who reward the good and punish the bad, and are more ready to admit their preference for rewarding and being lenient towards their children than scolding them. From the accounts of some of them it stems that it's the mother who can be stricter, while they are rather forbearing in relation to the children. The model of a strict and tough father was not clearly represented in this group.

"Mainly it's my wife that does the shouting, and I try to devise some punishments, for example for my son the simplest one is not cuddling him in the evening - he's very scared of that ...he loves cuddling up to me, it lasts all of 15 minutes or 10, but he won't go to bed if I don't cuddle up to him"

Relationship of father and child

The parental attitudes represented by all respondents irrespective of category, age, or education, were characterised by a strong emotional ties with their children.

The models in upbringing represented by all fathers both in the category of single and the standard fathers were models of high expectations with regard to their children; in the accounts of the decided majority of the respondents they are also brought forth as the source of psychological benefits and are the objects of particularly positive experiences.

"What does fatherhood mean to me? Everything...it's the air that I breathe. Nothing better could have come my way."

But never as an attribute of a 'normal' family (and marriages) being the cause of financial burdens and difficulties in life.

Equally frequently, and in most cases given as the first in defining fatherhood, comes the emotional-psychological dimension - the striving for satisfaction of the emotional needs of the child, the concern for its correct psycho-physical development before the caring-feeding concern.

"Fatherhood to my mind is associated most of all with such responsibility and care. Responsibility is something of a key - so that they develop in all aspects, that is both in the field of feelings and some sort of mental, emotional and, I don't know, social - in all fields. In other words, guaranteeing children harmonious development."

Ever-present and strong is the aspect of financial security:

"It is precisely such an obligation of mine as a father to guarantee this family some sort of existence. It relates to material aspects - that is my internal need to give this family security ..."

The statements of many respondents (without a noticeable connection with education, or place of residence, or of marital status) is characterised by the relevance of the 'present father', that is, one participating not just in satisfying the material needs but also the emotional needs of their progeny. Active fatherhood is a consciously adopted template of parental and social attitudes with regard to children:

"You know, straight up, you have a family and you can't simply cop out at some moment. There's no helping it. And I have it very strongly embedded in me, that some situations govern us."

"Fatherhood is the responsibility for rearing a human being. Bringing up in a responsible atmosphere. That's what hurts me most; a child should have a father and mother together, a home, in which it feels safe. At the moment, fatherhood for me stands for pangs of conscience. I have a sense of guilt all the time, that her world has fallen apart."

And the source of satisfaction of a parental role accomplished well. One could be tempted to conclude that the shattering of the male monopoly - father in the material field is compensated by the intensification of the emotional-psychological sphere.

“Above all I take responsibility for another person who is helpless and I have to shape her/him and the whole of that struggle going on so that s/he comes through the initial stage of her/his life safely, so as to make of this being a good person ... Well that’s how I would describe it - all the time work, work, a sort of sculpting of another person.”

“Love them, care for them, watch out for them...”

“Probably for certain I am more tender towards Zosia than her mum. She herself said that I fulfil the role of father and mother simultaneously ...”

Opinions that it is easier for the father to relate to the son and for the mother to the daughter - were rather isolated.

“He should instil more into the son. It’s always known that a boy will dare to do something more and that’s why I think that the father should address his words to his son words and set a good example more than the mother. I think that the mother should influence the daughter more.”

Equally rarely, respondents presented opinions that there should be some specialisation in teaching children various skills depending on the child’s gender or the gender of the parent. In actual fact, all respondents subscribe to the equality of their children irrespective of their gender, but they admit of the possibility of their different treatment because of their sex. The motivations of double standards can be divided into three groups, but always au fond lies the conviction regarding the difference in the nature between girls and boys:

1. Various methods for achieving the same result.

“They are more possessive and dogged, also in certain cases they well up too quickly and somehow later it is difficult to get through to them, or you need time for it...and as for girls, it’s somehow easier to communicate with them ...”

“Girls are easier to bring up, they are more willing to compromise, they are 100% easier to reach an understanding with.”

2. Methods of bringing up adequate to the cultural templates of the gender e.g. a girl cuddled and pampered, more physical distance and reserve in showing feelings to boys.

“I think that if it was a boy, the hand would certainly be a bit heavier and he’d be brought up a bit. That’s how it seems to me. I am not sure, I’d have to have a boy. I don’t imagine that I’d be cuddling a boy so lovingly and kiss him so much for good night.”

3. Boys and girls make their own choice of ‘teacher’ and the activities he teaches on the basis of inborn preferences - boys are more technical, girls prefer to play with dolls:

“I observed this many times, that there is an enormous difference between a boy and a girl and that’s it. She is not so technical, so I won’t force her.”

“I look around the nursery at those small five year old girls who tease each other terribly, while boys simply give each other a smack in the mouth when need be, and then, when need be, they make up and everything is more clear.”

At the same time they try to include their off-spring of both sexes (or irrespective of gender) in the tasks they perform.

“I am very sensitive to nature, because that’s what my father taught me, and I’m passing it on to Zosia and the effects are already there to be seen. I am definitely dragging her into other interests - I save up for yachting trips and car rallies.”

“That sort of hammering or screwing in screws but also cooking. The children cook with me, my wife rarely cooks, and how we do itfor example our piece de resistance is spaghetti, then one peels the onions, the other does something or other, each of us tries to help somehow ...”

An interesting example is provided by the respondent who, remaining on parental leave with eight month old twins, treats the partnership arrangement as the highest possible value just like the equal treatment of women and men. He professes the need to socialise his children to adapt to male and female roles

only in the sphere of 'appearances', gender attributes of a social character like charm and coquettishness in the girl and chivalry in the boy (kissing women's hands and letting them go through the door first).

"Values are the same for women and men and, in connection with that, it's immaterial who passes them on - what I mean is that Johnny will not be brought up as a tough guy but there are things which look strange when performed by women - for example, hammering nails. In connection with this, if Natalie will want to, I will teach her, while I will teach Johnny whether he likes it or not. Because in our society it's so that despite advanced feminism and equality, when there's a nail to be hammered in it is always expected of the man to do it. Most certainly he should respect women, that's our ancient Polish tradition, letting women go first through the door, the general world principles of gentlemanliness... and mum will surely teach Natalie the art of seduction - the girls pass it on to one another how to flutter those eyes ..."

Contextual factors

The dominant relationship model in families of origin was, for most respondents, the traditional one, patriarchal - a working father who is not involved in bringing up the children and the mother, who runs the house and is an additional wage earner.

"...and I had that sort of model in my home, that my mum was the type that kept things in order."

"In my home the situation was that mum ran the house and in addition she worked, father did nothing, well apart from some sort of technical work, but it is always he who initiates their social outings because he now fulfils a public function."

Or fathers performed select activities from the range of domestic chores, playing an auxiliary role in the household set up:

"Father was the sort that would do a lot about the house, some darning and worked on the sewing machine, ... at home, mother did the shopping; father was incapable of doing anything except peel the potatoes..."

“I think that the model I’ve taken from home is that mum did the cleaning and the shopping. She took care of the home and the children, nearly 100%, but that was only because dad was not there - he ran a business and from what I remember, just before the divorce - because they did - I remember that he was almost totally not there.”

Only a few of them (two standard fathers and one single father) recall having a picture of a partnership relationship between their parents.

“There was a period that dad worked, then mum did everything in the house and that probably coincided with the period of my childhood, but later when the situation changed and mother got a management position in a big firm, she then stopped looking after the home altogether and many duties were assumed by father - he cooks and cleans himself ...”

For those who have taken the traditional model from home, in their own relationship, the model approximating to that of the partnership is wrought by way of struggle - the striving of the female partners for emancipation, negotiation - establishing a balance depending on the amount of time devoted to paid work by both partners, evolution, or it is the workings of fate (widowers).

Those asked for an assessment of their style of fatherhood and model of relationship as opposed to others. All those interviewed had the feeling that they distinguish themselves positively (inclinations towards partnership arrangements) from the male part of the population. However, already in their nearest surroundings they find more people who are similar to themselves.

Most respondents have a rather good opinion of their commitment to attending to domestic duties and looking after the children, but they retain the feeling that they are oscillating round the social norm of their environment. In two cases one could speak of a different situation. The first is the case of the ‘grass widower’ who can be on the receiving end of cutting remarks and jokes on the part of men ‘upholding the patriarchal pyramid’ from their immediate surroundings (provincial, people of low social rank):

“At the beginning they laughed. That’s to say, they did not laugh in my face, but joked - ‘Go home now, because you’ve got to tidy up or do some washing’ - but now they’ve got used to it. From what I know, half of them would not agree 100% to something like that!”

The second is the case of the father of twins. He falls victim to his ‘partnerliness’, in implementing the ideal of the modern man he is presented as an example by the wives of his friends, which is the cause of his being slightly ostracised socially.

“That worries my acquaintances... because not all of them like to do those things - I am talking about blokes who for me are normal and if our female friends stress that, that’s precisely what I like, that they exploit this aspect that I do it, and they say to their husband: why don’t you do that... at which point they spoil my relations with my pals because I am constantly that ideal that is a doer, and he is not, so you get: why don’t you give it a rest... but for me that’s normal and I do it not so that someone points me out as being extra super - because I do it because I like it and I don’t think that everybody should do the same as I ...”

Even if the declarations of respondents concerning their active participation in fulfilling domestic duties have no bearing on the reality, they are indicative of the respondents’ recognition of them as values in themselves.

Increase the participation of women in the public sphere and in the labour market, and will contribute to the levelling of the status of women and men, the respondents are basically divided into two groups.

Part of them treated it as a social engineering project and expressed decided opposition to such engineering, laying their
Asked to express their attitude to the assertion that a more equitable division of domestic duties will trust solely in individual strategies.

“No, that’s a vicious circle, the wrong thinking and that’s why it spoils these relations, strange words crop up - chauvinism, feminism, and all such crap, pardon the expression, but that’s my take on it. If we can’t build a partnership then we’ll be building some artificial divisions, artificial requirements, that women have to be airmen irrespective of whether they have the predisposition for it or not. If there is someone with the predisposition to do something, then you can’t put up

barriers, but on the other hand, there's no point in doing something artificially."

Others maintained that this 'carry over' is not direct and that the reduction of the disproportions in the performance of domestic duties between the woman and the man is only one of many routes to levelling out their status:

"Maybe it's one of many, but it does not seem to me to be a basic one, that the woman will always be regarded as the weaker sex, because when it comes to childbirth it's the woman who frequently has to take maternity leave when pregnant ..."

Thus, biology is, according to some respondents, an insuperable barrier which will always stand in the way of equalisation, at least given the current paradigm of the accumulation of capital. The respondent drew attention also to the fact that motherhood is given low ratings in terms of social status by women themselves, who are self-deprecating. A woman with a child or children in a public place can be seen everyday, it's ordinary, it's an unappreciated effort, well, that's a woman's sad lot. A man with a child is Winkelried in modern Europe, he sets all the female officials and functionaries and ordinary passers-by of the female sex swooning.

"In confirmation of what I say, it is the bloke who will sooner react than that a woman will help a woman, that in turn, Kasia told me several times, that she would be standing in a queue with a bulging stomach and none of these women even moved to let her through, most often it would be the cashier or some bloke, not a woman. So the fault probably lies a bit on the side of the women, that undervaluing, it lurks deep in our culture, maybe its worth changing."

The conviction was also presented that motherhood cannot be replaced by fatherhood, in connection with which, 'releasing' women from their domestic duties so that they may be active in the public sphere will come at the expense of the children. It should be added that this opinion was formulated by a respondent who, in the relationship model he seeks to pursue, oscillates round the partnership relationship, professionally working in the feminised profession of nursery school teacher, and most of his views are not characterised by traditionalism.

“(...) and I think that that is the other side of the coin, beside equality there is also something which is ascribed to the woman in a natural way, unfortunately that’s the way the world is made, although frequently those fathers take over this role, that this nature operates here, that motherhood is 80% tied with the woman and 20% with the man.”

The priority factor of women’s ‘liberation’ was seen to be improvement on the labour market, so that paid work was accessible to women (without imposing quotas).

Other respondents very much inclined to the assertion, declaring their support for the idea and faith in the capabilities of women to be a fully equal participant in public life.

Conclusions

The survey’s most important conclusions are the following:

1. Generally it should be said that the group of respondents in the survey proved difficult to recruit, and the research topic was characterized by a large dose of ‘social sensitivity’. As may have been predicted, the more difficult respondent recruits belonged to the ‘single fathers’ group. In Poland, 5.2 % of the court cases regarding custodial rights end in fathers being granted the right to care for their children. Thus it is not surprising that finding such a person within one’s own immediate circle of acquaintances was extremely difficult and at the end of the day such efforts proved fruitless. In connection with this, the research supervisor posted advertisements to 5 of Poland’s biggest websites for fathers - which also proved unavailing. Fathers fighting for their rights, who were approached on chat lines, did not want to consent to being interviewed. Their arguments can presumably be ascribed in large measure to suspiciousness and fear that ‘everything they say may be used against them.’ In such a context, the female interviewee acquiring research data within the framework of the project promoting equality between the sexes was not perceived as an ally in the fight for equal rights for men but rather as a feminist fighting only for equality for women. A request for an interview would thus encounter suspicion, a tirade against the fatal consequences of feminism, hostility and at best, the complete ignoring of the appeal.

Widowed fathers responded reluctantly to the research proposals due to the negative effects connected with the retrospection of traumatic events, as generated by the interview situation. Finally, we managed to interview one widower (of 8 months standing), three fathers with partial custodial rights over their children (two-three times a week) including one father who applied for a court order that would enable him to register his child and with a 'grass widower', i.e. whose partner was working abroad throughout the year whilst maintaining the family relationship, as someone who satisfied the criteria of a 'single father' though not in the formal sense and most certainly not in the practical sense.

2. From these experiences the important conclusion would emerge that the intention to level out the rights of women and men is viewed one-sidedly by the latter - solely as a plan to promote women's rights, without the thought that it could bring men advantages precisely in the family legislation domain. It corroborates the assumptions of the Pariteia project as having been spot on, - of the greater and fuller inclusion of men in the politics of gender mainstreaming, but also points clearly at the omissions in legislation and 'best practices' in the private sphere and family law. Granting more rights to women on the job market and in the public sphere could possibly bring in train the stronger and more visible increase in fathers' rights regarding custody of their children.
3. Despite the dynamic changes to which the institution of the family is subject in present times, in describing the type of social organisation in the family milieu might generally relate to two models of relationships - traditional (collectivist, Catholic) and partnership-based (individualistic, laicised). Those are ideal types which in social reality occur in a variety of forms and hybrids - approximating more or less to one or the other or as a compound of aspects of both. The survey confirmed the functioning of both these cultural templates as determining the values, attitudes and behaviour of the respondents. It might at first sight seem that the partnership arrangement is the dominant model since most of the respondents - widowers and single fathers retrospectively, and standard fathers currently - declared their active involvement in discharging domestic duties and looking after their children. However, a precise, multi-aspect analysis of

the statements indicates that the models being implemented significantly differ from one another. Below we describe the six categories emerging most clearly from the analysis of the material collected.

Conditional partnership relationship

(Age 31, 2 children, professional education, small locality in the Warmia region.)

The postulated relationship model - standard - 'a covenant' between women and men of the old type, buttressed by economic 'complementarity' of the male and female roles (he has paid work, she looks after the house). Pursued until the moment of the wife's disappearance. The wife, not being able to find a satisfactorily remunerated job on the local labour market takes up work abroad where she spends most of the year. The marital arrangement is suspended by the economic situation and labour market conditions. In effect, all domestic duties are assumed by the husband. Relations with children are characterised by emotional distance, the material-based bond dominates over the emotional-psychological bond.

The 'conditional partnership' arrangement could be revoked if the family's financial condition and the father's remuneration were to improve. That is all the more possible because from the respondent's statement it would emerge that his posture differs significantly from the male behavioural models prevailing in his immediate milieu. His commitment to running the house in his wife's absence is the subject of jokes and cutting remarks and is treated as diverging from the accepted norm. His posture regarding the 'appropriate' relationship model is being shaped in a situation of 'conflicting schemas' - the stereotypical male representative of a patriarchal arrangement and a modern model of a man participating in family life.

Almost a partnership

(Age 39, secondary education, wife, two children, rural municipality in Mazowieckie province.)

In this model - almost a partnership - both spouses work and look after the house. But most of the traditionally female duties - cooking, washing and ironing - belong to the woman. The duty of the man, as he sees it, is to perform work that requires strength or technical skill and 'helping' the wife, but above all in 'maintaining' the household. In the conviction that the

responsibility for their financial well-being rests on his shoulders is upheld by his wife, with the added assumption, that his duties extend to active participation in domestic work. The model of the relationship based on family origins (here understood as the inherited values and attitudes) is a collectivist model (particularly strong in rural areas where the family is an economically self-sufficient unit). It is implemented in the life of one's own family with a large margin of error (willingly cooks, shops and looks after the children). A strong emotional bond exists with the children, especially with the son.

Ideal partner relationship

(Age 32, higher education, father of eight month old twins, Warsaw.)

The vision of a relationship in which people can swap roles. The wife, generating more income, returned to work after maternity leave while the husband utilises his accumulated holiday allowance to look after the twins. Without exposing themselves to loss of earnings (they only take paid leave), they thereby simultaneously ensure continuity in caring for their children up to when they reach the age of one. The work organization is characterised by a good deal of egalitarian 'social exchange' occurring within the marriage.

The conviction regarding the difference between the yin-yang elements and their equivalence, is a profession the need to socialise their children to assume the male and female roles in the sphere of 'appearances' (attributes of gender of a social character - charm and coquettishness in the girl, chivalry in the boy). The same principles apply as in the family origin scenario. This case shows, in an interesting way, that strongly individualistic orientation can interplay perfectly with the family's values.

Partnership - under special supervision

(Age 33, higher education, two children - daughter (6), son (8 months), Warsaw.)

Equal division of tasks: both spouses are in professional employment with equal prestige and pay scale, which take up an equal amount of time. Two children (girl of 6, boy of 9 months), man's contribution to domestic tasks expected, supervised and scrupulously exacted by his partner. Tasks are performed by the partner on the basis of orders from headquarters (the wife is the domestic 'strategist' - she tells me what to

do). The model is implemented in a family with inherited values - traditional with elements of the lay model.

Through a partnership lost

(Age 33, professional education, 1 daughter - aged 6, municipality near Warsaw, and age 32, secondary education, 2 children - son aged 4, daughter aged 2, Warsaw.)

The partner's wish to fulfil both herself (resuming her studies interrupted by pregnancy) and her professional aspirations (employment as a stewardess immediately after parental leave) and her partner's reluctance to accept these aspirations or the exclusive commitment of the partner and father to professional work accompanied by a low level of attention to domestic duties - are the reasons for the break up of the relationship.

Partnership relationship as a joint venture with a diversified input

(Age 33, higher education, his wife as well, Gdańsk, two daughters aged 2 and 4.)

He supplies the financial resources; she has her own contribution in kind. Recognition of equality of their roles (but with the exclusion of the man's primacy in the complementary arrangement). He has exhausting work, but generates significant resources; she has light unstressful work which obliges her to perform most of the domestic chores for the sake of balance in their input. At the same time, a declared wish to swap roles if their income level were the same. Justified not by reference to tradition, but pragmatism - a structure for the special tasks of a family on the make.

4. It can thus be asserted that both the standard and partnership model values impact on the conduct of the men participating in the survey. The partnership ideal for the family, as formulated within the framework of the new individualist ideology, formidably rivals the standard relationship model, most of whose respondent-subscribers know them not only from literature but from the families they themselves come from.

Expectations with regard to men have still not fully crystallised - they don't know what shape their role should take. Men seem to be the hostages of a 'perfect man project',

who is to be tender and caring, sensitive, give his partner and children emotional support, but on the other hand, remain a tower of strength and efficiency.

5. The relationship model most frequently implemented in a situation of a 'conflict of schemas' (Kauffman) with modes of behaviour not necessarily reflecting their attitudes, though in all certainty their clear share in shaping individualistic values can be seen. Even if respondents' declarations regarding their active participation in performing domestic duties find no reflection in reality, it still attests to their recognition by the respondents as a value.
6. Thus it would seem that the emergence of a partnership relationship model coincides with: women working professionally, especially those that are better paid than men, a partnership model or one approximating to a partnership relationship template taken from the family's origins, and the individualistic values acquired in the period of secondary socialisation which strongly impact on the individual, or it may also be the effect of a trial of strength in the field of socialization affecting the family - the partnership template is forcefully promoted and implemented by the female partner. Finally, in the opinion of some respondents, only a partnership relationship guarantees satisfaction because it gives the family members freedom of choice, the possibility to fulfil themselves and obtain emotional support.
7. From the analyses of the interviews with respondents emerges that the abolition of the primacy of the male as the material-economic provider is balanced by the ever more frequently undertaken emotional-psychological support role by the respondents.
8. The situation of conditional partnership - coming about as a result of the adaptation of the family (as a structure) to boundary conditions point to the danger connected with the possibility of 'retracting' consent to the equitable division of tasks in a situation when the woman joins the ranks of 'a reserve labour force'.

A significant question in the survey was one concerning respondents' ideas to possible government action, conducive to a more equal division of duties at home and the

greater involvement of men. Most of the proposals related to improving the labour market - government efforts aimed at creating more jobs and better pay. These were comments as much addressed to the government as simply the expression of the conviction that good work and pay will provide for a decent life, and will be the best form of help for the family. There were ideas for the state or NGOs to guarantee support for welfare institutions - nurseries, crèches, and subsidized summer holidays for children, especially for those from incomplete families - that cropped up. The necessity for both parents to take up paid work restricts their scope for looking after children personally, and where only one parent works - that ties in with a significant level of exclusion from the sphere of domestic duties which destroys the postulated balance. The respondents emphasised at this point the value of individual strategies, shying away from ideas of state intervention in these matters. In their majority, above all, they would like the government not to do damage by interfering, and the best form of help on its part would be to attend to the economy so that their own individual strategies could be implemented.

9. Asked to take a position in relation to the statement that a more equitable division of domestic duties would increase the participation of women in the public sphere, and on the job market, and will contribute to the levelling out of the status of women and men, respondents split themselves into two distinctive groups. Part of them treated this as a social engineering project and expressed their decided opposition to such interference, laying their confidence solely in individual strategies. The priority factor of 'liberation' of women was recognised to be improvement on the labour market so that well paid work was available to women (without the application of some quota system). Other respondents were very favourably inclined to the statement, declaring their support for the idea and their faith in the abilities of women to be equal ranking participants in public life.

4. Fathers in Italy

By: Francesca Zajczyk, Elisabetta Ruspini and Francesca Crosta, Brunella Fiore

4.1. Introduction

The following interview analysis sets out to pinpoint on-going tendencies, dynamics and transformations in the typical urbanised context of the Milanese metropolitan area⁵, which is often ahead of new social trends. We were interested in seeing the kind of changes affecting fatherhood today. The debate on fatherhood and parenthood in Italy has only recently aroused interest in sociological and historical studies, which previously focused exclusively on the pedagogic and psychological field. The debate on parenthood and fatherhood is thus becoming increasingly lively, and hinges on the observation of changes in male identity. If these changes are taking place, an essential role is played by the movements for female emancipation (Deriu 2004 and 2005, Ciccone 2005, Bellassai 2005). The theme of fatherhood came up as a result of the changes in family structures (Deriu 2004 and 2005; Rosina and Sabbadini 2005), in which the on-going transformations in male identities are most visible. Although studies of fathers still reveal a strong imbalance in the distribution of tasks regarding the management of children and the home, there are signs of a greater involvement by fathers in the early years of the child's life (Ventimiglia 1996, Maggioni 2000, Zanatta 2000, Bimbi Trifiletti 2005, Rosina and Sabbadini 2005).

The social, economic and cultural transformations that are taking place in Italy, in particular the changes in feminine identities, increasingly and inevitably tend to involve male partners, workers and fathers. A situation of growing contradictions is taking shape in families in Italy nowadays. Women, who

⁵ The interviews were carried out in Milan, in the Province of Milan and in a nearby Province.

since the end of the Second World War had traditionally been concerned with the management of the home and care, have become increasingly less willing to deal exclusively with family matters. This decline in motivation is due to women's new competences - with growing schooling rates - and because they are increasingly present on the employment market (Mingione 2001). The reduction of women's willingness to concern themselves with home and family is part of a context of insufficient welfare policies able to support families with suitable services (nursery schools, transport, conciliation of time), where new tensions are added to old ones. The reduction of family support networks, population ageing and the spread of temporary work are some of the factors which are contributing to complicate the whole scenario.

In the '90s women's employment rates continued to grow and equality with male rates was reached in the younger groups. This means that in new families with young parents, both the father and the mother tendentially are (or were before the birth of their child) in paid employment and both of them are coping with housework and caring tasks. European Union directives during the '90s, which Italy must be in line with, provide for a greater redistribution of family and care tasks within the families. The Community Charter of social rights of 1989 already stated the need to "*develop measures enabling men and women to better conciliate their professional and family duties*". How do fathers see these transformations? How do they cope with them? How do they interpret this and what meaning do they attribute to the changes taking place? How is their relationship with their partner or former partner reformulated and reinterpreted in the light of the new scenarios on the job market and regarding the new feminine identities? Is there a greater willingness to share household and care duties? And regarding the children, has the affective relationship and quality of time spent with their fathers changed? Are fathers seeking to be more involved with their children? How does the mother figure fit into this father-child relationship?

Paternal profiles

A total of ten fathers were interviewed in and around Milan, of whom five are married or living with the mother of their children, four are separated and one is a widower. Of the five

single parents, two are in a relationship with a new partner with whom they do not share a house, and three are currently without a relationship. The age of the fathers ranges between 27 and 48 years. They are all employed: five of the fathers work in offices, two work in the catering sector, two are engineers and one is an educator. The level of education ranges from a university degree, a high school diploma to a 'middle school' leaving certificate. Five of the interviewees live in the city of Milan and five live in a less urbanised context around the Milanese metropolis and in a neighbouring Province. Five of our interviewees have only one child, four have two children and the widower interviewed has three. There are four children under the age of 3, while the others range between 3 and 19 years of age.

The results of the interviews enable us to outline various paternal profiles. We must premise that the extremely small number of interviews that were held makes the types outlined merely indicative. The categories must not be interpreted rigidly and schematically, but help us to see some of the basic underlying features in the on-going transformations of fatherhood. The creation of categories of fathers is thus aimed at simplifying a complex situation with blurred outlines, where one type tends to overlap another, with some contradictions.

The interviews help us to outline profiles based on the observation of a specific model of fatherhood:

- a) standard fathers
- b) fathers undergoing passive transformation
- c) fathers in active transformation
- d) post-transformation fathers

Most of the fathers we interviewed belong to the category 'fathers in transformation', while only one interviewee represents 'standard fathers', and one might be described as a 'post-transformation fathers'.

Standard fathers are those men who almost completely reproduce a model still dominated by the conviction that their only duty lies in ensuring the financial wellbeing of their family and children. Although there may be a conflicting relationship or rupture with their own father, this does not prevent the identity of these fathers from being completely centred on their work

and little or very little on their affective presence and care for their children. This type of father does not seem to reflect on the changes going on around him, which may affect the work situation of his partner and the difficulties of conciliating family life and working life. He sticks to his position to the extent that his role is and continues to be that of a father who admits no compatibility or conciliation with the roles of the mother (Ventimiglia 1996). The division of roles for these fathers remain a cornerstone in the management of children and the home. The father is responsible for a series of tasks and functions which are different from those of the mother; they cannot be considered as interchangeable, and are done at most only to help the mother, and not as a strict but fair sharing of household chores and childcare. The following interview extract seems particularly representative of this type of father:

“I must say the one of the weapons used, alas, by women and mothers is that they say: you are a father and you have never taken an interest in your child... well... this is one of the phrases you often hear... isn't it? No... it's not true... when you have time... let's look at Monday to Friday. As I was saying, first the alarm rings at 6 and you leave home at 7... if you want someone to earn a few euros in the family... and the mother works part time, and nowadays people working part time have limited duties and therefore an equally limited pay... so you have a pay packet, quite enough for some expenses and not for others... so.. you as a man... you as a father... I repeat... you either come from a well-off family... or you are self-employed which can give you time and money... from Monday to Friday... Saturday and Sunday too ...again, you devote the time you have...you don't grab your child by the hair and take him out...” (separated father, aged 37, 2 children, business agent, high school diploma).

Fathers in passive transformation are those who submit to the transformation without desiring it. Unlike standard fathers, their identity is less centred on work, but they are still convinced there is a division of roles according to gender. For these fathers the problem is that they feel forced to change their traditional view of the father-mother-children relationship because they see that their own reference model is giving way and demands re-formulation. Above all as a result of the demands for revision coming from the needs of their partner. However, these fathers are more concerned with having a relationship with their children that goes beyond mere support of a material kind, but are strongly disoriented by the need for a different model and

accept the new conditions with difficulty. We can illustrate this with the following quote of a separated father who still calls his former wife his wife after three years of separation. He is unable to construct a different model for himself and his children than that of the standard family:

“Well, first of all I must say I personally don’t believe that being separated or divorced is the ideal condition for the family, is it? I mean that I am in favour of marriage and, well, the problems with my wife, what happened, happened, but this is not the ideal condition... as separated parents you need to have moments together as much as possible... mother and father and children, just them, because for me going to have Christmas lunch with my parents-in-law is fine... I have no problem with my parents-in-law, because I go and pick up the children at their home... that’s fine... It’s not a problem” (separated father, aged 37, 2 children, office worker, high school diploma).

In several cases of separated fathers or widowers, the initial feeling of being lost and disoriented due to the de-structuring of a rigid traditional model leads to something more in the relationship with their children and an increase of ‘quality’ time spent together. The parental function and relationship with the children, which had previously been delegated to the mother, seems instead to be re-launched by the chance of a more exclusive, deeper relationship with their children:

“I mean, certainly in this case, the fact that I am separated has made me think about the affective relationship with the children... you know, if there are two of you, it’s the mother that plays this specific role... dictated by who or what we don’t know, but that’s how it is, isn’t it? While in this case, it’s just you and them... right? So if you are asked and you feel this need... right? It’s yours, and sometimes it is also mine... I mean being close to my children... right? I need first of all to relate to them too ...” (separated father, aged 37, 2 children, office worker, high school diploma).

“One thing, for example, I couldn’t do was put the children to bed on certain occasions, the result was the children only wanted to go to bed with their mother, so when I became a widower I rediscovered all these things, and from a certain point of view, even in the tragedy, I was allowed this privilege, I mean that things I couldn’t do before I managed to achieve, although this isn’t the most appropriate term... it was also a good rediscovery. Before, certain things were only done by my wife and then I started to do them all myself. If there’s one thing I’ve noticed it’s that in having to be a father and a mother, sometimes

there are also advantages, in the sense that if the child doesn't have two reference points, it's just you, so he asks you for everything, I need this, this has happened, please explain, so you create a relationship, a more intense bond with the children" (widowed father, aged 41, 3 children, office worker, high school diploma).

Fathers in active transformation are those who seek to detach from the model of their own father, trying with great difficulty to construct a more affective relationship with their children and their partner. This category is described in specific literature on the subject as soft males, maternal fathers or new mothers (Deriu 2005, Argentieri 1999, Pietropolli Charmet 2000). These fathers seem to focus not only on the quality of time they spend with their children, but also on the number of hours, and they are willing to question their behaviour, choices and expectations. They have an explicit will and desire to construct a different and more sharing relationship with their partner (or former partner) and their children which moves towards a real co-parenthood which is not imposed. Unlike the fathers in passive transformation, who are disoriented by the change, this type of father is ready to take up the challenge and attempts to leave behind a model, that of the father who has no family responsibilities except of a financial nature, to take up another able to give more satisfaction:

"...now it is a communication which has remained at a slightly superficial level, perhaps I thought I knew myself... but I don't, but because we grew up in this family where we didn't talk very much and... I mean perhaps out of reaction I talk about everything to Leonardo... I mean everything quite freely... there is more physical affection ... definitely... I missed out on that, especially from my mother... my mother was very present, but my mother... they are unaffectionate people ...my father and mother ... so little cuddles, kisses, hugs... very few... I mean... and I discovered this with my son... but maybe, I don't know... maybe I wanted a child for this reason... definitely" (separated father, aged 39, 1 child, office worker, degree in philosophy).

The fathers we interviewed were relatively similar, with homogeneous behavioural patterns and lifestyles. There is homogeneousness in responses when they are asked about the differences in their relationships with their fathers and the one they have or think they are constructing with their own children:

“An abyss... yes, yes, an abyss... I mean... my father is work, work, work, work and more work and that’s all. He has never done anything in the home and... but for God’s sake, I don’t blame him at all... because 50 years ago that’s what it was like... and... he had his role and he kept to it... although he was I think attentive ... or anyway... he took part in decision making... I mean the important ones, right? Even if he took part, it was always our mother who took us, wasn’t it? But at the same time he was also attentive to us... I have some very pleasant memories of time spent with my father, but very, very few” (separated father, aged 37, 2 children, office worker, high school diploma).

“Ooh...there is really a gulf... well, my father ... but times were different, weren’t they? We’re talking about 30 years ago... no, it’s completely different... my father didn’t take much care of his children... my father... but my father worked... he worked a lot... he even worked at weekends...” (separated father, 39, 1 child, office worker, degree in philosophy).

In the following part of an interview we may see all the determination and resoluteness which this interviewee shows in stating the gap between the way he relates to his own child and the relationship he had with his own father:

“I am better with my son. When I was little I never played with my father. I care more for my children. He spent time with us when he was on holiday; otherwise he worked and took care of the garden” (married father, 30, 1 child, engineer, degree).

The desire to keep a distance and be ‘different’ does not always seem to be fully and easily achieved. As this interviewee explains, although he strongly desires to be different, sometimes, even without wanting to, he steps in the footsteps of his own father:

“ ... this is a sore point I don’t want to dwell on... no, I’m joking (he laughs)... it’s a long story. Well, let’s start from the premise that... up to a certain point in my life I always thought... I always had him as my entire model... then at a certain point I said no... I started to notice more and more some mistakes in certain things. Now I can’t tolerate them, I can’t stand them any more... let’s say I see the mistakes more... the defects than the good qualities, and I used to see the good points above all. Since I have been in it... since Paolo was born I have maybe started to recover a few things... I mean... but the thing is that regarding Paolo I haven’t... I would like to be different and sometimes

I realise that I am doing the same things my father did with me... this is sad, in that I feel powerless... the educative figure reappears, the fatherly figure... which is something which always happens and it's inevitable, but this stuff,... well, it's hard to do" (married father, 27, 1 son, educator, degree in sociology).

The desire to be a different kind of father, is a change which in many cases brings suffering; the father has to come to terms with the (traditionally male) difficulty of having to look inside himself, recognising his weaknesses and knowing how to deal with them, not only in himself, but also with his partner, friends and parents (Deriu 2005).

Another factor we must bear in mind that that in Italy, as is known, the birth rate is 1.33 children per woman (Istat 2004), and has been one of the lowest in the world for some years now. The reduction in social networks is also an established fact, and several fathers when asked if they ever compared their upbringing of their children with other fathers, answered that they did not know many fathers because only a few friends have chosen to have children. This is a further aspect which results in the lack of reference points, and also makes it difficult to compare friends or acquaintances sharing the same experience.

"Well... let's say among my friends, the people I see, to tell the truth there aren't very many people who have children, and the few I have compared myself with, we are quite similar on the whole, but we don't have many samples to make statistics... so I don't know... that is, quite honestly I can't answer this question because most of my friends have girlfriends or are married but they haven't any children and so... The few I know, yes, more or less we do the same things... then maybe there's one who devotes more time to other things... one for example has a hobby, and so to devote more time to his hobby maybe he devotes less time to his kids... but in the end I haven't seen any great differences between my role and that of other fathers" (married father, 35, 1 child, engineer, degree).

"... I know my sister... maybe someone on my sister's side, but I seldom see them... not much with my sister, but now I think about it, maybe with someone I work with, every now and then we compare notes, because there is a month and half between the children... she tells me what's happening to her and I tell her what's happening to me.. so basically we tell each other what's happening... I don't know any fathers... at work there are two, but they're old... I couldn't compare

with them” (married father, 27, 1 daughter, fast-food assistant, catering diploma).

“I compare myself to Silvia’s (my wife) upbringing, I mean... I haven’t got many friends who are also fathers... the friends I had before I became a father are still not fathers... I have a few friends... I do have a few friends who are fathers, and I have compared notes with them... we have different ideas... some are more like me, but I have never found anyone who thought the same as me... everyone has his own way of being a father, in a way” (married father, 27, 1 child, educator, degree in sociology).

Post-transformation fathers are those who ‘since they were young’ have been socialised to become attending, responsible fathers. The fathers of these fathers were active figures, collaborating with their partners and willing to deal with the relationship with their children. To a certain extent they might be considered the sons of fathers in transformation, where the change from an authoritarian-institutional fatherhood to a more relational-interactive one is seen not in the interviewees but in their fathers. We may notice a certain desire to develop in their relationship with their children, but there is not a large gap with their own father figures.

“Cooking, I used to cook at school and here again my dad taught me something, but since it was my father who cooked at home... yes all the men in our family... (he laughs)... times have changed in any case, it’s not like it used to be when fathers just sprawled on the sofa... a thing I never saw my father do... and the mother did the cleaning... no, I don’t agree with that...” (married father, 27, 1 daughter, fast-food assistant, catering diploma).

What distinguishes these figures is a greater serenity and less anxiety in their relationship with their children, and less difficulty in handling the relationship with their partner. This type of father is less likely to base his reasoning on gender stereotypes in the upbringing of the children, decidedly detaching from the idea of a father with certain specific functions.

Task achievement and time sharing

The increase in women's inclusion in the employment market calls for an increase in men's collaboration in domestic work. But what emerges from our interviews? How are household tasks carried out? From quantitative research studies (Istat 2005), it emerges that an imbalance continues to exist in the quantity of time devoted by men and women to household chores and to leisure activities. For women living in a couple, free time amounts to some 2 hours 34 minutes (2 hours 11 minutes for those in employment), compared with 3 hours 15 minutes for men. The gap tends to increase if the couple have children but, and this is an important fact, an increase of time devoted to domestic tasks and child care (6h47') is seen only for women, while for men the amount of time does not appear to vary greatly. If the man leaves the family nucleus, women's work load even seems to decrease by around 2 hours.

Our interviews seem to confirm this trend. They also give the impression that many female partners or former partners consider the subject of household care (slightly less so regarding caring for their children, as we shall see) as their own territory to manage and organise. The division of tasks is still mostly decided by women, who take on the largest share of the work (Mapelli 2005). Many men seem to 'carry out orders', when they are given. Few of the men concerned in many of our interviews seem to take initiatives, a trend which affects all the different types of fathers.

"Quite a lot, I think I devote the right amount, in the sense that I lend a hand. Of course I don't start to clean the bathroom spontaneously, but if she tells me the bathroom needs cleaning I do it. I wouldn't like to devote more time to domestic chores. Maybe I would like to devote more time to the garden" (married father, 30, 1 child, engineer).

"Regarding the housework I always do: tidying up the living-room takes me less than an hour once a week, and cleaning the balconies and the stairs always takes an hour and a half once a week. My wife does a lot more things... cleaning the bathrooms, washing, ironing, every evening she has something to do. The time devoted to these jobs varies; it depends on what she has to do" (married father, 38, 2 children, skilled factory worker).µ

On more than one occasion, it emerges that fathers feel unsuited for carrying out household tasks. This attitude seems to express the fear, on the part of women, of losing a domain over which they traditionally have control. Losing responsibility, delegating part of household chores might signify losing their power over one of the few areas in which they have always had the last word. For men, on the other hand, it seems an easy way out of those duties which, in most cases, they have little desire to carry out.

“We both work and we give each other a hand. But certain jobs are done above all by women... my wife comes home tired too but... even if I’m at home in the afternoon, I don’t do certain jobs, even if I did them I don’t know how, so, so as not to do them badly...” (married father, 38, 2 children skilled factory worker).

“... but in theory I almost always do the dishes even if Stefania says I don’t wash them properly... we both wash the floors and she’s the one who tidies up most... she tidies up and dusts... she usually does that because she’s the one.. she’s at home most... but, well, basically, we take it in turns, even if Stefania yells at me... let’s say I should clean better... which is very hard for me... even if she’s not very accurate, but more than me... I mainly do the dishes, because she irons... she irons and puts things away, because she decides the order... it’s her order in the house... as soon as I try to put something away she yells at me, because I haven’t got an order, so I have to try to follow her order... repairs I do... she doesn’t touch them, which is just as well” (married father, 27, 1 child, fast-food employee, catering diploma).

An excerpt from an interview below shows the possessive attitude shown by a mother and her attempt at exclusion:

“In the sense that sometimes I have noticed.... Don’t let her hear us... I have noticed that if there is a job to be done, she wants it to be done as she says... she won’t accept a different way... maybe in the end it’s the same, right? But if the method is different, she won’t accept it... quite a possessive attitude, isn’t it? Let’s say... it may be expressed in this way... maybe she hasn’t got the courage to say it openly, but she expresses it, let’s say ... in these little ways...” (married father, 35, 1 child, engineer, degree).

However, we should emphasise that, although this aspect of female control emerges strongly, a trend seems to be taking place: where both partners have a higher level of education, they tend to downsize the importance of household chores. The overwhelming majority of interviewees does not tend to consider housework a crucial sphere of activity. The fact that the slight attention dedicated to this aspect is also underlined by the way in which the interviewees tend to pass rapidly over the subject to go on to something else.

More specifically, most of the fathers we interviewed are convinced of the need to give less importance to housework, even by women. It is interesting to note that when there is less pressure from women in their demands on their partners, the latter seem more willing to accept an exchange of roles.

“Ironing, no one irons here... but I iron more than Silvia... Silvia hates ironing... but I don’t mind it... if I had time I would like ironing... I mean I would put on a film and iron... yes, I iron... I have ironed... I enjoy it, I am more accurate than Silvia” (married father, 27, 1 child, educator, degree in sociology).

“No, we never sat down at a table and shared out the jobs... we saw what there was to do and one of us did it according to the moment, time and desire...” (separated father, 39, 1 child, office worker, degree in philosophy).

Even among separated fathers or widowers, the transition from a situation with a partner carrying out most of the personal care tasks to one where they have independent management of household care, does not seem to be particularly traumatising. The strategy adopted, without too much worry, is to lower the quality standards in cleaning and use their little free time for more recreational activities.

“I do the washing machine, but when I have time, when I can... my girlfriend now comes to my house every now and then and ... there’s a bit of a mess here! And she is a Virgo and is very precise... very accurate in everything she does... but it’s because I don’t have time... I mean... I haven’t got domestic help for the moment... if I have a few euros left over I will find one, but otherwise I don’t care... I mean I have no intention (he laughs) of getting into debt to pay for just anyone 4-5 hours a week to put things in order... no...I just manage to get organised and manage to use my time in the best way... and it’s

more profitable... that's true... but today all things considered anything I have to do in the house I really do it... but no, it's not heavy, because anyway I do what I can... let's say I am awake 16 hours a day because that is the amount of time, at least ... what I do in 16 hours I do... I can't go crazy or freak out because the windows are dirty or this evening I haven't swept the floors... I'll do it tomorrow evening... I can't ruin my life for these things... I mean the house has to come after me... not me after the house, otherwise I'm not living..." (separated father, 37, 2 children, business agent, high school diploma).

"I try to devote as little time as possible to boring tasks. I prefer to give time to my children and also to myself. If I can I prefer to spend a day at the lake instead of starting to dust here, I close my eyes if I see a bit of dust and prefer to have a relaxing day at the lake" (widowed father, 41, 3 children, office worker, high school diploma).

There is however one household task which encounters most resistance in our fathers, and that is ironing. This chore, whose low level of difficulty is not questioned by our interviewees, still seems to be considered by many fathers a symbol of women's work. Taking up this task would threaten the last bulwark of masculine identity in the most traditional sense of division of work according to gender roles. We have the impression that for many men ironing would mean questioning the deepest-rooted part of male identity based on stereotyped gender roles.

"I do a bit of everything, except ironing, I hate that. I clean the house, go shopping, I cook, wash up, everything that's useful. In the ironing, my mother and my sister help me with my shirts and then I take a lot to the laundry. But I am going to get help with the cleaning because since I work in Milan I come home late and it's better to have help" (Separated father, 48, 2 children, caterer, middle school leaving certificate).

"Yes, for example, ironing, I'm no good at it, I have never tried, but I don't think I can; at most I can iron the towels. I think women are better at it, although there are men... some men can and they cope with it" (married father, 38, 2 children, factory worker, professional diploma).

Male collaboration starts first in dealing with the tasks more traditionally carried out by men, such as small repairs (fixing a plug, changing a light bulb, etc.) and the physically heavier jobs (like decorating). Then men seem to gain confidence with jobs like shopping or dealing with bureaucratic-administrative tasks, which are part of household duties but which have a public dimension involving the management of household finances. They are followed by those tasks which in male and female imagery may also be done by men (we may think, for example, of chefs). From here we may see that cooking or dealing with the kitchen in general is a subsequent step towards collaboration between the partners. After that come the lighter, less stereotyped chores, such as vacuum-cleaning and making the bed. The last steps towards equal collaboration seem to be cleaning the bathroom and ironing.

What happens when men who are not used to do housework (or who only did some tasks) no longer have a partner willing to do them, or have a partner who cannot take on all the load of housework on her own? Help from third persons does not come so much from paid help (due to financial reasons), but the fathers fall back on informal help from girlfriends, sisters and mainly mothers. They, in most cases, lend their services without any kind of payment to help out with their son's or brothers' domestic chores.

“Cooking, I cooked before and I like it... so... the only thing is ironing... I can't stand it... well... what do I do? well, every now and then, to be honest, every now and then, shirts ... mammy? Is the laundry open? Yes... because I take half an hour to iron a shirt and then if I iron on one side, the other side is crumpled” (separated father, 37, 2 children, office worker, high school diploma).

“Because her (ex-wife's) mother used to help us a lot... and so luckily she helped us, because otherwise we couldn't... we couldn't cope with the daily jobs such as washing, ironing and cleaning the house... luckily she was there and she helped us, otherwise we were in a fix... she devoted more time to the child... and I didn't do anything! OK, but then I didn't do anything... but if I don't do anything, I don't know, I'll change my job and work six hours too ... I'll earn less and then instead of two cars we'll just have one” (separated father, 37, 2 children, business agent, high school diploma).

The mother figure remains more central than that of the father not only in terms of a physical presence but also providing affection, psychological support, emotional outlet and interaction. However, there is a strong emerging desire to distance from a life based on moral rigour and on physical and affective coldness, into a relationship with their children and with their partner.

We must therefore not have too rigid an idea of these fathers or think that they are not making efforts to collaborate more: we must bear in mind that they were children, in almost all cases, who never did anything or almost anything, as long as they lived at home with their mothers. In fact, the level of collaboration in household tasks in the family of origin, as emerges in the interviews, was almost zero. Their effort to be better fathers and partners seeking to meet demands from partners is noteworthy, and is perhaps understandable only in the light of a glance at the role played by their mothers. Their fathers had hyper-protective mothers who, in many cases, did not allow men them to do the smallest job.

“I didn’t do anything. Absolutely... yes, because my mother is the sort who never let me do anything... for example, I really loved cooking but I couldn’t even go in the kitchen... but then, when I was alone on my own I did things... simply because my mother was a maniac for order and so if I did things differently from how she wanted them, she would freak out...” (married father, 27, 1 child, educator, degree in sociology).

“Personally, I didn’t do anything, well, sometimes I cooked and washed up, but apart from that, no, because my mother’s culture meant she absolutely didn’t want me to” (separated father, 48, 2 children, caterer, middle school certificate).

“I was always quite open-minded... although before my mother always did everything... open-mindedness was only in my mind... now, I repeat the matter is a bit weighted on her side, because she doesn’t work, she looks after the house and the child, and it’s right that she should, but, for example, if she started working again, in the end we would have to share things equally. I mean, that’s what I think... I don’t cook because I can’t cook and not because I don’t think it is suitable, on the contrary, there are lots of men who are cooks” (married father, 35, 1 child, engineer, degree).

View on the division of tasks

While on the subject of household work we observed that among the men interviewed there is a general attempt to downsize its importance, we may instead see a growing desire to be involved, and fully taking part, in the sharing of family duties. Children are increasingly a conscious, desired choice and consequently the desire to take on the experience of fatherhood is something the fathers feel and about which they have expectations, desires and plans (Zanatta 2003). It strongly emerges from our interviews that fathers feel the need to experience fatherhood and play a role which in almost every aspect coincides with that of the mother. It is, for example, interesting to hear what this young father tells us when he states that he is annoyed by the impossibility of having an experience completely like that of the mother:

“I didn’t breastfeed because I have no breasts, but I have fed him... that is, I have woken up in the night and fed him... I was even happier... because I would have liked to breastfeed him... I mean, I always told Silvia that I would like to experience motherhood, but I’m a man and so it’s impossible...” (married man, 27, 1 child, educator, degree in sociology).

If we look again at the categories of fathers, the desire and willingness to take part comes mostly from the fathers in transformation; we may speak here of a true situation of co-parenthood where the functions traditionally carried out by mothers are also done by fathers and, perhaps this is the major novelty, with enthusiasm. Fatherhood in this sense is an experience which the fathers are seeking; it is an exchange in which they not only feel the duty to transmit something, but also the desire to experience the same development with their children.

“Rightly, I found myself a father and I found myself on the wrong foot, in everything... I hadn’t formed an idea, I hadn’t formed a father’s point of view, since it’s better not to have one, otherwise you can even be upset... no, in any case, slowly, slowly, little by little, you get into it... let’s say that after a little while you find yourself... you have to have experience... difficulty also in changing the nappy, the first time I put it on wrong and her pee leaked... (he laughs)... but, OK... just by making that mistake and I had to put the nappy on ... then, well cleaning her ears, at first I was scared, because

basically you know how to clean them, and other things like the lotion, which helps to unblock children's noses... the first time I was scared to put the syringe inside the baby's nose... then using another product you put the liquid inside and then it's easier, but in all these cases they are things that at first make you feel unsure, but then you manage easily..." (married father, 7, one child, fast-food employee, catering diploma).

"So when I get home... well... I hold her while she has to cook, or example, she's busy doing something else, I give a hand to bath her... I prepare the feeds on her instructions..." (married father, 35, 1 daughter, engineer, degree).

Quite a few fathers are anxious about the new responsibility of being a father. But the search for a more 'maternal' relationship does not always happen easily. Once again we have the impression that these new fathers, in search of a new way of experiencing their parenthood, pay the price of their lack of reference points. The desire to take more part in their children's lives comes with the need for a completely new world. As we know, from childhood little girls are socialised to motherhood, through the provision of ad hoc games such as dolls, pushchairs, dolls' clothes (Giannini Belotti 1973); little boys and future men and fathers are not provided with this world, and they consequently feel truly unprepared to handle situations which for many women are not a source of anxiety.

"But, I don't know, not feeding her, for the moment the mother is OK. I really should try to feed her; I have tried to feed her an apple, and she ate it, it's not that she rejects my presence, but perhaps I don't feel confident, she's still little, and then I don't know how to do it because I don't often see her eating. For the moment I prefer my wife to handle this, so there are no problems and complications" (married father, 38, 2 children, factory worker, professional diploma).

"As far as I'm concerned, I had somewhat idealised the figure of going to be a father... how great...I mean and then finding a baby there is... also from a psychological point of view of responsibility, a feeling of... I slept badly at night... but he slept at night, but I felt this anxiety ... I mean the fact that he depended entirely on us...that I was responsible for him... I don't know... it was also something a bit atavistic, I don't know, the hunter, the caveman who has to protect his offspring from wolves and I don't know what... and so it all unsettled me quite a bit..." (separated father, 39, 1 child, office worker, degree in philosophy separated father).

The above-mentioned reduction in social and family networks is a problem which affects both men and women. It also causes a reduction in the opportunities to spend time with and see children grow. In this case the handing on of a visual unwritten knowledge, which used to be the main source of learning for generations of mothers, no longer exists.

“He just didn’t sleep at night... he spent two years ... 2 hours per night ... we took turns... because he was a little bastard... he slept until midnight, but you can’t go to bed at 9 o’clock in the evening.. I mean, I couldn’t manage to go to bed at 9 in the evening... it was a nightmare... for two years... yes, since he was 4-5 months old till he was 2... well, we tried everything, until we realised, because at first he had colic... you know babies... digestive colic... in his tummy because it hurt, but then it became a bad habit.. but is really a... but you couldn’t be up with him at 3 o’clock at night in your arms, singing Brother John... and then... he goes to sleep... you sit on the sofa and he starts crying... and then in the end we bought a cot and we put it in the kitchen and shut him inside... the first night he must have cried and shouted for 5 hours and we were outside the door saying, no, OK.. let’s pick him up...but no, let him cry! He’s fine, see, there’s nothing wrong... the second night he cried for 2 hours and the third for 10 minutes and then he never woke up at night again, and so with the second child, when we saw that... as soon as we saw... there was nothing wrong... so that was the end of that...” (separated father, 37, 2 children, office worker, high school diploma).

Regarding this subject, it is disturbing to see that many parents put total trust in the opinions of paediatricians regarding the upbringing of their children. As we may imagine, they may be experts in the physical growth of children but know little from a psycho-socio-educational point of view. So it happens that mothers decide to stay at home, totally ignoring the well-known consequences of leaving the labour market, believing that one day they can easily return.

“Because then we asked more than one paediatrician and they told us that it would be much better if the little girl went to playschool, that is at 3, but not nursery school. Now she’s very little, she could easily get ill... and this would force her mother or me to stay at home and so in the end it’s not a great advantage... for her to go back to work” (married father, 35, 1 child, engineer, degree).

An additional factor is the objective difficulties and costs of childcare services in the Milan metropolitan area. The chronic lack of facilities such as nursery schools in a metropolis is a reality which men and women have to cope with. The result is that mostly always women give up their job, with the consequent impossibility of investing in their professional career, which could later on protect them from possible poverty.

“We don’t want to take her to nursery school...if we can. I don’t want to take her, first because they cost a fortune and second if we can manage to bring her up ourselves at least for... then playschool I think it starts at 3 ... for the first 3 years we don’t mind ... we would like the idea... then playschool OK.. no problem, otherwise you make the impact with primary school harder ... we prefer to look after her ourselves for the first 3 years, in any case there isn’t much interaction between little boys and girls at kindergarten... but they are too little and at playschool it’s different... so they start to socialise... even though when she sees little girls she has socialised quite easily, and she’s still little, so in the end that doesn’t seem to be the problem...”
(married father, 27, 1 child, fast-food assistant, catering diploma).

As we have seen in the previous chapters, support policies for parenthood have only recently also benefited fathers. With Law 53 of the year 2000, fathers are given the chance to benefit from parental leave to look after their children. This can be seen as periods of leave, daily times off or sickness leave. The novelty is that these leaves may be easier to take for fathers instead of mothers and, as far as the leaves are concerned, they may cover periods paid up to 30% of salary for the child’s first 3 years of life. However, numerous research studies show that these permits are still used by a small number of fathers (Piazza 2003). Our interviewees also confirm this trend and show that there are many reasons for the failure to use parental leave. We must firstly state that this law is still fairly recent and essentially not sufficiently publicised, to the extent that some of our interviewees not only had not taken advantage of it, but did not know of its existence. This must be seen from another point of view as well: for fathers of young children, that is those who have had children since 2000, not knowing of the law’s existence means they were not informed. They did not consider they could take leave to look after their children, and automatically delegated this possibility to their partners.

“It’s a good thing. I never thought about it. When we needed these leaves, my wife always asked for them. When the child was in hospital she stayed at home from work. I went in the afternoon, when I worked in the morning, for example, so she could come home for a few hours. But, for example, at night she remained in the hospital. She pays more attention, as they say a mother’s heart” (married father, 30, a child of 5 months, engineer).

Although it made it considerably easier for fathers to take leave to look after their children, the law on paternity leave only provided these benefits for employed workers. In a labour market like the Milanese one where, especially for young people, atypical contracts prevail offering irregular work, it is difficult to make use of the benefits. The following passage from an interview reveals the regret of a father with an irregular contract who was not able to make use of paternal leave to look after his child:

“I wish! It’s only for people with a long-term contract...” (Separated father, 39, office worker, 1 child, degree in sociology).

The law on paternal leave is still not entirely socially accepted by companies and employers. While it is true that women usually encounter approval when they ask their employers for leave to look after their children, men encounter even more disapproval. As if, in some way, they were betraying that male identity which should be devoted to work or, as the sociologist Marina Piazza (2003) might say, as ‘bulldozers’. This is fairly inconceivable in a society like the Italian one, where work carried out by men is considered more important than that done by women. As is to be expected, above all the standard fathers are the ones who are less willing to jeopardise this aspect of their male identity. It is interesting to note that these fathers do not mention the professional careers of their partners.

“Yes, I have heard of it... and let’s say that when it became law in 2000, there was little publicity... of the possibility for these things... then, in 2000 my second child was born but then nothing came of it... even today I don’t know if I could make use of it... well, I would say that if it had been... often you also have to see what human feelings your bosses have... I mean whether it affects your... it’s always linked to the world of economics... the world of money... if it doesn’t affect in inverted commas your working career, because anyway, if it were accepted by the company, I would have willingly taken it, and anyway

I would have considered taking a year or 6 months to be with them” (separated father, 37, 2 children, business agent, high school diploma).

“Yes, I know about it. Generally speaking, it’s a good law, but in practical terms, as far as I can see, especially in my firm, it’s almost impossible, for example, I couldn’t have managed to carry out certain jobs, because you discuss a project with the people present, doing it for a few hours or half a day would be difficult for everyone. And so it depends on the different working situations. Also, I see that in the work world, especially on the part of the people in charge, there is some reticence on the subject. And so, summing up the two things, it might be a good law, but as far as I have been able to see, it is difficult to enact at the moment” (widowed father, 41, 3 children, office worker, high school diploma).

Childcare strategies and hence the use of parental leave also have to consider the up to 30% decrease in salary (for the child’s first 3 years) for the parent making use of this leave. In Italy men’s salaries are on average about 20-30% higher than women’s (OD&M 2005) and therefore the decision is almost automatically in favour of the father’s job in order not to lose a valuable share of salary for the family budget and consequently for the mother to take the necessary leave.

“We are highly informed (laughs)... so this is how it stands... but parental leave related to... I mean in my case, is a fairly limited one, in that instead of working 8 hours a day I could do 6, and this would in any case affect my salary, because however many hours you take for parental leave, they pay you 30% less of your salary, not a full salary... at that point, if we make 4 sums... she went to see... it’s even vulgarly called ‘optional maternity’... and they would pay her 30% of her salary, and so in the end, adding it all up and weighing up the pros and cons, you realise that it’s a good thing if she stays at home and leaves her job.... It’s true her job isn’t paid well, but it’s a job you don’t easily find... so maybe we’ll leave it like this for a couple of years and then if she wants to she can start looking again” (married father, 35, 1 child, engineer, degree).

In order to offset situations of lack of childcare services, or financially disadvantageous situations, as we have already seen regarding household chores, the families fall back even more on grandparents.

“The children stay with their grandparents during the week. My wife takes them to school. My wife takes the little boy to school at 8.30 and then picks him up at 4 pm. The little girl goes to playschool, they can go in up to 9 o’clock. My wife takes the little boy to school and then the girl to playschool and then goes to work. The grandfather picks up the little girl at a quarter to 4, before picking up the little boy. Then the children stay with their grandfather till evening, about a quarter to seven, when she goes to get them after work. Even when I work in the morning, I never go with them, I stay at home, work in the garden or do something else. If I bring them home, I can’t manage to do anything. This week I am looking after them at home, but school starts next week and so they’ll start going to their grandparents’ again” (married father, 30, 2 children, engineer, degree).

“Now we would like to have another child and so I am also looking at friends who have made use of... what’s it called Paternal leave... and I would like... but I must see clearly if and what sense it makes, since we still have all 4 grandparents who are very active and there aren’t any other grandchildren and so... if it made sense, I would, but...” (married father, 38, 1 child, educator, degree in sociology).

“For me, for the moment, hardly anything has changed, because she is at home. When she goes back to work, we’ll see how we get organised, where to leave our daughter. We think we will leave her for a year with her grandparents, a bit with my parents and a bit with hers, and then when she’s one and a half, in September next year, we’ll send her to nursery school. Then we’ll see” (married father, 38, 2 children, skilled factory worker).

Although in the above interview extract we may find the father’s concealed desire to experience a period of fatherhood, in most cases parental leave remains a means to enact a strategy to conciliate work and family life. Paternal leave seems to be a means to support the demands of the mother’s working career, as in the case of this interviewee:

“I knew that there was one of our office staff ... his wife had some problems with her job so... he had had maybe... 2 weeks at home... because his wife wasn’t there... she had some work commitments elsewhere... then he had taken 6 months, I can’t remember if it was one or 2 hours leaving early... to be with the child... so I know... at that time I really understood... I think it’s the best thing in the world if we want equality... on these things, yes... mother and father must have the same opportunities... the same rights and the same duties too, right? Although they are two different figures, because both are

necessary” (separated father, 37, 2 children, office worker, high school diploma).

Relationship of the parents

As we mentioned at the start of this chapter, studies of fatherhood agree in considering that changes in paternal identity were sparked off above all by the movements for women’s rights, which placed foremost importance on the need not to exhaust the range of one’s opportunities in managing and caring for home and family, but widening it to sectors which have traditionally been considered a masculine domain. The opportunities sought by women start from their presence in the employment market and professional career aspirations. To achieve these, women must succeed in delegating part of care and household duties to their partners, especially when there is a lack of support services outside the family nucleus.

How does the relationship between the partners change within the family nucleus? How are the figures of mothers and partners perceived by these new fathers who, as we have seen, in many cases are seeking greater participation in the care of their children and are more willing to take charge of some household tasks?

The first, in many ways innovative, factor emerging is the need the fathers feel for the most open possible relationship in communicating with their partner. These fathers are not only looking for more intimate, relational dealings with their children, but also with their partners. A constant aspect emerging with separated fathers is their deep regret for the lack of communication with their partners. While it is true, as we have frequently underlined, that they feel lost, disoriented, anxious and sometimes unable to construct their own paternal figure, they seem to seek in their partners a guide to help them come to terms with creating a new image of themselves as partners and as men. Perhaps we should deal with separated fathers or widowers in a separate category: they express more the desire to tell their stories, to open up, share their feelings, points of view and chaos, the palpable wish to order their experiences and attribute a meaning to them. These interviewees feel a strong desire to seek people who have gone through the same experience, for example, in a new partner with a broken relationship behind her, or groups and associations

where they can share new experiences able to give a meaning to past ones.

Communication among partners seems to be simpler when fathers do not maintain a rigid division of roles, but are able to grasp the transformations going on around them. Where men have a greater awareness of the extent of the social, cultural and symbolic changes which have affected the feminine world, communication and constructing a harmonious relationship seem to work better (Deriu 2005). For new fathers, mothers are therefore a reference point for constructing their own relationship with their children. In several cases they show genuine admiration for their partners' management skills which, as the fathers are beginning to experience for themselves, may be very demanding because of the energy required.

“But it is very hard... I mean, I tell her ... I appreciate it greatly because spending 24 hours a day with a little girl... especially with her, because she is quite lively... she's full of beans.. it's hard... but the few times I did it, I liked it a lot... because the relationship is great... to experience this relationship with my little girl” (married father, 35, 1 child, engineer, degree).

The partners, new partners and, in some cases former partners, (when the break of the separation has been patched over), are often respected confidants, appreciated and admired for their commitment to their children and for their ability to handle relationships (Deriu 2005). Partners no longer and not only seem to be appreciated for their role as a wife and mother, but above all for their characters as such, apart from the roles they may play in the good functioning of the family:

“This was also the reason for great conflict between us, but I ... all my respect, because perhaps in her I saw what I was not... and so this personality fascinated me from the start... then over the years she has softened, I have got nastier and so the roles are mixing.. ... a bit, yes... I mean we are developing together in any case... I mean, we always say we say that we are still a family... there's Leonardo and until Leonardo has his own life and at 18 will be up and off round the world, we will always be a family... but then even more... because we can't be independent of each other because everything centres on Leonardo” (separated father, 1 child, 39, office worker, degree in philosophy).

However, as we stated at the beginning, we must bear in mind that this 'guidance' towards a new model of fatherhood does not take place in a linear process. The mothers may also rely on the father's traditional role, where he represents the authority she can fall back on. We must once again remember that also mothers are searching for a more relational identity with their children. Their development is of course less abrupt and bewildering than that of the fathers - in the transition from an authoritarian identity to a more relational one - but this does not prevent them from referring to stereotyped models in moments of confusion when they lose their points of reference.

"I play the father role... in that ... Leonardo sees me as the authority... it's true ... even if I am very affectionate when I have to be, playful, but if we are together and Leonardo does something he shouldn't, his mother tells him twice and looks at me... I mean she looks at me, she looks at the boy, she looks at me and I intervene, because I am... I mean he understands that if she looks at Daddy, if Daddy says so... There is this role, even if I am not so 'fatherly',? With a capital F... even if he understands the differences... of course I am not one of those fathers there used to be, who delegates..." (separated father, 39, 1 child, office worker, degree in philosophy).

Most of the fathers in our interviews are convinced that the role of the father is different from that of the mother and that the mother may give the child something that the father cannot give. They see the two figures as complementary and claim for themselves a role which cannot be that of the mother. Despite the intertwining of traditional behaviours and innovative behaviours, especially in the first years of the child's life, even those fathers who in reality see considerable interchangeability in care tasks recognise the irreplaceable role of the mother. What the fathers seem to be relating to most in this part is the reference to the educational figures which mother and father represent more than the actual tasks they carry out. The interviewees underline the role played by 'nature', which determines an inevitably greater attachment to the child in its first years of life.

"Well... I think that in the child's development and growth the mother is an essential figure at least up to 6-7 years, and obviously Leonardo, if he had to choose who to stay with, would choose his mother, but I think... it's not that I didn't suffer, but since he was very little I have realised... in the sense that this is nature... a boy, his mother... so he

was very happy with me, serene, he never had problems... so, I don't know, there are children who can't sleep with their fathers but with their mother they sleep all night, there are anxieties which develop in this way, but I saw that when he was with his mother..." (separated father, 39, 1 child, office worker, degree in philosophy).

"I don't want to be a male chauvinist, but for a woman, motherhood... I am a man and so I'll never be able to feel this, will I? And in a way I envy them because in any case the relationship between a mother and her child is... definitely different and certainly more... how can I say? ... more attached viscerally... closer and stronger than.. that between a father and child, and it cannot be otherwise because you carried it for 9 months and you gave it birth and we can't do anything... and the bonds are greater, but this is nature, I don't think you can invent who knows what in order to say or anyway to put into practice that man and woman must have the same rights and the same duties in this, because nature has provided differently" (separated father, 37, 2 children, office worker, high school diploma).

We have the impression that the impossibility of having an experience like that of mothers leads fathers to 'absolve themselves' from the possibility of having an attachment in some way comparable with maternal one. It's like saying 'it's like that and we can't do anything about it, whatever I do the relationship cannot in any case be as intense'. This tendency is however dubious because it enables them to justify their delegating of functions to the mother in the first part of the child's life, functions which, as we have seen, are interchangeable in many cases and so could equally be handled by both partners. Referring to the roles a father and mother must take up, the old stereotypes of the gentle, welcoming, good, understanding, peace-making, always available mother seems overstrained. Just like that of the authoritarian, rigid, strong, rational father, who is more permissive towards daughters (Ruspini 2003).

"It is different in any case because they are two completely different figures, although both parents, the mother has a different way of behaving, a way of acting, of bonding with daughters than that of the father. But they are both important figures who should never be lacking in a family, because the mother means gentleness and the father security" (separated father, 48, 2 children, caterer, middle school certificate).

“The mother definitely gentler, greater sensitivity... also the father... but let’s say ... maybe ... what I have noted in many couples I know and what is bound to happen to me is that the mother is stricter, firmer towards the child and the father not... then, above all towards the girls, fathers let themselves be won over much more easily and so I think it will happen to me too ... but definitely the father figure is a strong figure which gives security... strength, and this is important... to enable the children to grow with more security” (married father, 35, 1 daughter, engineer, degree).

Relationship of father and child

We have already underlined at various points in this chapter that for many fathers we interviewed, a new kind of fatherhood is developing in which they tendentiously seek involvement in the relationship with their children. Having children is a conscious choice of parents, who know they want to invest in the relationship with the children they decided to have. The fathers are seeking a way to relate with their children which is closer and more constructive than the one which characterised the previous generations of men.

“My own choice, yes, but also a need... a choice because there is for my part a desire to experience the relationship with her from the start, to concern myself with her upbringing, and it is also a choice, above all a choice” (married father, 35, 1 daughter, engineer, degree).

One of the foremost new features in these fathers’ relationships with their children is that they are able to feel physical affection. More than one father mentioned that the aspect of physical contact is one of the main differences in the relationship with their children. Kisses, hugs and caresses no longer earn the disapproval dictated by the social and pedagogical rules which prevented their fathers from showing affection towards their family (Barbagli 1984).

“Yes... with Nicky... every now and then it’s he who... I don’t know... little things... I don’t know... I take him to school and I say, Nicky give me a kiss ... he’s 10 and looks around to see if any of his friends are watching... He’s starting to have a sort of... at least I mean in public concerning... his father but also mother... while with the little girl Ada ... she is ... often it’s she who asks for one, right? Now we sit down and she asks me, will you cuddle me? ... OK? Well... and you do, I mean I

don't have any problem in relating to my children in this way"
(separated father, 37, 2 children, office worker, high school diploma).

"I love both my daughters, but she has always been the one who loves a cuddle. The fact that I have her, for me at this particular time, has been important, she has helped me a lot, she has been very important" (separated father, 48, 2 children, caterer, middle school leaving certificate).

The father-child relationship is therefore seen as absolutely central to their lives. The presence of children is a treasure, a precious asset able to improve the quality of time. And time is the resource which our interviewees say they do not have enough of, compared with the amount they would like to devote to them.

"It's great to have children but it changes you a lot, as a person, as a responsibility and also regarding the organisation of time. If you love your children you try to steal some time from your private life or your hobbies or friends and you devote it more to your family and children. Without neglecting your work, although every now and then of course a visit to the doctor or something like that and you have to put work aside. Of course it changes the organisation of your everyday life more" (separated father, 48, 2 children, caterer, middle school leaving certificate).

Investing time in their children, modifying their habits to devote more time to a child who has been strongly desired, eagerly awaited and planned, does not seem to be a problem for the fathers we interviewed. In fact, they choose to spend as much time as possible with their children. Having to give up hobbies, leisure activities or friends, is not seen as a sacrifice, because, as this interviewee explains, the children repay you and compensate for the things you no longer do. There is therefore an undeniable willingness to shift the focus of leisure activities from the public domain outside family activities to the private, relational sphere.

"This is something many friends and acquaintances have told me... marriage doesn't change your life, but the birth of a child changes it completely... it's true... in everything... in everyday life, in your way of thinking, in your lifestyle, in everything... at least, that's what happened to me, but I have also heard the views of friends I know, people at work who have had the same experience... when you aren't

married, when you're engaged... what's your aim? To have fun, get money, and spend it on having fun and going to restaurants, to the pub or disco... you have a different way of thinking. But when you have a child you change completely.. you think about her... your whole life centres on her... so maybe you say, well this evening I'm not going to the restaurant, I'll put some money aside because she might need it or... we can't go there because there's the little girl... it changes your lifestyle, I don't see it as being deprived... on the contrary... from my point of view compared to the life I had before, now I have much more, I mean she really gives you ... she makes up for ... what in inverted commas she takes away from you... yes" (married father, 35, 1 child, engineer, degree).

Fathers increasingly want to play an active part in their children's lives even in the most burdensome caring tasks which were traditionally delegated to the mother, such as: being involved in school activities, the choice of clothes, health, going to the doctor and the dentist. This is essentially also a way to get to know your children and to have a closer, more confidential relationship with them.

"I am the parent class representative and so I am inside... I got involved with this because Ada is in second year. Last year she was in the first and I said no, but with her I want to have this experience and I am involved... I want to do... I was also involved ...with Nicky, although I wasn't class representative... I mean my wife was too, every now and then, but you say she does it and so why should I go, right?" (separated father, 37, 2 children, office worker, high school diploma).

It is therefore not surprising now to see separated fathers who would like sole custody of their children. Whatever their marital status, all the fathers state they are able to deal with all the activities in everyday life and benefit from this from the point of view of the quality of relationship, actively seeking to be an essential part of their children's lives.

"Yes, yes... washing them, dressing them... yes, yes... but look, that's the least of the problems... I mean I like it. I really am willing and happy to do it" (separated father, 37, 2 children, office worker, high school diploma).

The fathers are beginning to show a desire, and to claim the right, to be able to establish a more committed, deeper and more exclusive relationship with their children. This right should be recognised not

only by the mother and closest family but, as this separated father would like, by all fathers. For too long, men have missed the chance to have a full relationship with their children and now, perhaps for the first time, they can aim for a greater share in the lives of the children they decided to have.

"I like it and would like the others to... maybe because it's something I neglected before, but anyway it's something I have always wanted to do, taking part in family life, looking after the children in everything. It's a wonderful thing and I would like others to realise this, because in this way families become more united" (separated father, 48, 2 children, caterer, middle school certificate).

Conclusions

What seems to emerge from this enquiry into the private side of the lives of the fathers is that, while still bearing in mind that these in-depth interviews do not enable us to generalise, the lives of these fathers is marked by chaotic, disorienting and often contradictory experiences. Traditional aspects are mixed and overlapped by the desire to experience full, satisfying fatherhood going way beyond mere financial support. Although we cannot outline a single type of father, we may tentatively state that transformations are taking place in the paternal identity in the region of Italy our interviewed fathers come from.

In this confusing situation, the wives and partners are inspiring muses and guides for men. They are looked upon with admiration because they are considered to have knowledge to which, for a long time, they had exclusive rights (Deriu 2005). But, these partners often show a possessive attitude to their children and the home which in a few cases tends to frustrate fathers' desire to fully experience the relationship with their children (Saraceno 1998). While men still do not feel ready to completely abandon the safe harbour of their gender identities based on the figure of the strong, virile, intractable man, they are also longing for a relationship with their children which is more authentic, closer and deeper than the one they experienced with their own fathers. The development in fathers' transformation therefore does not appear in a linear way and is not taken for granted. It is full of contradictions and inconsistencies, but in any case this seems to be a challenge which fathers are willing to face.

5. Fathers in Latvia

By: Evija Caune

5.1. Introduction

Overlooking the interviews held in Latvia with the ten fathers, we found a connection between respondents' childhood family, the 'way they grew up', and their current family situation. We call this the 'childhood family model'. Let us now introduce 'our' fathers by a short characterisation of the family in which they grew up.

Janis is a single father, he is divorced. He grew up in single mother family as well. He reasons that his childhood experience influences him as a father.

“Due to the fact I grew up without the father I try to do the best not to allow that my son experiences the same. A father should do the best for his child, love him. The child must feel that there is a father behind him who will always be there and support.”

Vents is a single father and lives together with his eldest son and youngest, a four year old son. He explains his experience

“I did not have a good relationship with my father. I was born when my father was at military service and afterwards he somehow didn't acknowledge me. I think it's my mother's fault. My eldest son also was born while I was at military service but I acknowledge him. I always say that I will be a better father for my children than my father was. I try to do my best. I want to be not only a father but also a friend. Most important thing is trust; there can be nothing without the trust.”

He was the eldest son in a family with five sons and very early the parents loaded him with keeping an eye on his brothers. To him it feels like he skipped his childhood:

“I didn't like the model of my family and I don't take it as an example.”

Ilmars, a single father, lived in a divorced family since he was nine. His mother was alone with four children and the two eldest boys helped a lot; they cooked dinner, chopped wood and brought water. Nowadays he does the household tasks and he is living together with his son. He doesn't divide jobs and tasks and he says:

"My experience is that I do all works at home, both women's jobs and men's jobs. If there is work to be done, I do it."

When his parents were together and afterwards when his mom was with his foster father there was a *"classical family. Father did all the men's jobs and mother did all the women's jobs. It was like in a movie."* Intars is also a single father, but his parents are still living together, actually they all live in one house. He thinks that the situation now and then was different:

"They both were stockbreeders. Both rear cattle. Mother of course spend more time in the kitchen. The kitchen was more mothers' domain than it is today." He thinks that he as a father doesn't differ very much from his father "He loved me the same way."

Norberts grew up in the family where both father and mother were present. He can't see any difference in his behaviour compared to that of his father. He remembers that in his childhood family the father was most time of the day at his job and the mother stayed at home like his wife stays at home at this moment:

"I attain the same situation like in my childhood. I wish my partner could build up herself more. I am only working and nothing else."

Aivis is married and he grew up in a family with both parents present. He doesn't reflect much on his childhood family .

"I haven't thought about it and didn't pay any attention to that. I just living my life and that's it."

Guntars is married now but he himself grew up in a single mother family. He remembers the time when his parents lived together:

“We all come from a family and probably we act as our parents acted in our childhood family. Comparing the families I can say that I do more home tasks than my father did because nowadays perceptions of how things should be done are different from before. I can’t say that it was bad when my father didn’t do dishwashing, then the situation was different and then it was absolutely acceptable. My mom thinks that a father should do men’s jobs and that a mother should do women’s jobs. She is from the generation that thinks that a father is a breadwinner and mother is more with the children. However, my mother educates me until a certain level and there were other people, too. I am not a pure product of my mother and therefore my opinion differs.”

Guntars notices that he does more home tasks than his father did. Audris grew up without a father .

“I experienced what it means to grow up without a father. I wanted him to be aside, to do things together. Being together is the main thing I missed.”

Elgars’ case differs from the others because he stays at home while his wife is working outside home most part of the week. He grew up at his foster grandparents. His mother was in his life only periodically. He remembers that in his grandparent’s family all was “upside down”.

“My grandma did all men’s jobs. She did building and gardening work but grandpa did sewing and cooking. I learned building from my grandma. She has an attitude and she could speak with all these fellows. Grandpa was henpecked husband. All was upside down.”

He lived in the countryside and did not meet with other people a lot. When he visited his relatives, he noticed that in other families tasks are divided differently.

“but I was happy about my foster grandparents.”

Some fathers stress that circumstances have changed a lot over the last decades and that it is very difficult to compare past times with nowadays:

“Situation has changed. Probably then people have more free time. Maybe I do things slightly different comparing with my father because these are two different situations.” “All was different then.” “Time was different, life was different.”

5.2. Realisation of tasks and time division

Household tasks

Three fathers (out of ten) think that they devote more time to household tasks comparing to their spouses. One father working from home devotes more time to household tasks than his wife does. In addition, one father working outside home also thinks that he spends more on household tasks than his wife. The single father who is married for the second time also declares that household tasks take more time of his entire week than they do for his wife. Four standard fathers pointed out that they are mostly responsible for maintenance. One standard family is living together with the grandmother, she is a pensioner and she is doing a great amount of household - preparing food, doing laundry, dishwashing, cleaning up.

The older a child is, the more involved he or she is in the household of single parent families. For instance, a father who lives with his 17 and 4 years old sons stresses that the eldest son is a great help in household and he is sharing the care tasks. A single father with a 14 years old son and the father with a 12 years old son describes the tasks which the sons have. None the less, no consequences can be drawn because standard respondent fathers have younger children.

Care tasks

The performance of care tasks varies in families depending on the age of the children. In standard families fathers spend between three up to 20 hours on these tasks. In single parent families fathers spend up to 10 hours on these tasks. In the single families, children were older than in standard and therefore they spend less time on care tasks. For instance, a father whose son is 14 years old doesn't spend any time on care tasks. While a father who is married and has two small children spends 20 hours per week on care tasks.

Supportive tasks

Single parents perform mostly all supportive tasks themselves. Two of them involve an elder son and a baby sitter or the son's mother in a few tasks. Single fathers spend from 4 to 14 hours per week on these tasks. Standard fathers mostly perform these tasks together with their partners and spend 2 to 20 hours on them. Three standard fathers point out some tasks for which mainly they themselves are in charge: they are keeping an eye on children, providing sexual education (sons' father), making decisions about school (the father is born in the surroundings), and they are the ones punishing children when necessary.

Management tasks

Standard fathers usually share management tasks with their partners. Nevertheless, some tasks are performed only by a man in a family. These are: paying the bills (2 cases), managing rent of mortgage affairs (2 cases), household budget planning (1 case), organisation and planning of purchases, outings (1 case), arranging insurance (1 case), maintaining contact with the neighbours (1 case), maintaining contact with the school (1 case). These fathers spend from 1 to 15 hours for these tasks per week.

It turns out that within the married couples, the parent who has the higher income is responsible for expenses, and he or she is the main or single breadwinner and at the same time the 'purse keeper'.

For most fathers it is such that his wife spends more time on all management tasks. Only in one family the respondent is more occupied with management tasks when compared to his partner. In this family, the partner spends a greater amount of time on her professional tasks than the father does. In another family, the wife has a higher income and she is the one who spends more time for her professional tasks outside home, but the situation with management tasks is the same as in other 'standard couples'.

Single fathers are doing the most part of the management tasks themselves but they involve other persons. A father who is married for the second time is performing these tasks like in standard families together with a partner. In one household the elder son is helping the father, in another household bills are shared with man's parents because they are living in one house. One father shares maintaining contacts with family and school

with his ex-wife. Single parents spend from ½ to 3 hours on these tasks.

Division of time and sense of time

Fathers demonstrate a different sense of time. For one father 20 hours for household tasks per week seems like 20% of his week time, for another father 20 hours seem to be only 8% of the week. For one father 2% is 15 hours for management tasks, for another 1% is ½ an hour per week for the same tasks. One married father evaluates 15 hours spent in household tasks as 4% of the week time, but a single father evaluated 15 hours as 10% of the week time. A father who works approximately 40 h per week outside home evaluates that professional tasks take 45% but his wife's 40 hours take 30% of her week time. He explains that his work settlement is in another town and he spends approximately 3 hours per day on the way. What we can conclude from this is that the way people perceive time is not a very reliable indicator for actual time spent on certain tasks. Anyway, we will use these subjective indicators to understand the differences within couples and between fathers.

It is interesting how the time in percentages is divided in the standard families. We can observe in four cases that fathers are working more hours and/or are away from home for a longer period of the day. The longer they are away the less time they spend on caring and supporting tasks. In three cases fathers have more spare time during the week than their wife has. In one case a father and mother spend an equal amount of time in all domains. In one case a partner has more spare time, the father works from home and he spends a lot of time on child care and household tasks. In another case the man's partner was working mostly at home and had no fixed working hours. A great deal of time is devoted for caring and supporting tasks both for fathers and their partners. However, women seem to be spending more time on these tasks than the fathers do. When we compare the figures, we see that women spend more time for children in the standard families. One couple differs from others because the father is working at home approximately 20 hours per week while his partner is working 50 hours per week outside home. In this case, the father is doing a great deal of household and care and supporting tasks comparing with other standard families.

Single fathers are also spending most part of their week time doing professional tasks away from home. There is no big difference in time for leisure among standard and single fathers. In comparing both groups of fathers, we find that single fathers spend more time on household tasks than standard fathers do. Comparing women in standard families and men in single parent families it comes out that women spend more time with children on average. The situation is the same when we compare women and men in standard families. It must be taken into account that single fathers have children that were older than those of the respondents in standard families.

5.3. View on the division of tasks

We saw that all respondents take part in doing home tasks, childcare, supporting and management tasks. However, they all do it to a various extent. All standard fathers are satisfied with the task division at home in general. They say:

“I don’t want to change anything.”

“Everything goes its way. I don’t think about it. That’s it. Everything happens naturally.” “I haven’t heard any complains from my wife that I am doing anything insufficient”, and “I took part in the division of tasks and logically I am satisfied with it.”

Elgars is the only father who is at home while her wife is working outside home. He says:

“I cope with all home works - tiding up, cooking. I do everything what a mother usually does in a family.”

Nonetheless, some of them accept that their spouses probably would like to see more involvement from their side in performing the tasks. Norberts, whose wife is unemployed and taking care of two small children, says:

“My wife wants me to be more involved in the housekeeping tasks. She wants me to spend more time at home with the children. In the same time she has very high demands and I need to work hard in order to satisfy them. I can’t do everything; I can’t exert myself to the utmost.”

Audris, father of a 9 year old son, would like to spend more time at home and even to be a house-man:

“I like household work, I am internally satisfied when I clean and tidy up something. I have no necessity to acknowledge myself at a paid job.”

Single fathers don't have high expectations in doing household tasks; they simply accept the existing situation. All of them confirm that they can cope with the tasks at home:

“Yes, I can cope. Other people wonder how I can keep my apartment so clean. It is pleasant. But how could it be otherwise? I tackle this.”
Another father says: “I deal with home tasks. I can't say I like it. Maybe it's not ideal tidiness, but I somehow cope. I can't afford luxury to share women and men jobs in my situation. I can't say I won't sweep floor because it's a women's job. Then there will be rubbish all over the place. I must do it. I can't say I admire cleaning the stove but I must do it and there is no other way.”

One single father is eager to hire a person who can do the cleaning job in the house:

“I was thinking about hiring a cleaner who once in a week would clean the apartment and I'll pay for it. I prefer that she does what I hate to do.”

Vents is approximately half a year a single father, he says:

“The first two weeks alone with the children it was tough. I thought I could give medals to these mothers who are alone with children.”

Analysis of respondents' answers demonstrates that fathers do not deeply consider and reflect upon the division of household tasks within their families. They respond that they have no special strategy or rules and division of tasks depends on their working conditions or even *'happens naturally'*. Aivis, who spends more time of the week in his job outside home, says:

“There is no task division. Everybody does something. It happens spontaneously. There is no schedule. I don't think about it. Everything goes its own way. Naturally, it happens. Everybody has its own job and in that way it is easier. If everybody does everything nothing good will turn out.”

His wife is doing many childcare and home tasks alone because

“she has irregular working time and has more time to be at home. She has more time and she doesn’t feel burdened with these tasks and she likes it.”

Guntars reflects on reasons why tasks are divided in that way:

“My wife didn’t work for a long time and she was doing the shopping. I can’t do it anymore; I don’t understand anything about that kind of things unless I have a list.”

Audris tells about his family:

“Often we divide jobs considering the principle “who has time to do it. Probably it happens spontaneously.”

Male and female tasks

Some fathers do not divide or see a sharp distinction between male and female tasks. Aivars, who is married for the second time, says that modern technologies makes household work different and that it dismantles borders between male and female jobs: *“In the past women washed dishes and clothes, but nowadays there is plenty of machinery. There are no women and men jobs because of machinery. If I see a pile of clothes to wash, I have no problems to sort them out and to put in the washing machine. I do not have to spin this vehicle myself.”*

Ilmars speculates on the economical changes in the society: *“In past women were dependent on men but nowadays it changes. Family models and roles model also change.” He is sure that “there is no such thing as male and female jobs. My experience shows that almost all house chores I do myself, both the so-called women and men jobs. That’s the way it is. It’s my fate,”* Ilmars admits.

No matter how strict or compliant respondents were about division of tasks, all of them conclude that there are some jobs that should be done by a man and some by a woman. For a man this is *physical work or heavy physical work*. Many fathers nominated sewing as a particular female job. Cooking as a female task was nominated only by one single father who actually does cooking himself. He explains: *“An omelette is better when made by a woman.”* Many respondents think that

women are better at childcare and speculate with such terms as 'naturally', 'in the process of history', and 'closer link':

"It depends on sex physical peculiarities. Not every woman could bring a wardrobe upstairs. However, cooking, cloth washing - I don't see any difference, it depends on the situation. If there is something to do, I do it and I don't question whether that job is a women or a men's job."

"It shouldn't be that a woman lifts up hundred kilos in order to be equal. Those heavy works are not women's work."

"Childcare tasks a woman can do more naturally. Repairing jobs even don't look good, like a woman that works with a hammer and nails. It's not exactly a women's job. In housekeeping she is better."

"There are a lot of male jobs. For instance, small repairing works as things to screw, help children with bikes. We come from different families and I have learnt practical things and I am better at this."

"Of course there are men's and women's jobs. Sewing is a women's job but physically heavier things are men's jobs."

"When we talk about household tasks, men can do it, but if we talk about childcare - women can do it better."

The fathers all provide a rational explanation why this division of work within their families or in society in general exists. Intars is doing many tasks at home except cooking. It is done by his mother.

"Mum is at home and I am at work. That is an answer. I won't run home to cook. Physically heavier work I do myself because my parents are old. It's not such a division women's and men jobs."

Other fathers add to this point: "Everybody does what he or she can do better."

"My wife more often talks about child problems because she is a crisis social worker."

"Women are better with childcare tasks. It is since previous centuries. It comes more naturally to them."

“She is doing these tasks because I spend more time outside home at work. But I do not consider there to be male and female jobs.”

Some of the explanations show that respondents are doing things because of certain stereotypes and public opinion. Guntars is emptying the rubbish bin himself because:

“I don’t want that my wife is doing it. I don’t want the neighbours, who see everything, will discuss why my wife is emptying the rubbish bin and then make subjective conclusions about our family. I don’t care much about their opinion but I somehow feel better if I do it myself.”

Other fathers stress the competencies that are specific male or female to do certain things:

“Childcare tasks are not based on the division of work but also on instincts. The same is the case regarding buying and fixing clothes. These jobs are more for women. I am compensating it by cleaning up the toilet and the bathroom. These are jobs which don’t need any specific talents or knowledge.”

Elgars is a standard father who is at home with his children and he experienced a stereotypical attitude towards his decision to stay at home from others. He says:

“There was incomprehension: why are you at home? What is your wife doing? Why is she wandering around? When I said that she is working at three jobs, then they became calmer. There is a general perception that the wife should be at home and a husband must work.”

Relationship of the parents

There is no consonance on what should be the father and should be the mother role within the family.

Some fathers agree that there is a clear distinction between these roles.

“Mother is better with children. In the first year mother should be with children. Father can do the same things but women better can do this.” “A mother traditionally is a mother, a woman, she has another psyche, thinking mode, which is necessary for a child.”

Guntars thinks that even women's behaviour is different because of their motherhood:

"Mother and women in general see children from upbringing aspect as teachers. They want children to do things the way they consider are right." He says: "if there is such a notion as a father and mother role than there should be such roles. He reasons that "mothers have closer emotional contact with a child; a father has more practical, logical contact."

He has an explanation why it is so:

"Because a child and a mother are very strongly connected in early childhood. This connection always is stronger with the mother."

Audris thinks that there is no specific distinction between those roles. However, he admits that there are typical things he is doing together with his son:

"I am more practical. My wife goes to the theatre and cinema with him. She is talking to him more often and reads something before going to sleep. My wife is more emotional; I am calmer and even-tempered. From my wife comes the cultural part, from me practical things - gardening, car fixing. I would be happy to teach him this practical side."

On the other side, Intars thinks that there are no specific father or mother roles. He says:

"I think that there are parents. There are no specific roles. Maybe the warmth comes from the mother, but on the other hand, it was good that my parents could help and gave it."

Norberts thinks:

"It's not appointed that a mother can teach to cook and sew but a father can teach only how to dig, chop woods or plant trees. Both mother and father can do it."

At the same time, he has a rather strict father and mother role division in his family:

“Now in my family I am the evil person. Everybody watches what I’ll say. If I say no my wife says: “What can I do if dad says no?” I am the mean one and the mother is good one.”

He says he is not satisfied with such a situation but he doesn’t know how to change it:

“I am seldom at home because I am working a lot and the partner is the person who has frequent contact with the children. Dad can’t improve things in that short period while he is at home. So I somehow bribe my children by buying something or talking with them and for a while I am the good one. Of course, I want to be a good person, a person whom they come and talk to. Everybody wants that, is it not?”

It must be remarked that in single parent families, fathers are less strict in their statements about father and mother roles. However, in general also these fathers think that in the family ideally a man (father) and a woman (mother) are present. They attribute certain emotional and behavioural traits to a man and/or father and to a woman and/or mother. Especially single fathers stress that a mother as a woman differs from a father and can give other things than a father:

“When children were smaller the mother was highly necessary. From the woman comes warmth, tenderness, and femininity. My mother and grandmother on some extend could give this tenderness to my children.” “Every living creature needs both sides.” “Men and women have different modes of thinking, it is scientifically proved. I am not so good on emotional things. I feel that my boy lacks the emotional aspects and forms of support. I teach him a more rational way of approaching matters. Colleagues reproach that my son lacks attention. But how it can be, I spend all my time with him.” “A mother can give a feminine touch to society. A mother is tender. Children go for reassurance to mom.”

In single parent families, fathers do their best to substitute both parents.

“I am the person who makes final decisions. I know the others claim I make decisions for my convenience. I want to think that I am doing the best for my child.”

In standard families, fathers and mothers together are trying to make decisions:

"We are discussing things, giving arguments. There is compromise important in relationships. If we can find it, everything is alright." "I never make decisions on myself. Every time I talk over and persuade"

Only one partner is in charge in some fields. Mainly it is discussing with a child about emotional problems.

"My wife is one who talks more with a child", "She is more communicative, she likes to talk, and it comes more natural to her." "She talks about problems because she is a crisis social worker."

When it comes to arguments in standard families, some fathers declare they are forming one 'frontline' with their partner:

"There is a common frontline in general things. If one parent decides, the other agrees. It is important that there is consent policy."

However, the experience is different in Norberts family:

"I am the person who punishes. It's important that there is one position; a child must understand what we want from him. There shouldn't be that one is the good one and other is the bad one. Now the mum is the one who loves and dad is the one whom should obey. I don't think its right."

In Elgars family dad is the parent who "regulate" the daughter, but *"concerning the son I allow the mother to decide. I keep distance from punishing the son."* Guntars explains his experience:

"We can't become controversial in the same time but we do. I try to step back and afterwards to discuss it. Sometimes verdict belongs to the one who is more assertive. But we are common in general things," he admits.

Relationship of father and child

It was interesting that on the question *"What does it mean for you to be a father and to take care of children?"* all fathers have difficulties to answer immediately and elaborate on this question. Practically they all have a pause and most of them start the answer with stating that it is not simply to answer. They consider it a difficult question and *"I haven't thought about it specially."* These answers give the impression that fathers do not reflect on that question in everyday life. Rather,

they explain being a father as something natural, that they are fathers in fact. The hypothesis can be made that respondents do not reflect on fatherhood as a social role but rather see it as an integral part of their identity:

- *"If I could distance myself from being a father for a while, I could answer. But now I am totally involved, it is so and that's it."*
- *"It means practically everything. A short and clear answer."*
- *"It means your blood, continuation of your kin."*
- *"It is natural. It is that way. I don't know how it could be if they weren't in my life. It is matter of course that they are."*
- *"I am a father, that's the way it is."*

Practically all fathers stress positive emotions and attitudes towards the fact of being a father. Talking about children, they show their emotions:

"It is a very positive feeling to recognise that I am a father and inwardly I need to care about children. It's important for me." "It is a special feeling and my responsibility. I must think of him, it is a good feeling to see that my son is growing." "It is the feeling of satisfaction. I feel proud and it is a positive feeling."

Norberts, the youngest of all fathers, says that he is a father on the one hand but on the other hand,

"I don't feel like a father. I buy toys not for children but for myself, I am more interested what is "inside a teddy" than they are. I am not a big deal of father yet. I am trying to amuse myself together with children."

Some single fathers stress their emotional closeness to their children. Intar told us about his experience in becoming a single parent:

"How can I draw a line and meet them only once in a week? I can't understand it. When they were small they sat on my knees, they were so sweet, and they snuggled up. How could I push them back?"

Ilmars says:

“When you will see my boy you will love him.” “I changed him diapers, I took care of him. When he arrived I got attached to him immediately, I didn’t see any other option.” Vents, asked the question about being a father, started to cry. He says: “For me it means everything.”

Elgars has a philosophical explanation:

“Physiologically it is my child, bone of my bone. In spiritual level children are particular creatures, particular personalities. A fathers’ role is to help to develop them to become independent.”

Only one father declares that he is not a good father in the eyes of the people close to him:

“Those who see me in everyday life think that I am a bad father. Outside the family people think I am a good father because I tell positive things about my children and family.”

A large part of the fathers thinks that they seem good fathers in the eyes of society:

“If my friends’ children pull forwards to our family, it means something. I can’t say I am a good father. Nevertheless, I have heard people saying I am a good father.”

Ilmars has an experience that his colleagues wonder about him as a single father:

“Colleagues looking at me as a stranger. Why are you alone? Why don’t you find a woman? I don’t need anyone; I am satisfied living together with my son.”

Vents told about his experiences when becoming a single father. He experienced that society is critical about his ex-wife’s actions:

“I have huge support. Everyone was aware that I would drink myself to death if I could not have my children. People think that the mother left her children and they don’t understand this. All extremely condemned the mother and I sometimes quieted them down. It is not

their problem. I feel a little bit offended. People condemn her and admire me, the way I manage all working in three jobs."

Boys or girls?

If a child is male or female can make a difference for some fathers. Aivis has two daughters and a son; he says:

"I am more comfortable upbringing a boy. A daughter as a woman is more difficult to understand. The answer is simple - I was a boy too and it is easier for me to understand what small boys feel." Aivars says: "My wife is more with the children. It is so because we have three girls."

Norberts has children under five and he says that there is no difference between sexes, but he thinks the difference will appear in due time.

"It will be different when they start to attend school, then they will see sex differences. While they are at home they are indifferent to the fact that they are a girl or a boy."

Elgars has a daughter and a son but he feels more comfortable with a girl:

"The daughter is my honey because she spends much time with me; my wife is more with a son. Sometimes she claims: "You don't tell off the daughter. She seeks comfort with me."

5.4. Contextual factors

Work conditions and settlement: economical factors

All fathers claim that the need for money to support their families make them work hard and it forces them to be outside home and away from their children for a long time.

"I am at work too much. If I could work less I would. However, the situation dictates the rules. We in our country have small wages and therefore I must work so hard. We have European prices but Latvian wages." "I have to work hard in order to support my family. I have plans and in order to reach them I need money. In order to get money I need to work hard. In the future I hope to work less and receive a higher income, I am aiming for this." "I am most time at work, every

day. *Someone must be a bread winner.*” “*I am at work most of the time. The way to work and back takes a lot of time and also I have to work in the weekends sometimes.*”

Guntars' experience is that when the children are sick, Guntars' wife usually stays at home. He explains:

“My work is not more important but it is better paid and it would not be profitable if I would stay at home. My job is also more creative and high-level.”

Elgars is at home now but he worked full time outside home until a few years ago. He explains:

“It's not worth to work so much. Whom do you need afterwards? Family will forget what you look like, children won't see you. You are not needed for yourself.”

Now his wife is the main breadwinner in the family. She has a higher income than he would be able to get in his full time job. Almost all respondents would accept to work less hours if only:

- their income would be enough to live prosperous lives;
- their wife would have a higher income than they and could provide a prosperous life.

Some of the fathers would like to stay more at home and be a houseman if their income would suffice: “I have no inward need to acknowledge myself at paid work.”

Gender equality

Respondents were asked to comment the statement.

„If we aim for more participation of women on the labour market and in public life, then men will have to get more involved in care and household tasks.”

Janis is a single father, he is doing all tasks at home almost on his own, and he disagrees with this statement:

“I don't want them to participate in public life. Nothing depends on my will but I disagree. I want that everything would be in a way that is more patriarchal. Women I guess are unhappy with this participation. From outside they want to be given freedom but then they don't know what to do with it. I am not optimistic about gender

equality. Men should be more involved into house keeping but women should have more free time to relax. We must help; it's normal."

Some other fathers agreed in general but they have some adjustments:

"I agree, but I think that women shouldn't carry 100 kilos in order to be equal."

Guntars' wife is working full time; he says,

"I agree theoretically. If we aim...but do we want? From the fact that men are more involved in care tasks doesn't automatically follow that there will be gender equality. A man could go out with a child to show what a cool and modern father he is, but at the same time he would continue to treat his wife and family as a property, let's say: 'as a Rolex watch.' Of course women should have opportunities to participate on the labour market and in public life but it is her choice what she does with this opportunity."

A single father says:

"I don't know. I think that businessmen or politicians are a zero for the family if they cannot find time to spend with their family. Money or fame is often more important for them and children come in second place,"

Another single father say:

"Of course I agree. But I want a mother to be at home more, with the family, she gives more warmth."

Some fathers agreed with the statement.

"I agree; it's logical,"
says Aivis.

Norberts' wife is a housewife. He absolutely agrees with the statement

"Certainly. Children see all and receive their own family model as the right one. If they notice that the father is the one that works and the mother the one that takes care of the children, then they believe it's right this way. I think that a woman should take more responsibility for herself. She can't be at home and excuse herself that she is bored

and having to stay at home in order to take care of children. It shouldn't be this way."

Ilmars agrees with the statement:

"I agree totally. I must stress that society has psychological delay. It will take much time, it's not realistic to deconstruct this thinking in one generation." Later he admits "Frankly speaking I don't see any difference between sexes in the legislative level."

Elgars reasons that gender equality is the situation in a family when everybody does everything when he/she is at home. When there is not such a division - he must do this, she must do that.

Experience of gender inequality

Ilmars and Vents are single parents and as fathers and men they experienced gender inequality. Vents says:

"I don't understand why the priority right to the children is for the mother when the marriage is annulled? I am afraid of the litigation. If the judge is a woman, I am afraid there will be emotions and they will decide that my son will stay with his mother."

Ilmars who is living together with his 14 year old son tells:

"I pay alimony to my ex-wife. The court passed a verdict that my son must live with his mother and ignored the objections of the head doctor of the hospital. I don't want to sue anymore. In my case women solidarity won because it's not common to leave a child to the father."

One single father extracts alimony through the 'Maintenance Guarantee Fund'. Another single father doesn't receive any alimony from his ex-wife, and the next single father shares the responsibilities and expenses with his ex-wife, the son's mother. The son is living with the father for two weeks and with the mother for two weeks, on and off.

Elgars reasons that gender does have importance:

"In my new job I said to my female employer that I want to conciliate my job with my family life. She smiled and agreed. I think I could agree on this only with a female employer not with a male."

Support from the government

Most of the fathers do not expect any support from the Latvian government. A lot of distrust regarding the state was found in their answers:

“I don’t trust our state. I don’t expect anything. We have a ‘banana republic’. I don’t even watch TV, it is disgusting.”

“You pay taxes but don’t receive anything in return. I have no big social guaranties because I haven’t paid all the taxes. But I don’t because I have a small wage.”

“Government establishes laws only for themselves.”

“The state should support employees who have families because their families take a large part of their time. There should be some solutions regarding working hours.”

“I have no patriotic feelings. We have a system that is upside down. I don’t feel that the state has any interest in me. If only I could feel that paying taxes actually pays back, I would have some additional support for my family.”

“Political decisions are changing so fast and sometimes they are controversial. Next to that it is hard to predict the development of business.”

There were some positive remarks regarding state support. Intars, the single father, says:

“The child care allowance is a positive step from the government; it helps to foster gender equality.”

Also Audris is positive regarding the opportunity for both parents to receive child care benefit, but he is unhappy that

“we are forced to work so hard in this state. It deprives me of the right to be with my family. There is no balance between prices and the wages. The one who wants to be able to afford something must work awfully hard.”

One father expects and gets more help from municipality:

“If I ask for help, I can get it. For instance, they paid for my son’s school excursion and even didn’t ask me about it. The municipality is very obliging.”

When it comes to employers there is not only one point of view. There are three groups of fathers. Some fathers are self-employed. It means they have to pay taxes themselves and they more or less ‘masters of their time’. They can be more flexible and adjustable. Those who work at a civil service enjoy more social benefits and they can arrange to stay at home or to be away when their family or children require that. The third group consists of the fathers that work in the business sector. They encounter problems when they need spare time for their family and children. Norberts illustrates this case:

“In my workplace the fact that I am a father doesn’t matter. Employers don’t take into account that I should have time for my family and children. If you are at work, there is no such a thing as an outside world, it doesn’t exist anymore.”

Norberts is on childcare leave at this moment but only formally. In practice, he is working to the same extent as before. His wife is unemployed and he wishes that she would work too; it would ensure equal participation in the family tasks and an equal contribution to the family budget.

Guntars is unsatisfied with his employer; he thinks that his employer does not think about his employees at all.

“My employer has one aim - to squeeze employees like a lemon. And the state doesn’t do anything to prevent this. Family and work life is separated in our society as the state is separated from the church. It is difficult to change something if there is no strong trade union.”

Fathers give examples of inappropriate support from the state and legislation. In Elgars’ family his wife is the main breadwinner and he says:

“State institutions are not ripe for the fact that a father stays at home and take care of the children.”

He knows a father that was bringing up his children on his own and the municipality wanted to take away his children because “there is no mother in the family.”

Aivis knows a father who was a high level manager who took up childcare leave. However, when he returned he was fired because his employer considered they could manage things without him and that they did not need his services anymore.

All fathers claim that they work a lot in order to be able to support their family. They explain that this is due to the economical situation in Latvia. They experience a gap between the average salary in the state and the cost of living. Data of the Latvian Central Statistical Bureau confirm this. It shows that the average net income for an employee in Latvia was 150 lats per month (approx. 214 EUR) in 2004. The cost of living in 2004 was 99 lats per month (approx. 141 EUR) per person. In 2004 minimal salary set by the state was 80 lats (approximately 114 EUR) and in 2006 it is 90 lats (129 EUR). The average income of one household member per month in 2004 was 101, 23 lats (approx. 145 EUR). Men have average salaries that are up to 15% to 19% higher when compared to the average salary of women. So men are those with the higher income and mostly they are the main breadwinners within their families. In order to earn more they work more (overtime and additional jobs) and the biggest part of their week time they are away from home. It leads to the situation where a mother is more at home and doing the bigger share of household and childcare tasks. To hire a permanent baby sitter or a nanny is costly. Sometimes grandparents help out. The hypothesis can be made that unequal wages and income between sexes is one of the factors that lead to unequal division of tasks in households. However, this hypothesis needs further inquiry.

Conclusions

Fathers seem to act in a similar way in their current families, as was the case in their childhood families. Usually unintentionally, and in some cases unaware, they repeat their childhood family model. For example, there is one standard father whose wife is the main breadwinner. The most part of his week time he is at home with his children and he is in charge of the bigger share of childcare, supporting and household tasks. In his childhood family, the task division between male and female was rather

alike. Sometimes the contrary is the case, and then fathers intentionally act in the opposite way, as was the case in the family in which they grew up. With this in mind, it can be concluded that the fathers' childhood family model influences how they perform their father role in their adult life.

All respondents take part, be it to a various extent, in the household tasks, childcare tasks, supporting tasks and management tasks. However, most of the traditional fathers, that are married and live with their spouses, remarked that their partners spend more time on childcare and supporting tasks than they do. Four out of six respondents who live with their partners have a higher income than their partners do. Four respondents in standard families are spending more time on professional tasks than their spouse does. Single fathers spend considerably more time on household tasks than standard fathers do. Besides, they are the only persons who make decisions within their families.

All fathers make a distinction between male and female roles. Although they declare that there is no specific mother or father role, nor typical male or female tasks, they point at things that are better or more suitable, more natural and easier for either women or men to undertake because of their gender. None of the respondents uses gender discriminatory or sexist language when speaking about women and their social value.

The fathers do not deliberately reflect much on their fatherhood in everyday life. They explain being a father as something natural, that they are fathers as 'a matter of fact'. The hypothesis can be made that respondents do not reflect on fatherhood as social role but rather see fatherhood as part of their personal identity. All of them experience being a father as positive. They have a positive attitude and they express positive emotions towards the fact that they are fathers.

6. Fathers in The Netherlands

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6.1. Introduction

In order to give an impression of the Dutch fathers that were interviewed we give a short characterisation of each of them regarding their family situation and the way they have organised their working and family life. The first five fathers are 'single fathers' and the 5 last fathers are 'standard fathers'.

Father 1 has two adoptive daughters, twins of seven years old, who live with him. The twins came to him and his ex-partner when they were 9 months old. He got divorced when the children were 3 years of age. With his ex-partner he maintains a good relationship in which they give priority to the care for the children. They prefer not to bring their children to a day care centre or kindergarten and that is why they manage their time in such a way that the children are always with one of the parents. He is a social worker and spends about 28 hours per week at his job and the (adoptive) mother also works for 28 hours per week. She lives nearby and twice a week she comes to the father's house to take care of the children. She picks them up from school and cooks for them and sometimes they eat together as a family.

Father 2 is a widower whose partner died when their daughter was only three months old. He is fully responsible for the daughter, 10 years of age now, and he is taking care of her on his own. There is no new partner in his life. This automatically implies he has to do all care and domestic tasks himself. He is neither happy nor unhappy about that. It simply is a fact and things need to be done. Ideally, he would like to see himself as part of a family with a mother and father in which responsibilities and tasks are equally distributed. He works for 32 hours per week outside home and his daughter is making use of childcare facilities at school and once a week there is a baby sitter.

Father 3 is divorced since three years and he has two daughters of 2 and 10 years old. His ex-wife is an alcoholic and that caused social and health problems in his family. During the second pregnancy, the mother left their house and after the birth of his daughter he took care of the baby. Since the birth of the second child the mother is no longer involved with the children, the youngest does not even know her. The eldest daughter suffers from the lack of attention in her early childhood. This is the consequence of living with an addicted mother for seven years while the father was working 40 hours per week. He describes his former family situation as 'absolutely not normal'. The household tasks mainly came down on him, although his partner was at home most of the time. Last year he decided to give up work. The combination of work and private life was impossible for him as a single parent. The youngest daughter has health problems, due to alcohol use during pregnancy, and requires a lot of attention. He decided to stay home and look after his children fulltime for about one and a half year. After that period he wants to start working again.

Father 4 is divorced since three years. His daughter, 9 years old, lives with her mother during weekdays and during the weekends with him. They also have a child of 21 of which he is the legally acknowledged father but not the biological father. Since the divorce he and his ex-partner hardly have any discussions on the education of their youngest; things seem to evolve automatically. He does notice some influence in his daughter's behaviour coming from the new husband of his ex-partner, but he prefers to keep the peace and avoids discussions with the mother. He tries to have an understanding attitude. Both houses, the mother's and father's, simply each have their own rules. For him it can be difficult sometimes, but the focus is on his daughter and her development, and her ability to combine both styles of education and raising.

Father 5 has two boys of 7 and 10 years old. He lives with his girlfriend who is not the mother of his children. Every other weekend he takes care of the children and also every Tuesday. He pays alimony to his former partner. The decisions concerning the children are made together with the mother. He is an IT-manager working from 8 to 5 outside of the house. The mother of the children works 16 hours per week. They do not make use

of paternal leave, nor of services like crèches or facilities at school.

Father 6 and his partner are so-called 'starters'. They are settling down and starting to build their family. Two years ago this father graduated and he started his own business. He works between 40 and 60 hours per week. His partner works outside home and has irregular working hours (shifts) for 20 hours per week and next to that, she also works in his business. Their 2 year old daughter attends kindergarten 3 days per week on average, and sometimes more. He is earning more money than she is, and that is why he is working more while she is caring more. For her, to work more hours would not benefit them financially; they would have to pay extra for the kindergarten. Money is an important factor in how their task division came into being.

Father 7 works 28 hours per week as a researcher and his partner works 32 hours per week, both work outside home. They share the care responsibilities for their one year old son. Their son goes to a day-care centre for two days per week. And this father is making use of the possibility for (paid) parental leave at the moment. The questions in the interview got him thinking: they seem to be quite simple, but when he thought about it more he considered them to be pretty difficult to answer. He concluded: 'that means they are important and good questions'.

Father 8 has two children, a boy of 7 years and a girl of 9 years old. He lives with his wife and they both work outside of the house. He works on average 32 hours per week and she 29 hours. In addition this father takes up unpaid leave which accumulates to 4 weeks per year in total. So both of them have an equal amount of time to dedicate to their work and to their family. Day care facilities at school are made use of about three hours per week. They evenly share the care and domestic tasks: fifty-fifty. Equality is an important issue for them but at the same time, he says it is important to keep each person's qualities in mind.

Father 9 has one girl of three years old and his wife is pregnant with their second child. They both work outside home and share the responsibilities regarding care tasks. He works as a tax advisor and works minimally 40 hours per week and his partner

has a part-time job of 24 hours per week. They make use of the kindergarten for 27 hours per week. So, the mother has two more days per week than him to care for their daughter. This implies she is doing more tasks in general than the, but when he is at home he actively wants to be involved with everything concerning his child.

Father 10 lives with his wife and his one year old son. He is self-employed and works about 40 hours per week. His second child was to be born shortly after the interview took place, and his partner did not have paid work at that time. They do not make use of any leave arrangement or day care facility. The mere fact of having this interview had an effect on the way this father dealt with domestic tasks. The interview got him thinking and since then he is making a bigger effort in helping out at home, for example by vacuum cleaning more than he did before. Especially since his second child is due shortly. He now wonders whether he is helping out enough in the household and is thinking about which tasks to pick up.

6.2. View on the division of tasks

Household tasks

All fathers actively take part in the household tasks. Only one single father has the guts to say he is very dissatisfied because he has to do all of the household tasks. This is not very surprising, since for single fathers to get involved in domestic tasks is not a choice:

"I don't live with a partner so I have to do all these task by my self."

The father who is not satisfied with the situation has hired a housekeeper to clean the house and to iron clothes. He argues as follows:

"I have no time, and these jobs can be easily done by somebody else."

Another single father gets help from his mother in washing and ironing clothes. He has arranged this because:

"I have tried to learn it but I am colour-blind, I put all clothes together in de washing machine and when it's done you can throw them in the bin."

All the standard fathers are satisfied with the way the division of household tasks is organised in their homes. It mostly depends on the hours each of the partners is working outside the home per week. The more a person is working outside home, the fewer tasks he or she can take up at home. Three of the standard fathers are mainly the ones cleaning the bathroom and the toilet. There is one standard father who is nowadays doing more household tasks than before because of health problems of his partner. Only one father in a standard family has a partner that does not work outside home. He sees this as the main reason why he is not doing much in and around the house. But, at the end of the interview he says:

"Maybe it is better if I would do more household tasks. Even if only vacuuming the house. My partner is pregnant now and to bring the vacuum cleaner downstairs is too heavy for her. I will not wait until she asks me to pick up the vacuum cleaner."

Care tasks

Four of the (five) single fathers indicate they are realising more care tasks than their former partners are and one single father is doing as many as his ex-partner. Two of the single fathers indicate that it is better to divide the tasks, but in their situation this was impossible. For example the father who is a widower:

"My partner died three months after the birth of our daughter, so I had to do all the care tasks."

Another father answers:

"my wife was an alcoholic and wasn't able to take care of the children. She was always drunk."

Two of the single fathers are satisfied with doing more care tasks:

"I am a male nurse and I like to take care,"

One of them explains, and another father says:

“being busy with my sons is relaxing to me.”

The standard fathers are satisfied with their current division of care tasks. Two of the standard fathers are executing less care tasks than their partners are. This is because of the fact both fathers work a lot of hours per week outside home and their partners work less hours or are not working outside home. One of them argues:

“taking care is not something for me. I have done a test for professional orientation and the outcome was that I would be a very bad nurse. For my partner it is much easier to do caring tasks.”

Another father says it is for time management reasons that his partner takes care of the children most of the time. He works five days a week, while she is at home with their son:

“It came about very naturally that she is doing the larger part of the care tasks.”

Two of the fathers living in standard families say they are taking care of their children to the same extent as their partner. Sometimes, there are practical reasons why they have to deviate from the usual pattern, for example in case of a sick partner:

“because of the fact I nowadays do most of the (heavier) household tasks, it is logical that my partner is doing a little bit more of the care tasks. When she recovers, she will take up more household tasks and then we will do these tasks together.”

There is one father who is doing some specific care tasks more often because of the fact that he is the one who is driving the car. So he is taking their daughter to the kindergarten or the doctor.

Supportive tasks

Basically, fathers express the view that they decided together with their (ex)partner to have children, so that they also share the responsibility in taking care of them and raising them. The

father and the mother have equally important roles in raising the children.

Most fathers are satisfied with the division of supportive tasks like comforting children, playing and talking to them. It must be pointed out that most of them (eight out of ten) share the supportive tasks equally with their (ex)partner. Two single fathers do all of these tasks on their own since the mother is absent. These two fathers both encounter restrictions when it comes to time management. One of them has a daughter of ten years old and says:

“I am satisfied in general, but I haven’t got much spare time left. When my daughter was younger, after coming home from work, I would do the ritual of cooking, eating, washing, reading and then bring her to bed. We always had to hurry because of lack of time.”

he other single father has solved this problem. He is a houseman since February 2006 and tries to work from home if possible. He says:

“This is the optimal situation for me and my daughter. Before I stayed home I had to divide my attention between home and work. That was not always easy.”

One standard father is less satisfied because of the fact that the mother gets to do all the leisure activities with the children like swimming and going to the library with the child. As he says:

“this is because the mother is at home two days per week while I work five days a week.”

Management tasks

When it comes to management tasks as organising activities and arranging finances, two of the single fathers are not very happy with their current situation. One of them says:

“I have too little time to also organise social contacts. And social outings and contacts do not happen spontaneous. So: there is less time for social contacts.” And the other one explains: “when I lived with my partner, she organised the administrative things. Now I have to do this on my own but I don’t like this task.”

All five fathers from standard families are the ones arranging insurance and mortgage affairs within their household. They answer for example:

“the mother does not like to pay attention to this stuff and I like it, it’s my specialisation, I’m a control freak and I like to know how the money is spent.”

Division of time

Not unsurprisingly, we found that single fathers are spending more time on household tasks, care tasks, supporting and management tasks than the standard fathers do. The result is that single fathers have less leisure time than the standard fathers. Also, single fathers spend less hours on professional tasks than standard fathers do. When we look at the time division within standard families, it is very clear that care tasks are mostly the responsibility of the mothers. Mothers have (a bit) more leisure time than the fathers, while fathers are spending more time on professional tasks than mothers. There’s one standard father who works less hours per week than his partner because of his parental leave.

None of the interviewed fathers encounters big problems in negotiating the task division. The division comes about spontaneously and mostly things are arranged in the most practical way. Mainly, the division of tasks is based on the skills of each of the partners and the time they can spend. The main concern of the single fathers is with the care and education of their children:

“Raising the children is number one for me” says one of them.

Gendered task division?

On the question which tasks are male, female or neutral all fathers firstly remark that all tasks in fact could be done by either men or women. At first sight, they do not consider certain tasks to have a specific gender connotation. However, after talking a bit longer on the subject, certain tasks do become more feminine than others. And mostly simply by the fact that women in practice usually take up these tasks. For example buying clothes for the children and sewing clothes are mentioned as typical female tasks.

“Mothers can do his better, they have a feel for it”, and: “women are better in sewing and fathers are better at doing odd jobs about the house.”

Doing the laundry, traditionally considered to be a more feminine task, seems to have lost its gendered image because of the more equal task division. One father among the interviewees for example, took up the task of doing the laundry because he does not want to wait with the laundry until his partner does it, and he wants to share the tasks fifty-fifty. Also cooking is a task men easily take up. A father who now lives with his new partner is more involved in cooking and daily and weekly shopping than he was in his former relationship:

“My new partner is working also 40 hours a week, so this is another situation. We both have the same time to spend on household tasks, so it’s normal that I take up more tasks now. My ex-partner worked 16 hours per week so she had more time to spend on these tasks.”

Government and social Support

When it comes to the need for support from the government in supporting the combination of working life and family life fathers are not able to answer right away. Mostly, they haven’t given this issue a lot of thought. One father says:

“I haven’t thought about it but I receive money back from the tax-collectors office and as a single parent I get enough support from the government.”

Another father got subsidy from the state in the past because of his health condition. With this subsidy he could afford do hire a housekeeper:

“But I only received this subsidy because of medical reasons.”

One single father would appreciate if more support would be available for him. His daughters are one and 2,5 years old and his ex-partner was a problematic alcoholic. According to him:

“My daughter is often sick because of the problems during the pregnancy. For a single father it is hard to combine a job and take care of a small child who is often sick. Government could support fathers like me to stop working for a while until my youngest

daughter goes to school. Then she is stronger and will not be sick so easily."

Three of the fathers in standard families think that child care provisions must be presented as a basic support from the government and to be available to a larger extent than now is the case. Most of the fathers can get support from their neighbours when necessary. One father gets support from his parents in once a week. Another father with a daughter of three years old, gets support from uncles, aunts and grandparents of the child but he does not often make use of this possibility because:

"my daughter is so young, we don't like to leave her to someone else."

In general fathers manage to organise someone to look after the children for a while when necessary.

6.3. Relationship of the parents

Differences of opinion

Standard and single fathers alike, have differences of opinion with their (ex) partner. In most of these mother and father discussions the parents were able to talk to one another about their differences, but they avoid discussions in front of the children. Single fathers do not want the children to become a victim of the broken relationship of the parents. Just like the standard fathers, the single fathers prefer to solve problems by compromising on behalf of the children. But there is a difference between the two groups of fathers: in a broken relationship there is an extra competitive component in the arguments in comparison with the standard fathers. For example one ex-partner spends so little time with her children that, as a mechanism of compensation, she buys presents and goes out with the kids, a single father says:

"She is like Santa Claus for the kids and that's not always healthy for the relationship between me and my children".

Standard fathers and their partner mostly have disagreements about the daily activities concerning the children, such as going to bed on time or how to deal with bad behaviour of the children. These problems are solved per case and mostly a solution is found in favour of the children and what is best for them. The personality of the parents is playing a role in how they reprimand a child. An impatient parent will use more authority and will punish a child easier. On the other hand, a more patient parent will talk with the son or daughter and explain the situation again and again. This is a typical example of the so-called 'negotiation household', a family characterised by respect, argumentation and negotiation between children and parents.

Father and mother role

The single fathers act both as fathers and mothers. They have to do all kind of tasks in the house that in traditional families are divided between the partners. Also the more 'female tasks' as repairing clothes, combing the long hair of the daughter and comforting children have to be done by the father. In case of an argument with the father, the children don't have the opportunity to find comfort or advise with the other parent. The single father has to reprimand the children but a few minutes later he also has to comfort them. It can be very hard to play the mother and the father role and it costs a lot of energy:

"I can't always be strict with them because I feel guilty for the fact that my child is growing up in a single parent family. That is the reason I can't stay angry."

How parents take care of the children

In standard families with an equal division of care tasks, the parents are stimulating or supporting each other. In the families where the mother is doing more of the care tasks, the father is doing more of the household tasks. In these situations both parents agreed about their capability to do certain things and take up certain responsibilities: *"We do things in the most practical way; who has the time and who can do it better?"* Arguments can be settled on the spot, or at least, within the same house. In one parent families, the fathers do not always share a house with their children all the time. They are not confronted with each situation that would require parental

interference. For that, these fathers need to either deal with issues on their own or await the moment they can talk about it with the mother and come to an arrangement.

6.4. Relationship of father and child

Being a father

It is interesting to note that on the question ‘what does it mean for you to be a father and to take care of children?’, the fathers found it difficult to answer right away. They all reacted amazed and you could nearly hear them thinking. Most of them consider it to be a very difficult question: “It is a simple question but not an easy one to answer.” This might give the impression that fathers do not reflect upon their fatherhood in everyday life. In fact, they see being a father as something natural. However, most of the fathers show their emotions when they elaborate on this topic:

“I’m born to be a father. Being a father is my life”, “ It is something special and there’s is nothing more special than that”, “It is something very special. I like to share my experiences with my daughter. I like to see my character and personality in my daughter. Seeing my daughter makes me a positive person and makes me forget all the bad things that happened that day. My daughter gives me energy, joy and happiness”. “It is my duty to do all I can on behalf of the children. Being a father means everything to me. That boy enriches my life.”

A father also means to teach things to your children, give them a solid background upon which to build their lives. Fathers want their children to grow up into independent adults. A father’s role is to give a good example of being a responsible person. Three of the single fathers stress that it is difficult for them always to be consequent towards the children because of the lack of energy they experience:

“After doing my job I got less energy to be consequent and I let my daughter do her own way”, “In the weekend I have no energy left. The children are watching television while they eat their breakfast sitting on the sofa.”

Most of the standard fathers answer that there is no big difference with the mother in how they raise the children. Only

two fathers come up with a clear difference and explain that the mothers are more protective towards the children in comparison with the fathers:

“When our daughter is crying, she panics and takes her up”.

Boys or girls?

Fathers were asked whether there is a difference in how they raise their daughters or how they raise their sons. This question proved difficult to answer since most of the fathers did not experience having as well a boy and a girl to raise. However, most fathers think that there is no big difference in the way how they would raise sons or daughters. They would give the same attention to both. Still, most of the fathers think that boys demand more physical attention, like playing rough games as football or climbing, and that girls would do less rough activities. Girls will play quietly in a corner with their dolls. This assumption plays a role in how they handle their sons and daughters. One father says:

“I think boys will solve a problem by fighting physically with each other, so I will pay more attention to this with my son. If somebody hit him he has to protect himself and hit back. It is not so necessary to teach this to my daughters.”

Another subject that is mentioned quite often is that fathers are more protective towards their daughters:

“There are more foolish men and boys who could hurt your daughter than there are men who could hurt your sons.”

Both types of fathers think that more little differences will appear when sons and daughters are growing up. One man explains:

“If my son goes to a party at school and a friend will bring him home, it’s okay, but I think I’ll will always go out of bed to bring my daughter home.”

Another father points to the biological factors that play a role:

"When she is older she will be drawn closer to her mother because of the experiences she has as a woman. If I would get a son, he would get closer to me because of my experiences as a man."

6.5. Contextual factors

Generations, friends and family

All single fathers experienced that the mere fact of being a single parent forces them to take up more tasks or all tasks in and around the house. Tasks that in a standard family would be divided between two persons:

"I'm alone with the children. Things have to be done."

Three fathers see a big difference between their attitude towards doing domestic tasks and that of their own father. The generation gap is to be blamed for that:

"In the past it was normal that the husband would go out to earn the money and that the wife is cleaning the house and takes care of the children. My father had his own business and my mother was taking care of the children. When my father came home, he was usually tired and could not help my mother."

Sometimes it can lead to a generation 'clash':

"My father was amazed when I told him I am taking up parental leave. This was not normal in his days."

However, there are also fathers who have not experienced such a generation gap:

"I was seven when my father lost his job. He was at home and did all household and caring tasks"; "I come from a family of only boys so there was no difference between male or female tasks. Things had to be done. I had to do all kind of tasks."

In comparison with their friends and colleagues, the fathers see a difference between those fathers who have lived on their own before living together with their partner and those who did not

have such an 'independent' experience. The first group of fathers take up more easily household tasks because for them it is normal to do them. Another father says:

"It depends on who is working more hours per week and earns the most. The person who is at home more often, automatically will do more household and caring tasks. You have to reach the optimal situation in a family."

Especially single fathers get respect from their family, friends and colleagues about the way they organise their time between work and home. One of them says:

"They respect me because of the children live with me since my divorce", "People say that combining work and raising a child is hard. They respect me for doing this."

In the case of standard families, it is nowadays generally accepted that parents share the tasks and also both work:

"it is very normal nowadays that both parents are working outside the home and divide the tasks."

Work situation

Single fathers do not automatically have a back up when their children become ill. There is usually no partner to pick up the children from school or crèche. They are the main responsible parent and the work situation cannot always be made to fit to it:

"Sometimes there is little room to manoeuvre. All your free days are gone in taking up care leave for the children and when they still become ill you have a problem."

Another father says:

"In my former job my colleagues knew what I have been through and they sympathised with my situation. But in my new job it is different. There is less sympathy for my situation, which is understandable. But, I had to work on Christmas Eve and did not even get a little appreciation from my manager. That is tough."

One of the fathers is an account manager and is responsible for 60 employees. He points out the differences in the workplace that exist for mothers and fathers. In his function it's almost impossible to work less hours per week. An advantage is that he is flexible in his working hours, when necessary. Most of his male colleagues do not take up parental leave although it is possible. It is just not considered normal to do that. On the other hand, female colleagues usually start working part-time after becoming a mother.

Realisation of a new task division

Extended working hours, demands of employers to travel or move to another city, these are factors fathers mention as threatening or destabilising their current task division at home. One of the fathers tackles these threats by a practical strategy:

"Maybe I have to look for a housekeeper."

Partners also play a role in changing the situation at home. Her work situation influences the negotiation process at the kitchen table, for example if she decides to work more hours outside the home. This can cause practical problems, as one father remarks:

"If she decides to go work outside the house, in our case it is not realistic because of the fact that we have two small children and the kindergarten costs a lot."

The fathers point out that for another division of tasks within the household also their employer plays an important role: "It depends on what kind of manager you have. My former manager showed his appreciation when I did extra work, but the new manager does not",

"A flexible job is needed to combine work and caring task as single father. If you are a single father and you never become ill, you work hard and you are very motivated and your holidays run out, then it is very pleasing if you can get ten extra holidays from the boss",

"Companies must stimulate fathers to take parental leave. My friend works in the metal industry and in this branch parental leave isn't normal."

The government can also do a lot in the opinion of the interviewed fathers. Financial support or more possibilities to take up extra leave, would be very welcome, especially for single fathers:

“If the government gives me some income, I could quit my job and take care of my children”

Another father points out the underlying principle that the government does not fully acknowledge the position a single father can be in:

“It seems that you have to be in really big problems before you get any support from the government. I am a single father, highly educated and then government presumes I can manage myself.”

Another important issue is the opening hours of child care facilities:

“We live in a 24-hours economy but the crèches close their doors on 18.00 or 18.30 hours.”

Two single fathers cannot answer the question ‘under which circumstances would you rearrange your task division at home and can de government play a supportive role in this?’, three of the single fathers say:

“When I meet a new partner, then we’ll divide the tasks.”

Four of the standard fathers would rearrange the tasks when their partner decides to work more hours per week outside the home. But then the total household income must remain the same or be higher. Illness or losing a job are also important reasons to rearrange the division of tasks.

The social environment and the use of childcare provisions Both types of fathers use childcare provisions. It is simply needed and they cannot do without. One standard father has to explain it to his parents and his parents-in-law because this older generation considers it unhealthy for a child to be in an environment with a lot of little kids and away from their parents. Only after the father took them to have a look at the kindergarten and the way children are treated there, that they became very positive about it:

“Their face brightened up.”

Two of the single fathers brought their daughter five days a week to the day-care because they had no other choice:

“Sometimes people remark that five days a week is a lot but I answer this with a shrug”

Another father says:

“My daughter went to the day-care 5 days a week but there wasn’t another choice in my case. My acquaintances knew that.”

Three fathers use day care four or five days a week and they notice that this is too much for their social surroundings.

“It seems that three days a week is the limit in this country for bringing your child to the child-day care. More than three days is ‘not done’ and is not considered to be good for your child, but what to do when there’s no other choice?”

In order for women to work more, men should care more

All ten fathers agree that men should get more involved in household tasks in order to let women get more involved on the labour market. All the fathers are in favour of doing more care and household tasks, but the total family income is also an important argument in making the choice who will work more hours a week outside the home. The general opinion of the fathers is that the more women enter the labour market, the more men will do household and care tasks. They all agree that there must be someone to have things done. A father says:

“Things will not be done by the fairies”.

None of the fathers mentions the help of a nanny or house-keeper in this respect. For fathers it is obvious that one of the parents will do these tasks. A single father notices that mothers more frequently go on a school trip with the children:

“I am the only father on a school trip usually! That is absurd. Fathers do participate in the school committee but mothers go on school trips. Why don’t fathers take a day off to join the school trip?”

One father expresses his feelings about other men who not help in the household and care tasks:

“I’m very annoyed about men who are not helping their partner with the care tasks. There are men who do not help because of the fact the partner works less hours outside the home. But these men would also not do anything if the partner would work five days a week outside the home.”

Another father says:

“If the government doesn’t support combining work and family life then somebody is left with the mess. It has to be done by someone. Government support for keeping a housekeeper is more than welcome.”

Equality between the sexes?

All ten fathers agree that gender equality is something good and that we all should aim for it. They all notice the fact that although women are working more outside the home nowadays, men are still working many more hours on the labour market. It seems normal that a mother works part-time when she gets children but men remain working fulltime. Most of the fathers think that this is the reason for the division in income of both partners.

“The person with the lower income works less days a week. The other partner works fulltime to pay the bills. The person who spends more time at home will do more household and caring tasks.”

In general, in The Netherlands, this person is still the mother. Another father however point out that it is not only a matter of economy but also of gender identity:

“Women have to give men more space to do these tasks. Women are always saying that they do household tasks better than men.”

Conclusions

Two of the single fathers do not have an ex-partner that is involved in raising the child(ren). One father is a widower and the ex-partner of the other father is an alcoholic.

Although these two fathers have to do all the tasks on their own, they answer that they are not dissatisfied with the situation:

"I'm not satisfied or dissatisfied with the situation. There is no other choice, I live on my own and these things have to be done, in a household with two parents tasks can be shared."

In the standard families partners can balance and coordinate tasks among each other. We see a correlation between the tasks: doing more household tasks means doing less care tasks. Supporting and management tasks are shared in nearly the same proportion between the parents.

Although the fathers in general are convinced that the emancipation of women is being completed, they still notice that mothers are working fewer hours outside the home than their spouse is, they earning less and are taking the biggest share of the care and domestic tasks.

Only two fathers have a housekeeper for some of the tasks such as vacuum cleaning, cleaning the bathroom, the toilet, the kitchen and mopping the floor. One father gets help from his mother for doing the laundry and ironing clothes. In general, the other fathers share tasks with their (ex)partner or do it themselves. They state:

"You have to clean your own mess, asking a housekeeper for cleaning your house is colonial."

Only one father answers:

"Maybe the government can subsidise keeping a housekeeper."

There's one standard father whose partner doesn't work outside the home and is now pregnant of their second child. Their division of tasks is based on the fact that he is the breadwinner and so he does not do many tasks at home. Although he helps with some tasks, most of it is done by the mother. This father is aware of the fact that the mother can't do all the task by herself.

"I can help with cleaning the house or the bathroom but I'll do this once in a month or every three weeks. For me it is not necessary to do this more frequently."

During the interview the father felt a little guilty that the division of tasks is based on the breadwinner principle.

"Maybe I can help more in the household or with other tasks because it is tough to look after your child and do all household tasks."

At first, the fathers say that no male or female tasks exist:

"All tasks can be done by a man or woman."

But in practice, there are tasks who are mostly done by mothers like buying clothes for children, comb the hair of the children and mending clothes. Fathers mostly do odd jobs about the house:

"It's is very traditional that women can handle better with needle and thread and men with nail and hammer and for most things, we have decided to do them in the most practical way, do what you do best."

It is obviously that fathers are open to do all kind of tasks when necessary. But it is remarkable that arranging insurance, managing rent or mortgage affairs and paying bills is mostly done by fathers. Most of the fathers recognise this in their social surroundings but one father says:

"This also can easily be done by a woman; it is not especially a male task."

Most of the fathers are of the opinion that it takes both parents to raise a child.

"Both decided to have children, so both have to take the responsibility in the care tasks, supporting tasks and realisation of management tasks."

The fathers who grew up in a family where their father was the sole breadwinner and their mother was home doing all the domestic tasks, see a big difference with the way things are done nowadays. Both partners are working and it is normal that

the tasks are divided. The parents of these fathers are a little amazed when they hear that their son helps in the household or care tasks or sometimes takes parental leave. Explanation and some convincing are sometimes needed.

Most of the fathers don't talk about the hours they spend on the household and caring tasks with people in their social surroundings. Most of the fathers are not aware of the possibility to take up parental leave. The fathers don't get structural help from their social surroundings. If necessary they can ask their neighbours to look after the children for some hours, and one father often gets help from his parents-in-law to look after the children. Another father gets help from his parents; they take care of the children after school. In all other cases parents use childcare provisions such as child care facilities at school. In one case the child sometimes is taken care of by the parents of a school friend after school.

Overall, we see that fathers, who spend more time working outside the house, are doing less in and around the house. Usually there is in such cases a mother or partner present that spends more time at home and takes care of things. Working hours and the flexibility of working time are over and over again, determining factors in the behaviour of Dutch men (and women) with regard to their level of involvement in domestic and caring tasks.

7. Conclusions: A fair distribution of work and care

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7.1. Introduction

Over the last decades, in all countries of the European Union women have entered the labour market in large numbers. This trend seems to be irrevocable and definitely has been putting pressure on the European countries to develop policies for the reconciliation of family life and working life. The trend towards a growing number of working women also questions the standard division of tasks within the household. In many European countries a debate has been started whether the current division is fair enough for women, regarding the fact that women spend more hours extra in paid work than man in household tasks. Optimists are of the opinion that things will work out in the end: the simple fact that women are leaving their homes to enter the labour market, implies that men will enter the world of care and household tasks. Pessimists, on the other hand, say that conciliation policy will not change the standard model of housework distribution for two reasons. First, as long as women are seen as the main carers and care tasks as basically female, little will change. Only if care tasks are no longer seen as female, but as gender neutral, a more fundamental change is possible. Second, next to the decoupling of tasks and gender, there is another prerequisite for a more fair distribution: men have to be more at home than in the actual situation - preferably alone with the children. As we will see, in case these conditions have not been fulfilled, the 'second shift' (Hochschild, 2003) will always remain the full responsibility of women.

In this report we have looked at the division of tasks and the opinions about these tasks in five European countries. In this last chapter we will draw conclusions on:

1. The hierarchy of tasks
2. The differences between the fathers
3. The mechanisms for change

And, in the closing paragraph we will discuss the importance of paid work in relation to household tasks, and the role that the government and the market play in this respect.

7.2. The tasks

For this project we have discerned four categories of tasks: household tasks, care tasks & supporting tasks, and management tasks. In each category more tasks were indicated (see annexes 5-9). Regarding each task fathers were asked to indicate whether * they mainly did the task themselves, * they shared the task with their partner, * the task was mainly done by the partner or by someone else. The sample (10 fathers per country; 50 in all) is rather small but, as we will see, the answers show interesting trends. Moreover, differences among countries provide us with a deeper understanding regarding the necessary conditions that have to be fulfilled for a fair division of work and care tasks between men and women.

Household tasks

Regarding the household tasks in the different countries, the interviewed fathers in standard families often have a partner doing the main share of the household tasks (as is the case in Poland, Latvia and Spain). In the Italian case we see partners sharing tasks somewhat more. In the Netherlands, most of the fathers in standard families share the household tasks rather equally with their partner, or, more precisely: they tell us that they do so.

Single men in our sample make more use of 'somebody else' to perform household tasks. The tasks are performed by either paid housekeepers or cleaners, or members of the family (in all cases mostly women). Italy seems to be an exception since the Italian single men do almost all the tasks themselves with the exception of one task: ironing. In the case of Latvia, we see that

in most families the children, when old enough, are helping out with household tasks.

The amount of time that fathers spent on average per week on household tasks differs enormously in all countries. For example fathers from the standard families in the Netherlands estimate to spend between 5 and 20 hours per week on the tasks, in Latvia between 10 and 20, in Italy between 2 and 10 and in Spain between half an hour to 40 hours a week. In all countries single fathers spent more time on household tasks than fathers from standard families.

The tasks that most men that were interviewed, from single and standard families alike, and from all countries, reckon to be 'their' job is putting out the dustbin and doing odd jobs in and around the house. These tasks seem to be typical 'male'. There also seem to be typical 'female' tasks. Especially ironing is a job that men not often do; many of them simply claim to 'hate ironing'. In the families of single fathers, this task is often taken over by a family member: a mother or a sister. Washing is not popular either. One of the single fathers in the Netherlands gets help from his mother in doing the washing:

"I've tried to learn it but I'm colour-blind, I put all clothes together in the washing machine and when it is done you can throw it in the container".

In the standard families, women consider doing housework as their territory and they decide what should be done. Men take orders from their wife or view themselves as assistants. These men, in general, do not take initiatives in doing the housework, but they carry out the tasks women ask them to do. As an Italian father states:

"Of course I don't start to clean the bathroom spontaneously, but if she tells me the bathroom needs cleaning, I do it". And a Spanish father mentions: "If she doesn't ask me to do something, I never take the first step".

Not all the men consider their wife to be very supportive. Some of the Spanish fathers we spoke to, point out that their partner does not appreciate the effort they make by performing activities they are not trained for. They think the women are too critical, as one of the Spanish fathers points out:

“Sometimes my wife refuses my help because, according to her, I double her work”.

Child care & supporting tasks

The analyses of the care tasks poses a problem because not all the fathers that were interviewed, have children in the age that they actually need this kind of care. However, we can conclude that within standard families in our research sample, most of child care tasks are shared between partners alike, especially when it comes to changing diapers, bottle feeding, washing, and dressing the children. Regarding child care, there is a gender specific division, and perhaps even a gender specific hierarchy: when it comes to bringing children to school and clubs, the fathers tend to take over more. While taking care of sick children mostly seems to be the mothers' task. In case of the single fathers household we see that regarding a task as caring for a sick child, (female) family members help out. The case of Italy shows that there is a big difference in performing these tasks according to the working hours of the parents. In households where both partners work fulltime, both care for the sick child.

Supportive tasks are tasks that have to do with raising children such as helping with homework, reprimanding them, talking about problems and decision making as to what they can and cannot do. The fathers in the standard families we spoke to, share these tasks almost equally with their partner and single parents do the same with their ex-partner. There are however some exceptions in more gender traditional environments: a Spanish man from gipsy origin holds the opinion that the father needs to protect the children and that it is the task of the mother to take care of them physically and socially. So he is the one reprimanding the children while she is performing all other care and supporting tasks.

Management tasks

Not very surprisingly, single fathers do most of the management tasks (organisation of the household, maintaining contacts and finances) themselves. Exceptions to this rule are the organising of outings and activities and arranging childcare. Here the ex-partner often steps in. In general, finances seem to be more of a male responsibility. Especially in the Netherlands, men in

standard families take care of arranging insurances and managing rent or mortgage affairs. Like one of the Dutch fathers explains:

“The mother does not like to pay attention to this stuff and I like it, it’s my specialisation”.

In Italy however, this is more of a shared task among the fathers interviewed in this research. The other countries are in the middle. Maintaining contacts is more often viewed by the fathers as something that the female (ex)partner is good at.

Hierarchy of tasks

When we look at the household tasks, there is a clear hierarchy of tasks from the perspective of the fathers we interviewed. Most of them do not have problems with doing odd jobs in and around the house or shopping. Next in line of popularity are cooking, vacuum cleaning and making the beds. Low in hierarchy are ironing, washing, and cleaning the bathroom. The stories of the fathers show that, in general, childcare tasks are much more shared and considered more gender-neutral than household tasks. With respect to child care and giving support to their children, fathers feel ‘a need to experience fatherhood’ and to play a larger role in the upbringing of their children. The fathers want to spend time with their children and to show them affection. The sole exception here is caring for a sick child. In most cases this task is carried out by the mother or, in case of the single fathers, by a (female) relative.

If we try to analyse which factors explain for this hierarchy, two come to the fore. In the first place, we see that tasks that are considered to be very dull or demanding do not have men’s priority. Tasks that bring fulfilment -like experiencing fatherhood- are far more popular. Second, among the less popular tasks - the household tasks -, tasks with public dimension are more popular. Shopping, walking around with the pram, and performing tasks around the house, are all far more attractive for men than the tasks that are carried out in the intimacy of the house.

The first aspect of this hierarchy is closely linked to the unequal power relations between men and women. In the perspective of many fathers, it is still a favour to their wife that they

participate in tasks at home. From that perspective, their partner should not ask for too much. They may ask their husband to do things that are interesting and gratifying, like playing a role as a father.

“I don’t take a day off from work to clean the restroom”

is a remark we often heard while interviewing fathers. Concerning household tasks, changes can be understood in two ways. The optimistic one is that change is possible - and men can not object to all household tasks -; men perform tasks they did not perform before, and even in public! A more negative reading will emphasize that men only carry out household tasks that are very close to the traditional male roles, like being busy in public with tasks that can be ‘recognized’ and valued by others.

7.3. The fathers

Involvement of fathers

The changing nature of fatherhood has been a central topic in a lot of research and debates over the last two decades. It has been said and written over and over that the ‘modern father’ shows an increasing active and emotional involvement with his wife and children. The man is no longer a mere breadwinner: the traditional father going off to work and returning with the money. He engages himself with tasks ‘at home’, and does so for reasons that were, until recently, considered as female. Dutch research on this issue shows that men who choose to be a father do so for emotional and affective reasons and (expectant) fathers wish to see their children grow up and want to give them love and affection. One of the pillars of modern parenthood is that both parents are very much involved in the well-being of their children - a process described as the ‘emotionalisation’ of parenthood (Duyvendak & Stavenuiter, 2004). For fathers this implies a major shift in becoming emotionally involved with tasks at home - an emotional investment that potentially is not exclusively limited to child rearing.

Fathers in standard families

All fathers interviewed for this research seem to be aware of the concept of new fatherhood. Many of them mention the role of their own fathers who were much more the traditional and distant father. In Italy, this new father role has been described as a process: there are fathers who are undergoing passive transformation, fathers in active transformation and post-transformation fathers. Fathers in passive transformation are those who actually do not want to change the traditional pattern, but they feel forced to conform to new circumstances. On the other hand, the fathers in active transformation are more than willing to construct a relationship with their children and change the division of tasks at home. The post-transformation fathers often were raised by fathers who performed tasks within the household and hold modern ideas on the division of labour and care. Also in Spain we see this change: when asking the fathers to compare their paternity with that of their fathers, all respond categorically that their ways of doing things are very different. One of the fathers explains that:

“My father was a stranger for me”.

Some of the interviewed fathers explain that the roles of their fathers were to work, to bring money and in some cases to go to the bar with friends.

“They lived like that”.

The Spanish fathers we spoke to, see themselves as children of their time with a new conception of fatherhood. In this respect it is important to note, however, that all interviewed fathers from standard families, also those who hold modern views on fatherhood and the distribution of tasks, spent less time on domestic tasks than their (ex)partner and sometimes do not perform household tasks at all. There definitely is a crystal clear difference between holding modern opinions and changing one's behaviour accordingly.

Single fathers

In this respect it is of interest to take a look at the single fathers. Forced by difficult circumstances, they are social innovators. They show that performing tasks is not only a matter

of opinion or competences. The force of circumstances determines what they do or do not do. A single father explains that after his divorce, he started carrying out tasks he had thought unthinkable before, like bringing the children to bed. Although he describes his divorce as a tragedy, some effects of it were very positive, in his view. He describes the 'discovery' of being involved more with his children. A single father usually takes over tasks that were formerly only performed by the mother. Also the single fathers show that once they started to broaden their repertoire of tasks, it was easier to add more new tasks. They were getting involved in school activities, choosing clothes to wear, visiting the doctor, or going to the dentist. Competency or preferences are no longer an obstacle, like one of the interviewed single fathers explains:

"There is no other choice, I do not live with a partner, so I have to do all these tasks by myself".

Fathers from gipsy origins

A specific group in this research form the Spanish fathers of gipsy origin. These fathers stick to a rather traditional division of tasks between men and women. Moreover, they are neither convinced of the necessities to change these roles, nor of the possibilities to do so. They continue doing things like in the past. However, things are changing for them as well. In the past, kindergartens and babysitters were not found appropriate, today these are acceptable. As far as changes occur, these need the approval of men, since power relations between men and women in gipsy circles are still unbalanced.

7.4. Mechanisms of change

In the optimist or liberal view men will take up tasks within the household when women start to spend more time on the labour market. The simple fact that women are away from home and that tasks still need to be performed, is a sufficient stimulating factor for men to take up tasks. In this respect it is worth mentioning that this research corroborates that fathers with a partner with paid work are more involved in performing household activities than those with a non-working partner.

Fathers with a non-working partner collaborate only in specific situations and when their partner asks them to do so. So, men are pushed to do more in case their wife has paid work. At the same time, we conclude that the increase in time spent on household and child rearing tasks by men was never in balance with the increase of paid work by women. Partly, this has to be attributed to the increasing pressure of modern work (Hochschild, 1997), that is demanding very devoted employees. This is, however, not the full explanation, since women with a full-time job do carry out far more household tasks than men with a comparable paid work load. Power relations between men and women, the gendered character of many a household tasks, and the (in)competence of men performing these tasks are all obstacles for a more fair division of tasks 'at home'. Nevertheless, things are changing. On the basis of this research, we conclude that this is often not only due to changing opinions or competences, but due to practical situations that need to be resolved and thus ask for innovation. The experiences of the single fathers in our sample show that men can, in principle, do all these tasks as well. Does this mean that the optimists are right and that all tasks will be carried out by men when circumstances change (for instance, when there will be less of a time bind, and men are under less pressure of the market)? That is highly questionable since also in households where women have a paid job, men are not doing their fair share. In particular, men refuse to participate in the more unattractive tasks, often considered to be 'female', underlining the importance of the decoupling of tasks and gender connotations. On the basis of the five country case studies we can distinguish factors that encourage or discourage men from taking up certain tasks. Based on a comparison of tasks, a number of mechanisms can be listed that appear to be 'operational' in certain tasks becoming more gender-neutral. What are the stimulating factors, considering the fact that men basically are able to perform all tasks (with an exception of specific biological tasks such as breastfeeding)?

Home alone

The mere fact that men are more often alone at home (without a spouse) seems to be a stimulating factor. Men who are divorced do not have any choice (though we are definitely not pleading divorce), they are home alone with the children by definition; other fathers have the option to choose: they can take parental leave or start working part-time, thus providing themselves with opportunities to be home alone.

In this respect it is worth remembering the father who spoke of the 'discovery' of being with his children. Doing more at home or with the children can in itself work as a catalyst. For example: a father who takes his child to school or kindergarten will be more involved in the daily activities of children and will be more inclined to do other tasks as well. This brings us to the second stimulating factor.

Linking the pins: a chain approach

Especially with regard to household tasks we have concluded that there is a clear hierarchy of tasks. Some are almost never performed by men, while others are more popular among men. Traditionally men are doing odd jobs around the house, putting outside the dustbin and they are in charge of the household administration. Sometimes, and after much pressure, some start doing other tasks as well, such as shopping and cooking. In this perspective, it is important to think strategically about the question to stimulate which tasks: stand-alone tasks are less promising for future change than tasks that are linked in a chain-of-actions. The example of child care has shown that doing one task can lead to doing another one. For instance, men who cook meals at home (either during the week or in the weekend) are more inclined to shop for the ingredients of the meal as well.

Visibility

Tasks that are to be performed outside the house in the public arena, like doing the shopping and taking kids to school, seem to be more popular among men than tasks which are done within the privacy of the home. Italian men explained us that they were constantly looking for a point of reference: simply said,

when there are other fathers taking their kids to school as well, there is no longer an impediment to do so yourself. As men see increasing numbers of other men in the supermarket, in the school playground or in the doctor's waiting room, it will be easier for them to overcome their reticence and they will take up such tasks themselves. This may work in two ways. First, this logic may hinder any change, since no man dares to be the first to perform 'female' tasks. However, a second logic may develop which is linked to the visibility aspect. We already saw that men - in case they take up some household tasks - prefer to perform tasks in public, where they can get recognition and approval (mostly from other men but also of women who might be jealous that their men are less emancipated).

Overcoming the gender connotation of visible household tasks may be easier in the long run than to decouple gender and cleaning, ironing or washing. The invisibility of these tasks makes that men are not very motivated to participate. The very fact that these tasks are performed at home does not imply, however, that their effect remains invisible for the outside world as well. Regarding laundering and ironing: it is publicly visible whether clothes are clean or not, ironed or not. Imagine, men become more concerned with their own appearance and of their children's, will this be an incentive for them to start doing the laundry and ironing their shirts?

Tolerance

Men and women sometimes perform tasks differently. This is demonstrated by the man in our sample who was not even allowed to 'help' his wife because she said she would have to do it all over again if he did it. This difference raises the fundamental question whether a more fair distribution of tasks necessarily implies an identical distribution. What if one person feels a task needs to be done and the other person does not think it is necessary? For sure, sometimes men will use this as a reason or excuse for just not wanting to do something. But, in many cases there is a genuine difference of opinion. If men are to be 'tempted' to do their share of all care tasks, both parties must learn to be tolerant: on the one hand, the person who thinks it's important that something is done, will have to do a little more himself or herself. On the other hand, the person with the lowest standards for cleanliness will sometimes have to do the

vacuuming, even if he or she does not think it is really necessary.

However, for many tasks it is obvious that they simply need to be done. But here, too, tolerance plays a role; we are talking about tolerance with regard to making mistakes. Doing the shopping is a task with little chance of mistakes. The shopper may forget an item or buy the wrong item, but at most this is an inconvenience. With regard to doing the laundry this is quite a different matter. An item of clothing that is washed in the wrong manner is often ruined forever. This may be a reason for women to continue to perform this task and for men to not even try to take it on.

Many of the men in this research explained that they were 'assisting' their wife's and had to do things in her way and at the moment she is asking for it. When women are more and more entering the labour market they also should give men more responsibility for the tasks at home and let them perform it with full responsibility in the long run. As long as men do not think that it is their responsibility, it is difficult to change their behaviour.

Transferring tasks/independence

How to facilitate this transition? We have seen above that men are merely taking orders or functioning as their wife's assistants. In earlier research (Duyvendak & Stavenuiter, 2004) we have concluded that for shopping a distinction can be made between the actual buying of the items and deciding what items need to be bought. Regarding a new generation of men, it shows that there is no need to help them buy the correct things; they are increasingly inclined to do the shopping completely independent. It is possible that a comparable development is taking place with regard to the laundry. Initially, women will maintain control and sort the laundry. As men do the laundry more often, they probably can, and will, take over the control task as well. And exactly in these things we see the possibility of a gradual transition.

7.5. How to balance work and care?

The fathers interviewed all spoke about the way they arrange their working life and their family life. Many of them expressed the positive sides of being involved in the care for children and many of them expressed the desire for a more equal division of tasks at home. However, not all fathers want to be involved to the same extent. Coping with both work and domestic duties is a matter of negotiating with partners, balancing with hours and taking up responsibilities and, last but not least, willingness to change patterns in and around the house. Next to that, fathers have all kinds of obligations that they have to meet. Work can be so demanding that it is an obstacle for fathers to get more involved with their children. As one father from Latvia remarks:

“state institutions are not ripe for the fact that a father can stay at home and take care of the children”.

Men and women can not enact all the necessary changes on their own. They need good facilities by the state and by employers, giving more room to all people - both men and women - to participate at home. Our research shows that in many countries, this is not the case yet.

A Latvian man states:

“We are forced to work so hard in this state. It deprives us of the right to be with the family.”

The example is given of a Latvian municipality that wanted to take away the children of a single father because there was no mother in the family. However, often facilities and attitudes are more positive in the (semi-)state sector than in the business sector in Latvia. People in civil service have more social benefits and can take up leave for emergencies at home.

The question is how far government and state institutions are able to, or allowed to, interfere in a private matter as the division of tasks within families. There was no consensus on this topic among the fathers we interviewed. Most preferred changes to develop ‘bottom up’. The Spanish and Polish fathers mainly see it as a private matter what they do or do not do around the house. A Polish father clearly expresses that a more equal division of tasks is a very good cause, but when it is put on to

people from 'above' it is felt as unwanted social engineering in a field that is and should be a private matter.

At the same time, many fathers acknowledge that there are ways of helping men and women to come to a more fair division of unpaid work. For example: regulations regarding working hours, laws regarding the right to work in part time positions, good leave schemes (with special attention to stimulate men to take up parental leave) and providing encompassing child care. The Italian case distinguished several categories of fathers. The 'fathers in transition' want to spend time with their children and they are willing to negotiate with their partner. They consider themselves to be 'ready to take up the challenge'. 'Post transformation fathers' have passed the phase of negotiation and see domestic tasks as something natural. Usually these men grew up in a family where a 'responsible father' was present. We can thus describe Italy as a country in transition in which some men are striving for more involvement with their kids.

In the Netherlands the keyword is 'flexibilisation'. The fathers that were interviewed plead for a flexibilisation from the side of employers as to time and leave arrangements. In general, these fathers already take up a considerable part of the caring tasks, but they would love to take up more. In order to combine working life and family life, fathers mention the need for flexibility in their working hours. E.g. by compensating overtime with time off when they are needed at home. Fathers are willing to realise a more equal task division but they need back up support from employers and the government.

All in all we see a struggle going on, for women and men alike, to combine work and care.

The emphasis that is put on work means that care comes second. Generally we can say: work comes first and care is less. Work is so important because of financial reasons, social esteem, it is higher valued and has a general connotation of urgency. The individual father wanting to put care first is pulled back by employers and government stressing the 'work first' principle. As long as work and care in society are not seen as equally important, men will be less inclined or triggered to take up caring tasks.

Colofon

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